

A Reflection on Tourism and the related Security Implications on the African Continent

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Abstract

Tourism has become a globally important sector and is undoubtedly playing a great part in international business. Many governments acknowledge the importance of the tourism sector in their economic growth strategies and also see it as a developmental tool, particularly in Africa. The contribution of the tourism sector to the development of African economies cannot be overstated. However, the optimism of how much the sector can actually assist in the economic development of the African continent is often dampened by the ongoing insecurity challenges that face Africa and the world, thereby hindering growth and development. Africa's share of the tourism industry remains small but any small negative changes in tourist arrivals has an adverse impact on the tourism industry. Among other challenges that are negatively affecting the tourism sector globally are issues related to insecurity, the direct and indirect effects of conflicts, terrorism, and general instability, among others. These barriers also affect the African continent's accelerated development plans. This article adopts a text analysis methodology to reflect on the incidents that are threatening the tourism sector's contribution to the economies of African states from the period of March 2015 to March 2016. It also briefly addresses some opportunities that exist within the tourism industry in Africa.

Keywords: Tourism, Security implications, African economic development

Introduction

Tourism to Africa is critical for growth and yet international arrivals are focussed mainly on South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritius, who collectively obtain nearly three quarters of Africa's tourism receipts. Interestingly, Africa is really doing better than many people may realize when it comes to the security of its people and visitors. Nowadays, and despite a few exceptions, armed conflict and terrorism are a smaller risk to most Africans than motor vehicle accidents. This improvement has assisted the notion of creating rapid economic growth of at least 5-6% per year for the last fifteen years. Africa's growth can no longer be simply explained by the global demand for its many commodities, tourism is also an important aspect which drives growth in economies.

In his remarks at the Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia on 16-17 April 2016, Kofi Annan, Chair of the Africa Progress Panel, stated that:

"At least two thirds of Africa's growth over the last decade has come from increased domestic demand for goods and services in thriving sectors such as telecoms, financial services, manufacturing and construction. As a result, today, inflows of private investment dwarf international aid. They have been encouraged by the efforts of governments across Africa to improve their macro-economic environments" (Africa Progress Panel, 2016).

There is also huge scope for tourism to bolster African state budgets. The continent of Africa has the advantage of helping to shape a new world order and maintaining its international influence through the many alliances that are forged with other states beyond her shores. Africa has become the playground for many international investors. The need for better

coordination between the tourism industry and other sectors (Sifolo and Sifolo, 2015) to fully explore the tourism sector's capacity to deliver on growth and development on the African continent is thus considered to be imperative. It is generally assumed that the tourism sector can generate economic and other benefits for poor people and communities in the context of responsible and sustainable tourism development (Mowforth and Munt, 2015); and can thus serve as an instrument to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) an agreed set of eight goals adopted by world leaders in 2000 that aims to tackle the world's major development challenges by 2015 (UNDP, 2011a). Hence, governmental structures in different countries place an emphasis on the tourism sector as a strategy to develop the country's economies and to improve the standard of living for the nation.

Some countries in Africa continue to face challenges of maximising the benefits of the natural resources that already exist due to the factors that negatively affect the tourism sector such as the direct and indirect effects of conflicts, terrorism and general instability, these include Somalia, Libya and Iraq just to name a few. We can also not turn a blind eye to the colonial plundering that has left scars for generations to come in many countries and where dictatorships remain propped up by vested international interests.

This paper highlights the security implications as barriers to accelerated development through the tourism sector on the African continent. This exercise is performed through the text analysis and thus content analysis was conducted, from the period of March 2015 to March 2016, whilst addressing the opportunities that exist within the tourism industry in Africa.

The Status of Tourism in Africa

Africa has been one of the world's fastest growing tourism regions, growing a small base of just 14.7 million visitors in 1990, to 26 million international tourists in 2000 and 56 million in 2014 (UNWTO, 2015). The UNWTO World Barometer (2016) recorded a 5% increase in Africa on international tourist arrivals. In absolute terms, the region welcomed a total of 56 million international tourists (UNWTO, 2015). Sub-Saharan Africa recorded a +12% increase, whilst North Africa was down by 2% (UNWTO, 2016). These patterns indicate both the rise in the Sub-Sahara region and a clear slowdown on tourism demand in North Africa. Although, the tourism industry in Africa fluctuates, as indicated in figure 1; the outlook for tourist international arrivals indicates a rise in the projections from 2015 to 2016.

Figure 1: Outlook for tourist international arrivals

| | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016* | average a year | projection 2016* (issued January) |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|----------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | | | | | | | | Jan-June | 2005-2015 | between |
| World | 1.9% | -3.9% | 6.5% | 4.6% | 4.7% | 4.6% | 4.2% | 4.6% | 4.0% | 3.9% | +3.5% and +4.5% |
| Europe | 0.3% | -5.1% | 3.1% | 6.4% | 3.9% | 4.8% | 2.3% | 4.7% | 2.6% | 3.0% | +3.5% and +4.5% |
| Asia and the Pacific | 1.1% | -1.6% | 13.2% | 6.2% | 7.1% | 6.9% | 5.8% | 5.6% | 8.8% | 6.1% | +4% and +5% |
| Americas | 2.7% | -4.7% | 6.3% | 3.6% | 4.5% | 3.0% | 8.5% | 5.9% | 4.2% | 3.7% | +4% and +5% |
| Africa | 2.9% | 4.5% | 9.3% | -0.7% | 4.6% | 4.3% | 1.1% | -3.1% | 5.4% | 4.4% | +2% and +5% |
| Middle East | 20.0% | -5.4% | 13.1% | -9.6% | 2.2% | -2.9% | 6.8% | 1.7% | -8.6% | 4.7% | +2% and +5% |

Source: UNWTO (2016) http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/unwto_barom16_05_september_excerpt_.pdf

Africa's political leadership in various states have invested time in creating a common blueprint to be adopted going forward relating to tourism growth and economic development, the African Union Agenda 2063 being one of the key documents. According to the African Union Agenda 2063, Africa's political leadership with a few sad exceptions, have rededicated themselves to the continent's development and pledged their commitment to make progress in eight key areas *inter alia*:

- African Identity and Renaissance
- The struggle against new colonialism and the right to self-determination of people still under colonial rule
- Integration Agenda
- Agenda for Social and Economic Development
- Agenda for Peace and Security
- Democratic Governance
- Determining Africa's Destiny, and
- Africa's place in the world

The intention is to have a peaceful and secure Africa with the mechanisms for peaceful prevention and resolution of conflicts that can be functional at all levels and which would serve the continent well for generations to come. The goals include:

- An entrenched and flourishing culture of human rights, democracy, gender equality, inclusion and peace;
- Prosperity, security and safety for all citizens; and
- Mechanisms to promote and defend the continent's collective security and interests.

Although there is a vision that is positive within the African continent, the growing optimism is often dampened by the lack of coordination, policy implementation, corruption and ongoing insecurity challenges that are facing the African continent and the world in general.

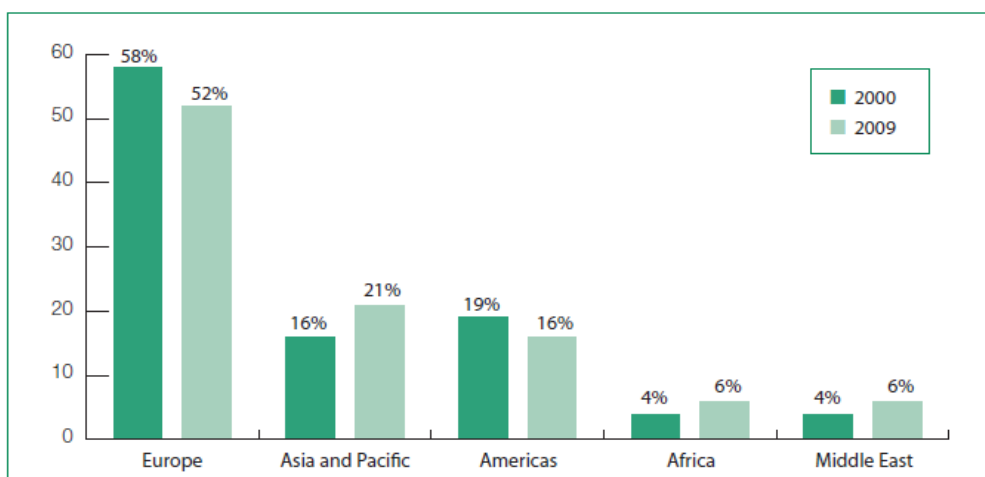
Methodology

This paper adopts the text analysis also referred to as content analysis which is used in social science research for analysing textual data and involves "drawing inferences from data by systematically identifying characteristics within the data" (Clatworthy and Jones, 2001: 317). This technique is good for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying special characteristics of messages (Holsti, 1968: 608) from billboard advertisements, brochures, magazines, newspapers, photographs, radio advertisements, TV commercials, video-tapes, websites or any other medium that can be turned into text. In this case, some academic journals, newspapers and TV interviews were carefully analysed.

Future Tourism Prospects

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2009), estimated the international tourist arrivals to reach 1.56 billion by 2020. According to Rogerson (2015), the sub-Saharan Africa as a whole has a growing weight of evidence that suggests that business tourism flows – domestic and intraregional – account for a larger share of tourism movements than leisure tourism. Although, Europe remains the most visited destination worldwide with Africa and Middle East at the bottom of the pyramid in-terms of international tourists arrivals as indicated in figure 1; Africa has great prospects.

Figure 1: Share of international tourist arrivals by region



Source: UNWTO (2010b) and UNWTO (2008).

Platforms and engines like the African Union which drive growth remain the heartbeat of the continent when it comes to promoting tourism. Event celebrations like Africa Day is one of the mostly celebrated days on the continent as well as in other international platforms in which the African diaspora plays a role. According to Sifolo (2016), African Month accords most Africans a chance to embrace a speech (*titled, I am An African*) that was made by the former South African President, Thabo Mbeki, with an emphasis to 'fall in love' with their countries, cultures as well as embracing being an African irrespective of race. One may argue that this is the perfect period whereby the African countries should reflect on the contribution which ought to be made by tourism to the development of African economies and efforts made to in fact drive it to new heights. This will lead to a huge contribution towards longer term relations amongst especially the African countries themselves. According to Tato and Ponelis (2012), diplomatic missions have dual roles: providing government services to citizens abroad as well as marketing their countries for tourism, trade and investment purposes. Increased international economic integration through tourism could lead to pro-poor tourism or poverty alleviation or social quality in the developing countries.

Africa remains a continent with authentic and diverse cultures. For example, from the south of the continent (South Africa) there are places including Robben Island, which is a symbol of 'Triumph of the Human spirit'; Zimbabwe also provides 'a hidden gem in the heart of Bulawayo' where tourists can engage freely with the locals and have one of the most intellectual arguments; Democratic Republic of Congo is still an untapped market for natural resources, such as wildlife including almost extinct gorillas living in the Salonga National Park and relishing nature. In Goma where the forests are breath-taking and the Mountain Oasis which has plenty of historical value. The peculiar architecture of Grand Bassam and the Tai National Park in Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire and the Greatest Mosques of Djenné and the culture of Koutiala are all small examples of what could become great tourists destinations and attractions with the potential to attract millions tourists annually. However, security implications remain a challenge on the continent and drive potential tourists away.

Factors Limiting Growth in Tourism

There are number of factors limiting tourism growth, some are natural, others are man-made and environmental. Some tend to be surmountable, whilst others are not. The scope of this article is mainly on the security implications on the African continent. Terrorism is one of the

negative aspects with a huge potential to limit almost totally, the ability of the natural and man-made environments to flourish. According to Visser (2016) natural and human-made environment affect the geographic patterns which are constantly being reworked by a range of forces (population changes, new patterns of economic production and consumption, evolving social and political structures, new forms of urbanism, and globalisation and the compression of time and space that are the product of ongoing revolutions in information technology and telecommunications). In turn, these forces are negatively affected, thereby leading to the changes in the geographic patterns which lead to tourism declining in the socio-economic environment of the countries affected.

Papadopoulos and Hamzaoui-Essoussi (2015) recognise broader challenges such as limited resources, negative images and branding in the African context or the variable interests of stakeholders. Negative publicity in the media coverage regarding a terrorist attack also contributes towards the factors limiting tourism growth in the continent. The study by Diriye (2015) captures the effect of terrorism on tourism in Africa in the 21st century. Diriye (2015) states that in certain places, negative publicity has a powerful affect on the formation of images in the minds of tourists. Thus any actual or perceived act of violence has a negative effect on tourism because it precipitates the formation of negative attitudes towards a destination, often irreversibly. Parkinson and Heyden (2015) claim that international terrorism deters personal safety and has a negative impact on tourism (See also; Henama, Jansen van Rensburg, and Nicolaidis, 2016).

Although tourism is regarded as an important and growing service sector in Africa, the African Economic Outlook 2016 indicates that tourism was adversely affected by terrorism and security problems in many regions such as Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya and Tunisia. However, in several countries, tourism boosted growth in 2015. This was particularly the case in Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles and Zimbabwe. Moreover, there is an issue of low average expenditures which also points to the limited range of products available, and the concomitant challenges and opportunities this presents to African countries (Teclé & Schroenn, 2006). Cleverdon (2002: 16) identified varying degrees of challenges in all African countries to include *inter alia* health concerns (malaria and AIDS); access difficulties and infrastructure deficiencies, susceptibility to an uncertain investment climate, poor planning and weak institutions, safety and security concerns, political and economic instability, inadequate product development and marketing and human resources development needs (Cleverdon, 2002). One of the security challenges facing the African continent is clearly corruption which is endemic in many states. The point is well captured by Tigere (2014), that corruption in any economy is the public enemy 'number one'. The security in the country becomes fragile due to massive corruption (Diriye; 2015); Tonderai (2014) hinted that political interference thwarts efforts to combat corruption. Rampant corruption and government mismanagement have turned a once-diversified economy with well-developed infrastructure and an advanced financial sector into one of Africa's poorest and most repressed (<http://www.heritage.org/index/country/zimbabwe>). These are some of the examples regarding negative publicity.

Perhaps concentrating more on different cases regarding tourism and security implication in the African continent is of paramount importance.

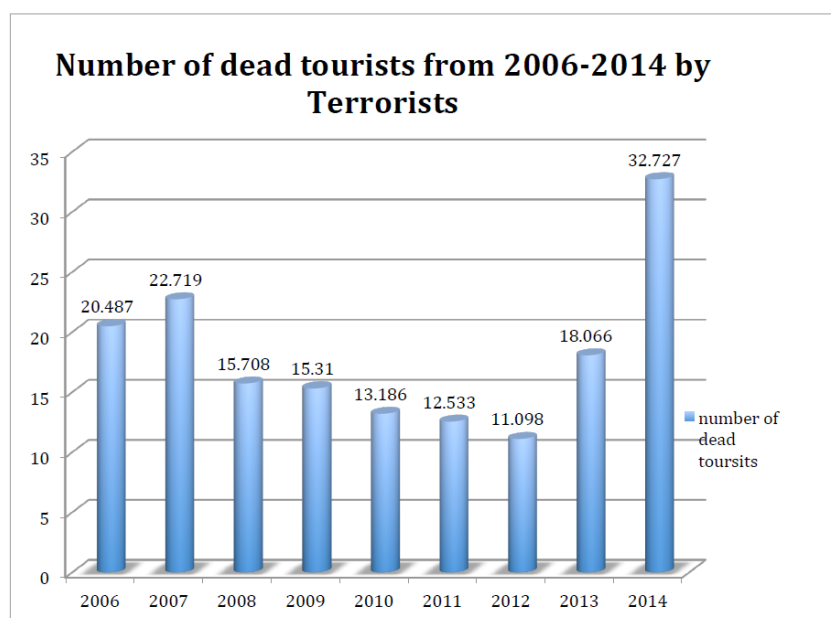
Selected incidents which threatened tourism's contribution to African economies from March 2015 to March 2016

Looking at the period between March 2015 and March 2016 alone, several incidents of acts of terror have severely threatened the tourism sector on the continent. According to Muga (2016), in March 2015, about 21 people were killed by gunmen who opened fire at the Bardo National Museum in Tunis, Tunisia. The Islamic State is said to have claimed responsibility.

Muga (2016) further states that in April 2015 about 150 people were left dead in Kenya when heavily armed gunmen stormed a university campus in an attack linked to the with Somalia-based Islamist extremist group called al-Shabaab. The spate of attacks continued in 2016 with a direct impact on the tourism sector of various countries of the continent. For instance, in March 2016 a group of gunmen opened fire to a crowd in Grand Bassam beach in Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire, killing about 16 people (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35798502>). Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility. In the same month of March 2016, gunmen opened fire at the Radisson hotel in Mali. The hotel was believed to be where a European Union (EU) mission was headquartered (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/mali-attack>).

The enumerated incidents and others are some of the events that have marred the African continent during the period of March 2015 to March 2016. These and other incidents are threatening the tourism sector's contribution to the economies of African states. Travellers, holiday makers as well business tourists are increasingly faced with a challenge of factoring security (risks) in their travel plans. They have to weigh the costs against benefits of visiting some African countries. For example one has to think of the importance of life before pleasure and or tourism experience. A traveller's trip plan to Libya might no longer be filled with excitement and fantasy of seeing magnificent Cyrene in Libya (an archaeological site of Greek settlement in about 630 BC and a Roman city in about 96 BC) or the site Assaraya al-Hamra in Tripoli (otherwise known as the Red Castle which has a wide yard filled with different statues starting from the Ottoman period). Again it is difficult to imagine travelling to Kenya's Amboseli National Reserve, and lake Naivasha or even Egypt's Sharm El Sheik Resort without worrying about security concerns. Moreover, in North Africa, terrorist events in the Spring of 2015 undermined recent positive developments in Tunisia (92nd).

In her study on the effects of terrorism in tourism, Ranbath, (2015) explicitly argues that the contribution of tourism to the revenue of countries is significantly hampered by terrorism. The graph below indicates the rate (globally) of tourists deaths by terrorist from 2006 to 2014.



Source: Ranbath, K (2015: 12)

Current literature indicates that there are potential markets for African countries within the continent (interregional, international and domestic tourists). Successful engagements and implementation have a capacity to boost employment within the economic blocks which may

lead to tourism growth. Economic, environmental and social opportunities have been identified and studied in the literature across the globe. Yet, there are persistent challenges that are negatively affecting the tourism sector in the African continent.

“External forces are taking advantage of the various shortcomings in African states. “From Mauritania in the west to Somalia in the east, the flag of Jihad is being raised. More than a dozen sub-Saharan countries are concerned, and tens of thousands have already died as a result. Boko Haram actually killed more people last year than the Islamic State. Attacks in many places are a daily or weekly occurrence. And local extremist groups are now linking up to each other across borders, and even to global franchises like Al Qaeda or Islamic State. Precisely because of these affiliations, these conflicts are generally seen through a unique prism: the global war on Islamist terrorism. This neglects what they have in common with other insurgencies on the continent, which have nothing to do with Islam. It is no secret that unemployed young men are especially vulnerable to the temptations of violence and easily instrumentalised for that purpose. This is not a specifically Muslim problem: a World Bank survey in 2011 showed that about 40% of those who join rebel movements say they are motivated by a lack of jobs” (Africa Progress Panel, 2016).

Tourism would have the potential to provide many of the needed jobs.

Although Zimbabwe possesses beautiful landscape including the Victoria Falls, Kariba Dam and game reserves, the country is facing many challenges. The literature on corruption in Zimbabwe is covered widely. Rusvingo (2014) covered most of the issues regarding corruption in Zimbabwe in his article titled, “Business and Corruption have a Non-Directional Relationship: Evidence from the Harare City Council, Zimbabwe”. Agere (2013) indicated that because of rampant corruption in the Harare City Council, Zimbabwe, the city has lost its glamour. Pamire (2013) claims that Zimbabwe ranked ‘157’ among the most corrupt countries in the World. According to Kramarenko, Engstrom, Verdier, Fernandez, Oppers, Hughes, McHugh, and Coats (2010), Zimbabwe performed poorly in terms of competitiveness whether it is measured by governance (including rule of law, property rights, and corruption), investment climate (including enforcement of property rights and infrastructure), or price indicators. Takawira (2014) emphasises the point of rife corruption in Zimbabwe. It is crucial to indicate that corruption is rife on most of the African continent. Numerous challenges related to corruption may lead to the unfair sharing of revenue from the tourism sector. According to Diriye (2015), in Africa, economically and socially marginalized youths are likely to be lured into radicalism and extremism that breeds terrorism and this does not bode well for the future.

However, weak global demand, curtailed growth of Africa’s exports, especially minerals and oil, and terrorist attacks and general security problems in some countries adversely affect tourism (African Outlook, 2016). Therefore, the optimism of how much the sector can assist in the economic development of the continent is often dampened by the ongoing insecurity challenges that face Africa daily and which seem to be mounting. Apart from the different territories on the African continent, there is an indistinct cooperation and integration regarding the marketing strategies to appropriately market tourism to the global community. Although, most countries are working in silos as far as tourism is concerned, this bleak picture needs to be radically changed. Africa must step up and invest more in security and drive the promotion of safe tourism to what is arguably the most beautiful continent on earth.

Conclusion

There is a special need for tourism cooperation on the continent for maximum benefits to accrue to Africa, especially because tourism is widely known to be the major economic contributor to developing countries globally. Cooperation can assist in strengthening the importance of good governance so as to improve service delivery as a strategy to increasing

foreign direct investment within the continent. Concerted efforts should thus be made to turn the situation around for the better. Unfortunately though, we need to bear in mind that various risks like disease, conflicts, terrorism can never be eradicated overnight. However, African states should adopt a cooperative security stance that will ensure mutual benefits in the security sector. Africa should take security concerns as a critical priority almost immediately.

Security issues can no longer be left to the states only, hence there is a need for public – private collaboration that will put security at the epicentre of economic development agenda. Of course, this approach may not be a ‘silver-bullet’, but will go a long way in ensuring a strong force that tries to deal with the dichotomy of security versus economic development. In this context, one concurs with the argument of the World Economic Forum Report (2016) that calls for “a wider range of stakeholders to be involved in setting the direction of the new global security paradigm and implementing solutions”. The Report further advises that private sector leaders should place security on their ‘radar screen’, considering that international security is likely to have more influence in the global economy in future. Hence, one would argue that there is need for strategic attention from all stakeholders, both within and also outside of the tourism sector. Perhaps, Africa should look at security through the lenses of its impact in the economy and in particular the tourism sector. Tourism continues to be the main engine towards economic development and a contributor to foreign direct investment.

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