



Challenges of Tourism Destination Development in the Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to identify the major challenges hampering destination development in the Amhara Region. For the purpose of collecting, presenting and analyzing data for this study, a cross-sectional study design with qualitative and quantitative approaches has been used. The researchers used both primary and secondary sources of data. The target populations were selected using purposive sampling from government officials, tourism experts of different levels, private tourism businesses, and local community leaders in Gondar, Bahir Dar, Debarq (SMNP) and Lalibela. Self-administered structured questionnaires, an in-depth open-ended and semi-structured interview, focus group discussion, observation checklists and document consultations were employed for data collection. The collected data from the various sources were analyzed and synthesized to draw inferences and make conclusions using both the qualitative and quantitative approach. Of the total respondents more than fifty-five percent either strongly agreed or agreed on the existence of current destination challenges such as poor community participation in tourist destination area; lack of benefit sharing; the lack of knowledge about the importance of tourism by a large segment of the society, problems in trained staffs and employees in tourism development. Moreover, destruction of natural resources in destination, lack of funding for tourism development, and resource competition from other sectors, less priority given for tourism investment, insufficient investment incentives, and lack of policy support were the major challenges in the four destination areas. Based on the analysis, we can conclude that major tourist destination in Amhara Regional State has been challenged by different factors including inter alia, low levels of community participation, lack of community leadership and good governance, lack of stakeholders collaboration, tourism resources degradation, low/lack incentive to tourism investment, poor tourist facility and infrastructure and weak policy implementation. Therefore, it is recommended that the government bodies and other tourism sector stakeholders give special attention supporting initiatives aimed at reducing all challenges.

Keywords: Challenge, Destination Development, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia



Introduction

Tourism is a social phenomenon that promotes the movement of visitors to a destination with certain natural or artificial features aimed at leisure, business, education, and vacation objectives (Gonzalez Fonseca, 2012). Currently, tourism is the world's largest industry and is valued at somewhere between USD\$3 to \$3.5 trillion, and it accounts for more than 10% of total employment, and 11% of global GDP (WWF International, 2001). Similarly, the direct contribution of travel and tourism to Ethiopian GDP was 4.1% of the total GDP and accounts for 8.4% of the total employment (creating 2,326,500 jobs), and 2.9% in the total investment of the country in 2015 (WWTC, 2017). However, the rapid growth of tourism and how to manage it sustainably is a challenge for many destinations (Weber, et al. 2017).

Tourism destinations can be considered as complex networks that involve large number of co-producing actors delivering a variety of products and services (Buhalis, 2000; Silkoset, 2004). Tourism destination is a geographical region, political jurisdiction, or major attraction, which seeks to provide visitors with a range of satisfying to memorable visitation experiences (Bornhorst, 2010). Ethiopia's nearly ideal location on the African continent and its relative proximity to the Middle East and Europe can add to the comparative advantage which it's numerous and varied attractions (TTCI 2015). Despite the fact that it is situated not far from the equator, much of Ethiopia's land has a temperate climate and is located at relatively high altitudes. Ethiopia possesses remarkable tourism potential in its unique and largely unexplored cultural (i.e. more than 80 ethnic communities each with their own distinct languages, lifestyle and traditions), historical (more than 3,000 years of history), archaeological and natural resources (i.e. rich biodiversity including unique, threatened and endemic species) (UNESCO, 2008). In addition to the availability of the World Heritage Monuments found in Amhara Regional State, religious festivities are a well-known phenomenal for instance, celebration of Orthodox Easter holiday, celebration of Epiphany, celebration of Meskel (finding the true Cross), celebration of Shadey/ Ashenda and other religious celebration mainly Christmas (Gena) and other Saints annual memorial celebration. These resources are fundamental in attracting visitors and for building a strong tourism industry. The issue of destination management in terms of tourism products organization that are coherent with market segments and targeted by the strategies of tourism development, reflect the delicate interaction between tourism and environment (ESCWA, 2001).

In the last two decades, the tourism system has been facing a wide range of changes in demand, and tourist flows increase differentiation of tourist motivation and expectation, etc. (Brian, Boniface, and Chris, 2005). The organization of supply, in particular, in terms of emerging problems of compatibility between safeguarding of natural and cultural local resources as well as of the community identity and their tourist uses, have all undergone a change (Manente and Minghetti, 2006). Computation is also considered as a challenge in many destination areas. These challenge are more specific, such as the presence of natural and cultural resources, the existence of human resources and financial, infrastructures, government policy frameworks for tourism, a successful private sector, strong private-public partnerships, and especially good governance (Meskele, 2016; Meskele, Woreta and Gebrewold, 2016; African Economic commission, 2016; Amhara Region Culture, Tourism and Parks Development Bureau, 2011). The other challenges in Amhara Region tourist destinations were lack of peace and security and political instability with other several related reasons such as violent revolution, religious and ethnic tensions, coups, riots, public protests, and demonstrations (Nafbek, 2017).

The Amhara region has tremendous and untapped tourism potential having some World Heritage Sites, however, the number of tourists visiting the region and the annual revenue incurred out of the tourism business is very low (Meskele, 2016; Meskele *et al.*, 2016). Studies conducted in this regard identified challenges including lack of effective marketing strategies, lack of human resource and capacity, weak institutional and legislative frameworks, industry quality and standards issues, insufficient tourism and support infrastructure, and, uncoordinated and fragmented tourism planning and development both at the national and regional levels in Ethiopia (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2015; Nafbek, 2017; Teshome and Demissie, 2018). However, in the Amhara Regional State, major destination challenges related to community participation, community organizations, benefit sharing mechanism, knowledge of the society about tourism, funding for tourism development, facilities and services in a destination, organizational structure, infrastructural development and stakeholder coordination have not been properly examined. Therefore, the objective of this study was to identify the major challenges hampering destination development in the Amhara region.

Methodology

Study Area Description

The Amhara Regional State is located in the northwestern and north-central part of Ethiopia. The State shares common borders with the state of Tigray in the north, Afar in the east, Oromiya in the south, Benishangul-Gumuz in the south-west, and the Republic of Sudan in the west. This study is bound to the Amhara regional state major tourist destinations. It encompasses two district towns (i.e. Debarq town and Lasta town) and two cities (i.e. Bahira Dar city and Gondar city). About 85% of the people are engaged in agriculture. The region's untapped tourism potential includes a unique place as one of the few countries in Africa with the most World Heritage Sites, and these consist of the majority of the northern historic route monuments including Lalibela, Gondar, Bahirdar/Lake Tana monasteries and the source of the Blue Nile, and also the pristine Simien Mountains National Park.

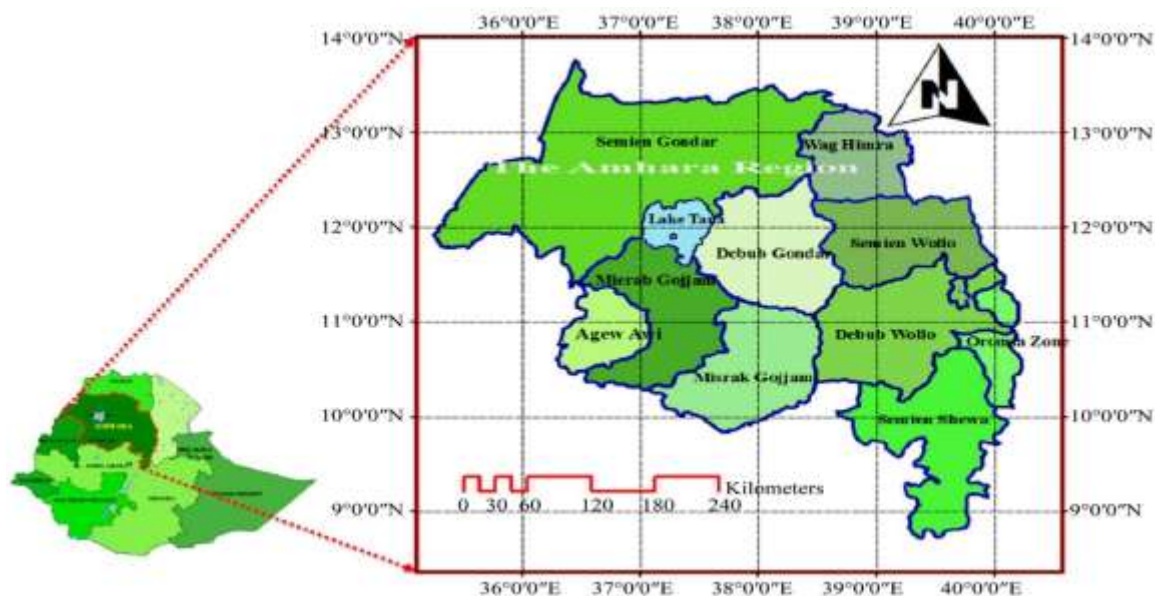


Figure 1 Map of Amhara National Regional State **Source:** Dereje, Kindie, Girma, Birru, and Wondimu, (2012)



The study area is topographically divided into two main parts, namely the highlands and lowlands. The highlands are 1500 meters above sea level and comprise the largest part of the northern and eastern parts of the region that includes the four tourist destination sites. It is characterized by chains of mountains and plateaus. Ras-Dejen (4543 m), the highest peak in the country, Guna (4236 m), and Abune-Yousef (4190m) are among the mountain peaks that are located in the highland parts of the four destination sites. The annual mean temperature in most parts of the region lies between 15°C-21°C. The State receives the highest percentage (80%) of the total rainfall in the country. The highest rainfall occurs during the summer season, which starts in mid-June and ends in early September.

Research Design

A cross-sectional study and survey research design were used to describe characteristics of the major tourist destination areas found in Amhara Regional State. The researchers used both primary and secondary sources of data. A questionnaire-based survey was designed in order to address the objectives of this study.

Population of the Study

The total target populations were 345 individuals that were government officials in the tourism sector, tourism experts of different levels, private tourism business, and local community leaders from Gondar, Bahir Dar, Debarq (SMNP) and Lalibela. They were selected using a purposive sampling technique.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Both probability and non-probability sampling methods were employed. Of the fifteen campsites in the park, the researchers selected four destinations (Gondar, Bahir Dar, Debarq (SMNP) and Lalibela) using non-probability sampling technique because these sites are frequently visited by tourists. In selecting respondents, a simple random sampling technique was used in all three sites.

Sample Size Determination

To determine the minimum sample size for large populations greater than or equal to 10000, the Alsalloum (2014), formula was used

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p(1 - p)}{d^2}$$

n = minimum sample size

Z-value = value of standard normal distribution

p = the expected or probability of previous similar studies

d = the maximum allowable deviation or error of the estimate

The confident level = 90% therefore, the z-value = 1.645

The population of the phenomenon by previous studies = 30%

Margin of error = ± 5%

$$n \geq \frac{(1.645)^2 (0.30)(0.70)}{(0.05)^2} \geq 227.30 = 228$$



When the size of the population is small less than 10000, researchers can use this valuable formula.

$$n_{spz} = \frac{n}{1 + \left(\frac{n}{spz}\right)}$$

n_{spz} = minimum sample when the population is small
 n = minimum sample when the population is large
 spz = population size (small population)

$$n_{spz} = \frac{228}{1 + \left(\frac{228}{345}\right)}$$

$n_{spz} = \frac{228}{1+(0.6608)} \geq 137.275$, therefore, 138 respondents were taken.

Data Collection Tools and Procedures

Different kinds of data collection instruments have been used to address the objectives of the research. Primary data were collected through self-administered structured questionnaires for quantitative aspects of the research using in-depth open-ended and semi-structured interview questions administered to the target populations of the study to gather information related to the issues of destination development, management, planning practices, and challenges. For the qualitative aspect of the study, data was collected through interviews, focus group discussions, observation checklists and document consultations. The open-ended questions, FGD, and observation help to triangulate data which is not addressed by the close-ended questionnaire. All ethical aspects for conducting research were considered and applied in this study.

Methods of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distribution, mean, percentages, tables, and graphs were used. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used to analyze the quantitative data. The qualitative data generated from open-ended questions, interview, focus group discussion, observation checklists and document consultations were categorized in themes in accordance with the research objectives to triangulate quantitative information.

Results and Discussion

Community-level Destination Development Challenges in the Amhara Region

Regarding the statements “there is poor community participation in tourist destination area” about 86 (63%) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed. This result suggests community participation in the destination development of the study area is quite poor. But tourism is a community business and without community active participation the business never flourishes. Thirty-six (25.1 %) of the respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statements of poor community participation. We may infer that those respondents perhaps participate either in a management plan development workshop or micro business in tourism-related service deliveries. Only 15 (10.9%) of respondents did not know about the level of participation. On the statements "absence of community organizations", few 29 (28.2%) of the respondents disagreed but the majority 83 (60%) of respondents were in agreement, and very few 16 (11.6%) did not



know about it. The absence of community organizations in tourism destination areas can affect the drive for successful tourism management and equitable community benefits generated by the same.

On the statement "unavailability of strong community leaders in tourist destination area", 85 (61.6%) of respondents agreed. Although there is community leadership in all major tourists destination sites, the respondents do not agree that community leadership is strong. While, 42 (34%) of the respondents did either strongly disagree or disagreed on the statements "unavailability of strong community leaders in tourist destination area", and the other 11 (8.0%) of respondents were undecided on how to respond to this question. This is because in the last two years, the Tourism Council has been established in all destinations sites to take a leadership role in the marketing and promotion of tourism, with an emphasis on building and maintaining the relationship with tourism business owners and local operators. In addition to this council, for example in Debarq town, local businesses have been encouraged to engage with tourism organizations through memberships (i.e. local guide association, ecotourism association, trekking gear rental association, car rental association, caterer association etc.), and in Lalibela, Bahirdar and Gondar tourist destinations, only the local tour guide association exists, but it still lacks the willingness to collaborate in growing tourism.

Benefit-sharing includes any general payments, services, or other things of value provided unilaterally because the law requires it, such as a share of taxes, royalties, or fees received by the government or a share of revenues generated by the outside partner (Behr, et al. 2012). On the statement "uneven benefit-sharing mechanism" 25 (26.1%) of the respondents disagreed, these respondents perhaps participated in tourism business either through tour guiding or other tourism business activities to generate income. Moreover, despite the different motivations expressed by stakeholders for taking part in tourism development, a number of general benefits accrue from tourism such as the development or upgrading of infrastructure such as roads, water, and electricity, which are shared by both tourists and local people (Frey and George, 2010). The majority 95 (68.9%) respondents agreed that only a few individuals take the 'lion's share' of tourism benefits from all the destinations. This is because there is no benefit sharing mechanism policy in Amhara regional state and in the whole of Ethiopia for that matter (Melak, Teshome and Girma, 2017).

More than half, 71 (66%) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "the lack of knowledge about the importance of tourism by a large segment of the society" but 30 (30.4%) of the individual respondents disagreed with this statement (Figure 2). These respondents are mainly from Lalibela and have long-standing experience within tourism-related activities. Overall a low level of tourism awareness among the local population leads to a lack of understanding of tourism. In cultural tourist destinations if the community has a lack of qualification and intercultural concerns, this may lead to intolerance towards tourists and create social conflicts. Therefore, the results suggested that there is a need for an awareness creation campaign to enhance the knowledge of the stakeholders about the tourism industry as a large market and economic segment. Knowledge is an important tool to support destination management because it is connected with the ability to create value and to generate needed competitive advantage (Kim, Fillies, Smith and Wikarski, 2002).

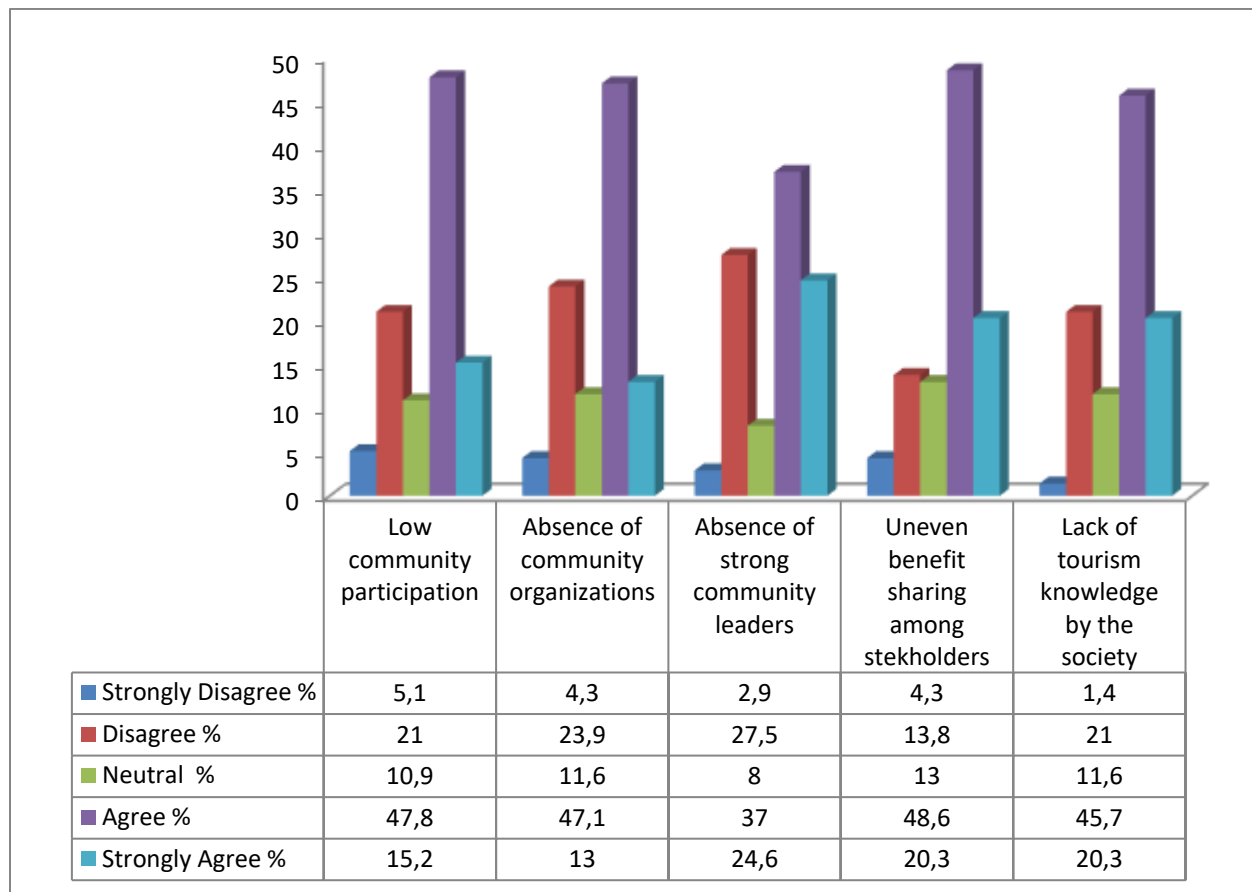


Figure 2: Destination development challenges at the community level. Source: Survey, 2017

Regarding the statement “weak organizational structure for many organizations involved in tourism development“, 37 (26.8%) of respondents didn't agree this is a challenge, while the majority 80 (57.9%) respondents agreed with the statement, and 21 (15.2%) of the respondents were neutral about this destination area challenge. Over half of the respondents accepted that the organizational structure is weak. Tourism is influenced by contextual setting, and tourism itself has an important impact on the community in many respects. It is only when many different stakeholders benefit from tourism that challenges from tourism can effectively be managed. The result is in line with other research in different destinations, that the most recognized challenges facing the tourism industry particularly in developing economies include: poor infrastructure, poor product development and management, poor marketing, poor linkages within local economy, poor institutional and technical capabilities, and shortage of appropriate and specialized core and skilled personnel (Manente and Minghetti, 2006).

On the statements “problems of trained employees in tourism development as a challenge in destination area“ 23 (16.7%) of the respondents disagreed, while the greater part 95 (65.9%) of the respondents agreed. According to the key informant interview result and ideas which came from focus group discussions, it is suggested that most tourist destinations have a limited human resources capacity. With this limited human capacity, the appearance of new competitors can also be a challenge for tourism development in these destinations. In addition, if their capacity is not improved, the natural and cultural tourist products/attractions can be affected through changes



of landscape and aesthetic impairment, for instance, through agricultural encroachment, illegal constructions or demolition of old buildings. The result that the tourism employees tend to have limited professional qualifications and opportunities for on the job training and could generally be improved, in particular for women employees who have long been in the lower skill level of the industry, requires attention. The competitiveness and productivity of the industry depends on the skill levels, professionalism, commitment, passion, loyalty and soft skills of the workers, thus training and skills development remain a priority within the sector.

Challenge of destination product and service

On the statement “destruction of natural resources in destination as challenge”, the majority 86 (62.3%) of the respondents disagreed although other scholars have mentioned issues such as over-exploitation, deforestation from firewood harvesting, trampling/soil degradation of the camping sites, plant picking and uprooting by plant collectors, and construction and destruction of unique flora (Gichiah, 2004). These respondents haven't fully realized that the use of non-renewable energy, the weak protection of natural landscape and environmental resources, unacceptable and the waste disposal systems of the destination development sites are problematic for sustainability. However 40 (28.9%) agreed with the statement, in the open-ended questionnaire, and have responded that tourism affects the movement, foraging, and reproductive behaviour of large mammals, the nesting behaviour, and the distribution wildlife and some species withdraw from the home range. This response was similar with previous research findings in similar destinations (Knight and Cole, 1995). Only 12 (8.7%) were unable to decide on the issue. In general, there is no doubt that in the future a significant number of tourism destinations will face serious global challenges which may adversely affect their profitability, such as climate change.

Table 1. Challenge on destination product and service

Variables	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Destruction of natural resources	42	30.4	44	31.9	12	8.7	30	21.7	10	7.2	3.38
Lack of facilities and services at destinations sites	4	2.9	28	20.3	21	15.2	65	47.1	20	14.5	3.62
Poor infrastructural development	12	8.7	34	24.6	28	20.3	43	31.2	21	15.2	3.70

Source: Survey, 2017

A facility is the most important part of tourism development that may attract visitors from different countries. Regarding the dire lack of facilities and services at the destination sites, 85 (61.6%) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements. The finding shows that there is lack of facilities and service in these study destination sites that include poor transport or accommodation capacities or a lack of infrastructure (e.g. parking, water facilities, cash withdrawal, restrooms, shade, shelter, sewage, etc.). Similar results have been observed in a



previous study (Meskele *et al.* 2016). Regarding services and facilities expected in the tourist destination sites, including proper internal roads, foot tracks, signage, resting sights, tented camps and standard camping sites with the requisite facilities, these were some of the important facilities needed by tourists but were found to be poor. Lack of facilities (i.e. access, public transport, and accommodation) leads to bottlenecks the destination development (Waveir, *et al.* 2017). 23.2% of the respondents, strongly disagree or disagree, by saying there is a large range of general facilities and retail services available in the region, aside from a few notable exceptions opportunities for restaurant/café and shopping experiences equal with the needs and interests of leisure visitors. However these are limited. The overall mean value 3.62 of the analysis confirmed that if meeting visitor needs is of brand value in a destination's appeal, enhancing the range and quality of facilities and retail service in line with visitor interests will be a key destination management challenge (Meskele *et al.*, 2016). The facilities poor quality, whether real or perceived, exert a negative impact on the reputation of host countries (Anonymous, 2010). Therefore, government and other stakeholders should give attention to the development of facilities in and around tourist destination sites.

Regarding the statement "poor infrastructural development" considered as a challenge on destination area, 46 (33.3%) of the respondents disagreed, while 63 (46.4%) agreed on this challenge and 28 (20.3%) were undecided. The quantitative data analysis results were supported by qualitative findings supporting the notion that poor infrastructure including roads, electricity and water supplies, insufficient accommodation, unsatisfactory public health services, poor telecommunication facilities and banking all exist and need correction. Modern infrastructure is the most important factor to enhance the flow of visitors and benefits for all stakeholders. The development or upgrading of infrastructure such as roads, water, and electricity must be shared by both tourists and local people (Frey and George, 2010).

Challenge Government support and Lack of funding for tourism

Regarding the statement "lack of funding for tourism development", the majority 92 (66.7%) of the respondents agreed, a fund is limited in many development sectors. the result more pronounces the challenges of gaining fund opportunity to destination development and management. Therefore, the stakeholders need to give special emphasis to fundraising activities. On the contrary, 34 (24.6%) disagreed with the statement "lack of funds as a challenge", and these respondents suggested that the needed funds could come from World Bank and UNWTO. These bodies are used to implementing projects for the last few years in the destinations in question, and the rest 12 (8.7%) of the respondents decided not to respond the question.

Regarding the statement "resource competition from other sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing as a challenge" 95 (68.9%) of the respondents agreed. This is because the Growth and Transformation Plans I and II gave special attention to the agricultural sector and the Ethiopian government has only believed that this sector offers immense growth potential to serve as the backbone of the country's economic transformation process and discounts tourism. While 24 (17.3%) respondents, disagreed with the statement ,they still believe the tourism sector has also gained attention to fight and reduce poverty in the country, and 19 (13.8%) of the respondents were not at all sure about this aspect (Figure, 3).

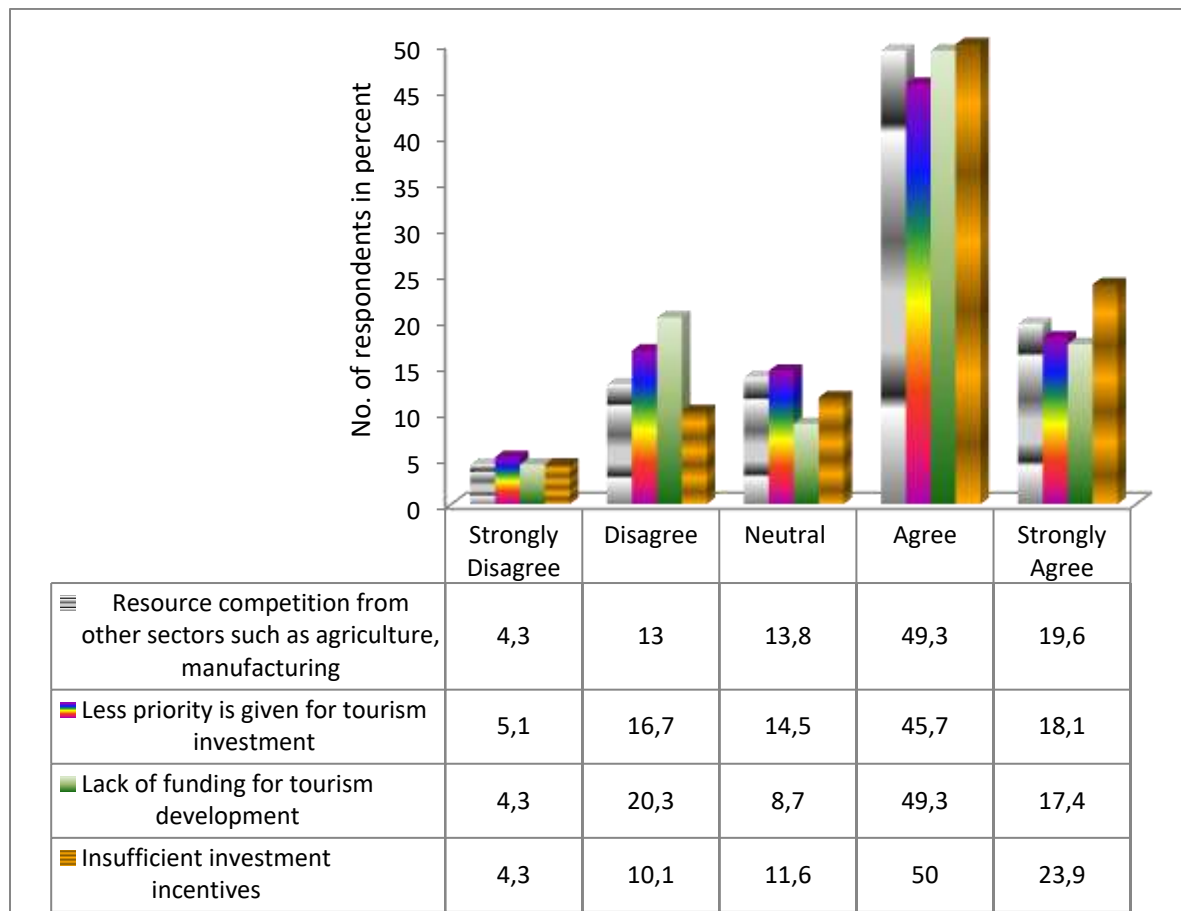


Figure 3: Destination development challenges related to investment incentive. Source: own survey, 2017

Regarding the statement “less priority is given for tourism investment”, 30 (21.8%) disagreed, and according to this, respondents suggested that the Government gave priority to this sector through establishing national and regional destination level tourism councils. Although travel and tourism investment in 2016 was 2.8% of total investment (USD715.3mn), it is expected to rise by 6.8% over the next ten years to USD1, 416.8mn in 2027, comprising some 3.1% of total investment (WTTC, 2017). The majority 88 (63.8%) of respondents agreed, that priority is given only to the agricultural sector. For example, water shortages are a particular constraint on the tourism sector in the study sites, and a facilitating mechanism for tourism development the financial sector lacks exposure to and awareness of the structure of the tourism industry and cannot relate to its particular needs. Others, some 20 (14.5%) of the respondents were not sure about this aspect.

Similarly, on the statement “insufficient investment incentives” 20 (14.4%) of the respondents disagreed by justifying that government allows tax-free vehicles for travel agents and tour organizers, and there are also tax-free construction materials for the star rated hotels and standardized lodge owners. However, the majority of 102 (83.9.0%) of the respondents were in agreement with the statement that the incentives given by the Government to the tourism sector are still insufficient. Nonetheless, private sector participation has been claimed as one of the critical components of success (Pretty, 1995).

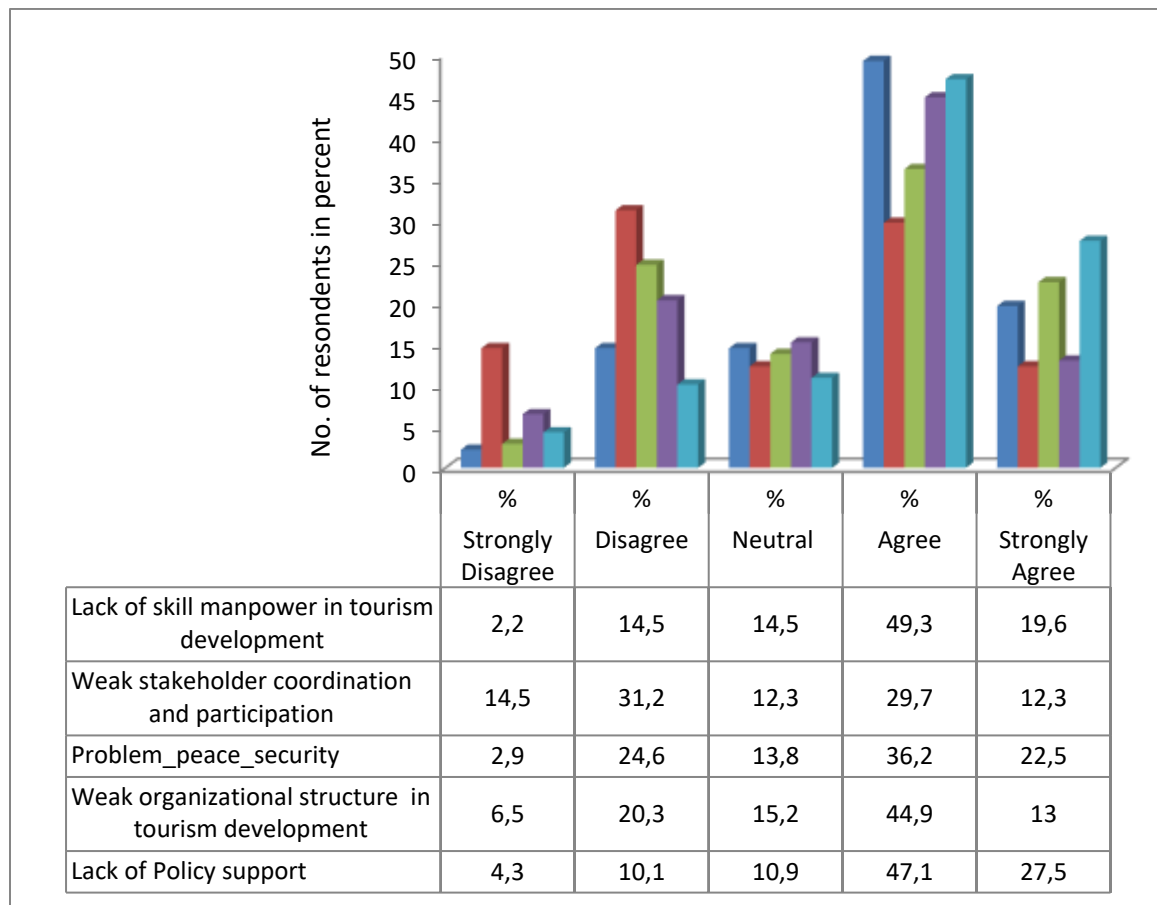


Figure 4: challenges related to coordination and policy. Source: Survey, 2017

On the statement "lack of policy support", 20 (14.4%) respondents disagreed and explained that the Ethiopian tourism policy has been ratified in 2009. However, they suggest that the policy lacks all stakeholder participation since it was formulated and this is needed because these formal bodies (stakeholders) often consist of people with wider knowledge and expertise. A large number 103 (74.6%) of the respondents agreed that lack of policy support was a destination development challenge. Although there is tourism policy support in the country, the majority of the respondents' said that a lack of policy support is the key challenges in a destination area. These show that the Ethiopian tourism policy and other tourism development related strategies were not communicated to the stakeholders. Similar 15 (10.9%) respondents were unsure about it and did not have any awareness about the tourism policy of the country. The researchers suggested that before making such policies, local people need to be consulted so that the outcome (the policy) meets stakeholders' needs and addresses their concerns. The result suggests that more could be done at the policy and regulation levels to recognize the needs of the tourism sector and that greater cooperation between local government and state government agencies to enhance the development of infrastructure and service appropriate for visitors is essential.

Regarding the statement "weak stakeholders coordination and participation", the majority of the respondents 63 (45.7%) disagreed. They still believe stakeholder cooperation is strong and that the tourism council at the destination level strengthens the stakeholder collaboration. However, still a larger number 58 (42%) of the respondents agreed that the stakeholder cooperation is still weak and mentioned that a destination as a complex system consists of groups of various and



networked stakeholders who have their own partial interests and goals but, also, those stakeholders are characterized by varying degrees of ability to adapt to internal and external factors that are not properly managed in the destination areas. Cooperation among governments, businesses, labour, and society is required to promote sustainable enterprises and guarantee the quality of employment in a sustainable manner (Hiwasaki, 2006). A constant dialogue between industry representatives and public authorities is needed to cope with the myriad of challenges in tourism (Weber, *et al.* 2017).

Regarding the statement "problem peace and security", the majority of the respondents, 58.7% agreed that this was indeed and important issue. This quantitative analysis result was also supported by the open-ended qualitative question that the state of emergency, coupled with it being the main cause of public protest, has resulted in the decline of tourist inflows to the country. For example, the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela and Gondar City which are the best historical route destination sites, have received scant tourism. The destination sites need to give serious attention to the problems and develop strategies oriented at improving safety and security, while simultaneously using the most effective promotional tools to enhance their images. Because safety and security-related tourism problems, whether real or perceived, exert a negative impact on the reputation of host countries (Anonymous, 2010) they need careful consideration. The Ethiopian Tourism Organization repudiated the claim that tourist arrivals decreased since the state of emergency came into effect and stated the reduction of trip cancellations was low (Nafbek, 2017). While 27.5 % of the respondents felt the destinations are safe and do not have a problem of peace and security, the other 13.8% do not have any idea about this problem. Based on the findings we propose that tourism in Ethiopia has definitely been suffering from the recent political instability. This suggests that tourism activities in these destination sites require peace and a stable environment both in originating and ultimate destination regions.

Challenge in related plan

Table 2: Destinations with development plan document

Variables	Yes		No	
Does your organization/destination site have Tourism destination development and management plan document?	97	70.3%	41	29.7%
Do your organization/destination site has tourism strategic plan document?	94	68.1%	44	31.9%

Source: Survey, 2017

According to Table 2 most 97 (70.3%) of the respondents responded that they have organization/destination site tourism destination development and management plan documents, while 41 (29.7%) did not have management plan. Similarly, 94 (68.3%) respondents also have organization/ destination sites have tourism strategic plan document sbut the other 44 (31.9%) of the respondents did not have a strategic document at all. For the analysis result we can thus suggest there should be a development and strategic plan in place and if in place, must thus be properly communicated with all stakeholders. There is then a need for further efforts to communicate ideas because the strategic document aims of a destination must incorporate the aims of all stakeholders involved in the creation of value for tourists as well as consider the long-term interests of the environment. Destination development and strategic plans can help to: enhance the long-term prosperity of local people; delight visitors by maximizing their satisfaction; maximize the profitability of local enterprises and maximize multiplier effects; optimize tourism impacts by creating a sustainable balance between economic benefits and socio-cultural and environmental costs (Buhalis, 2000).



Conclusion and Recommendations

Remarkable cultural heritage connected with ethnographic and ethnological characteristics within events in Amhara Regional State create a good foundation for enriched tourist offerings. Tradition and events are also vital elements of the culture in Amhara Region well, and the connection of tourism can lead to improved tourism development and destinations promotion not only in the tourist market, but also within the area of worldwide cultural identity. Cultural events related to tradition and different celebrations and religious occasions comprise an important part of the four tourist destinations. From the analysis of the results we can conclude that poor community participation, absence of community organizations, unavailability of strong community leaders to support destination development, lack of benefit sharing mechanisms, lack of knowledge about the importance of tourism by a large segment of the society, low capacity of employees in tourism development, tourism resources degradation, lack of quality facilities and quality, lack of funding for tourism development, less priority is given for tourism investment, insufficient investment incentives and lack of policy support were the major challenges in the study areas. To strengthen tourism development, and increase the inflow of tourists, and especially in a drive to enhance local community benefits and manage the tourism destinations in question properly, the above mentioned challenges should be mitigated by support initiatives from all stakeholders, starting with the government.

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