Assessing the marketability of cultural resources as a tourism product: A case of cultural tourism resources in Sidama, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Cultural resources are any cultural features, tangible or intangible available within a country, region or area, that could give tourists an incentive to undertake cultural tourism activities. To be consumed by tourists, cultural endowments of a certain area need to be turned to a developed and marketed commodity. Though Sidama, a zone in Southern Ethiopia, possesses ample cultural tourism resources, their marketability as a product has not been studied via academic enquiry. This study was conducted to fill the gap apparent in this regard. Its objectives were to assess the market-readiness of cultural tourism resources of Sidama; and to identify the profiles of cultural tourists consuming the resources. Regarding methodology, a descriptive study design involving survey-based quantitative research approach has been employed for empirical investigation. Data were collected from 302 international tourists through a survey questionnaire using convenient sampling. Findings from the study uncovered that, except for *fiche cambala*, Hanafa cultural tourist village, and *enset* brushing, the majority of cultural tourism products of Sidama are at lower market readiness stage. Furthermore, cultural tourist inflow to the area is largely characterised by holidaymakers to whom cultural tourism plays no role in their visitation decision making. The study provides significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it offers analysis of cultural tourism assets and their marketability as a tourism commodity in a developing destination context; in a practical context, it puts forward helpful inputs to governments and destination marketing practitioners in Sidama to make the nation's cultural tourism resources market-ready and assess profiles of tourists consuming them.

Keywords: Cultural tourism, cultural tourism products, cultural resources, Sidama, tourists.

Introduction

Tourism has experienced unprecedented growth over recent years and in 2020, international tourist arrivals are expected to exceed 1.6 billion (UNWTO, 2018). Cultural Tourism´s popularity is continuously increasing on a faster pace than most of the other tourism segments, faster than the growth rate of tourism worldwide (OECD, 2009). Because culture is a key tourism asset (UNWTO, 2015); the unique cultural offer provided by destinations has become a major driver and motivation for visitors worldwide, inspiring millions of tourists to visit new destinations each year (UNWTO, 2012).

According to Copley & Robson (1996) cultural tourism includes the unique features of a place which reflect its culture, history, or environment, and by their experiential nature, promote the rich tapestry of cultural traditions, ethnic backgrounds and landscapes. A cultural resource can be defined as any cultural feature, tangible (material) or intangible (non-material), available within a country, region or area, which makes a positive contribution to cultural tourism (Lvanovic, 2008). These resources are not cultural tourism commodities unless they transform themselves into products that could be consumed by tourists (Zhang, 2011) because, in a marketing concept, a

product is considered as anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or need (Kotler et. al., 1999). Hence when culture as a product is brought into transaction in the market, it is useful to analyze what is transferred to the consumer by the seller (Maccarrone-Eaglen, 2009).

Although cultures exist independently and for reasons other than tourism, there is a clear role for tourism in the process of expressing culture and cultural difference (UNESCO, 2013). Because marketing is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and exchanging the products of value with others (Kotler et al., 1999). The concept of product scope is extended to include anything, which is capable of satisfying a need. Culture as product would be consumed to satisfy the "enhancement of knowledge" need of tourists who own the product culture during their experience of immersion in a cultural context (Maccarrone-Eaglen, 2009).

Hence, cultural tourism product can be defined as "…by using the cultural tourism resource as a basis, anything that can be offered to tourists for participating in cultural tourism to satisfy their cultural needs and wants" (Copley & Robson, 1996). According to Richards and Munsters (2010), the cultural tourism product can be defined as a composition of the core product and the additional product, being the general tourism product elements and the related tourist services (general tourist facilitates and services; and transportation infrastructure). In order to attract more tourists, cultural tourism providers always position their products uniquely by focusing on their core cultural element, whose elements include cultural tourism destination, cultural environment or cultural events which involve the special cultural themes and unique characteristics (Zhang, 2011).

This study focuses on the marketability of cultural tourism resources of Sidama. Sidama people are among the 56 nations and nationalities in South Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS), with their own culture and tradition. They enjoy their own unique administrative system called *Luwa* which plays an important role in solving every aspect of problems in the nation. The people of Sidama also have their own date counting method, calendar. The new year day, which is decided by traditional astrologers called *ayanto,* is called *fiche,* and was registered in 2015 by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage. The new year *fiche cambalala* is colourfully celebrated in the state capital Hawassa and other parts of the area (Sidama Communication, Culture and Tourism Department; hereafter SCCTD, 2017).

Problem statement

Though the emergence of cultural tourism as a social phenomenon and as an object of academic study can be traced back to the surge in post-World War 2 leisure travel, modern cultural tourism has only been studied in detail since the 1980s (Richards, 2018), after being recognised as a tourism category by the ICOMOS Charter of Cultural Tourism in 1976 (Richards, 1996a). Limited interest had been shown by academics, particularly in the social sciences, regarding the relationship between tourism and cultural heritage. However, over recent years, the inter-relationships between tourism and culture have attracted considerable scholarly attention (Robinson & Picard, 2006; Nicolaides, 2011; Sonwabile Henama, Jansen van Rensburg & Nicolaides, 2016).

Although the concept of culture appears to be complicated and multifaceted, it has been examined in a number of academic disciplines (Maccarrone-Eaglen, 2009). According to him though, such disciplines as anthropology, sociology, philosophy and management have analyzed the relationship between tourism and culture as a symbiotic combination generating "cultural products" or commoditised culture, little attention has been directed to the analysis of the characteristics of culture from a marketing view when culture becomes a product.

The first organized cultural tourism survey was conducted by the European Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) in 1991 when it launched a transnational cultural tourism project in Europe (Richards, 1996a), Since then, interest has been growing in cultural tourism studies focusing on analysis of profile and behaviour of cultural tourists, covering several destinations across Europe, USA and Asia. Especially in Europe, several research publications (Richards & Wilson, 2004; Öter & Özdoğan, 2005; Binkhorst, 2007) have come up on national, regional and local level cultural tourism scenarios, using ATLAS survey as a springboard. In Asia cultural tourism was studied in the context of religious tourism (Ali, Maharani & Untari, 2019) while it drew attention in Africa from heritage and indigenous perspectives (Shepherd, 2002).

After conducting baseline research on inter-linkages between tourism and intangible cultural heritage, UNWTO (2012) urged policy makers and academia to conduct further research on marketing of cultural products in order to foster tourism development through the promotion of cultural heritages. Furthermore, the UNWTO Report on Tourism and Culture Synergies (2018) points to a number of areas of future cultural tourism issues including commoditisation and marketing of culture. Out of global studies, research findings indicate that only gastronomy and culinary heritage are fairly well promoted by National Tourism Authorities (NTAs), while products based on oral traditions or knowledge of the universe require more attention (UNWTO, 2012).

In Sidama, the extent of turning cultural endowments into marketable tourism products has not been researched. No research work also exists regarding promotion, in local and international media, of the cultural resources of local communities. Though *fiche cambala*, Sidama's new year, is registered by UNESCO, the intangible products of rural lifestyle, music, dancing, local status, and other customs have not been assessed in academic enquiry with regard to their market readiness to end users, and the profile of cultural tourists consuming them. Tourism related research works conducted in Sidama and its surroundings have focused on identification of cultural potentials; and conservation of heritages (Ermias, 2015). These studies, while capitalizing on exploratory aspects tourism and related sectors inquiry, have failed to specifically address culture and cultural tourism from a marketing perspective. This study was conducted to partly fill the gap apparent in this regard. The study objectives were two-fold: 1) to assess the market readiness of cultural tourism products of Sidama; and 2) to identify the major cultural tourists consuming cultural tourism products of Sidama.

Literature review

Cultural tourism products

The tourism product is complex as the varied elements of service, hospitality, free choice, consumer involvement, and consumption of experiences must be actualized in some way (Hsu et. al., 2008). According to du Crus and McKercher (2015) people do not buy products for the sake of the product itself, they buy them for the benefits they provide or the problems they solve. Hence any discussion of products or services must be made from the perspectives of consumer who constantly seeks authenticity in what they immerse themselves in (Nicolaides, 2014).

From marketing perspective, the term 'product' is defined as "anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a need or want" (Kotler & Turner, 1989); and by applying this to tourism context, Copley and Robson (1996) defined cultural tourism products as "by using the cultural tourism resource as basis, anything that can be offered to tourists for participating in cultural tourism to satisfy their cultural needs and wants.". According to Richards and Munsters (2010), the cultural tourism product is composed of two products. First there is the core product, which is the major cultural tourism supply (monuments, cultural events, local culture and etc.) and the related specific cultural tourist services, such as information and

education. Secondly there exists the additional product, which includes the general tourism product elements and the related tourist services (general tourist facilitates and services and transportation infrastructure).

Further extending the definition provided by Richards and Munsters (2010), du Crus and McKercher (2015) conceptually viewed products as having three levels: a core product which specifies the benefits of use, a tangible product which transforms these benefits into something to be consumed, and an augmented product that adds extra value.

According to them, the core product is the most important feature for it describes the core benefit or solution provided by its use. As they contend,

> It answers the questions of 'what personal needs is the product really satisfying' and 'what benefits does it offer ME'? …… The appeal of adopting a marketing approach is that the core problem being solved can vary widely, even for largely similar products. This variation enables different providers to position their product uniquely according to the benefits being promoted. (du Crus and McKercher, 2015:155).

The tangible product according to them represents the physical manifestation of the core product that facilitates the need satisfaction. They give examples detailing,

> It is the historic fort that is entered, the battlefield site that is visited, the museum that is seen, the cultural tour that is joined, or the festival that is attended. The tangible product is not the core experience provided. It is the means by which the core need can be satisfied. (du Crus & McKercher, 2015:155).

The final level in their classification constitutes augmented products, which provide additional features above and beyond the tangible product that add value and facilitate easier satisfaction of the core need. It could be something such as a free shuttle to and from the hotel, the provision of umbrellas for rainy days, a souvenir at the end of a tour, or a money back guarantee.

A slightly different approach developed by Maccarrone-Eaglen (2009), which is called 'product culture model' views cultural tourism products in terms of four elements. These are *essence of product*, which the consumer receives to fulfil a need; *real product*, which encompasses those features that distinguish a product from those in the market; *processed real product,* where marketing interventions via promotional materials are done; and *additional product*, which explain the additional benefits and services added to the core one. At the heart of the model is *real product*, which encompasses the five product lines: tangible symbolic representations, intangible symbolic representations, staged symbolic representations, replicated symbolic representations, and transferable symbolic representations.

It can be concluded that though several cultural tourism product definitions and models exist (Shepherd, 2002), almost all of them place culture at the heart of the models with learning being the major core product.

Cultural tourists

Cultural tourists are an easily recognizable market niche (Swarbrooke, 1999); and in wide body of literature (Richards, 1996b; Stebbin, 1996; Sharpley, 2000; McKercher and Chow, 2001; du Cros and McKercher, 2015), they are highly regarded as visitors who tend to stay longer, spend more and travel in low seasons. In addition to this, they are also older, better educated, and more affluent than the travelling public as a whole (Richards, 1996a) where women constitute a

significant share. Furthermore, cultural tourists join in more activities than other tourists (Richards 1996b). However, according to Prentice, Witt, and Hamer (1998), these characteristics do not reliably represent cultural tourists; and as a result of this, there are several cultural tourism typologies (Richards, 2018).

The majority of cultural tourist typologies that exist these days are either adopted or elaborated versions of framework developed by du Cros and McKercher (2015). This typology, which was tested in Hong Kong in 1999 and adopted widely by governmental and quasi-governmental agencies, identifies five types of cultural tourists based on centrality of trip purpose and depth of experience at destinations. First there is the *purposeful cultural tourist* to whom cultural tourism is the primary motive for visiting a destination, and the individual has a deep cultural experience. Then they identified the *sightseeing cultural tourist* to whom cultural tourism is a primary or major reason for visiting a destination, but the experience is shallower. The *serendipitous cultural tourist* is the one who does not travel for cultural tourism reasons, but who, after participating, ends up having a deep cultural tourism experience; while to the *casual cultural tourist, cultural* tourism is a weak motive for visiting a destination, and the resultant experience is shallow. Finally there is the *incidental cultural tourist,* who tourist does not travel for cultural tourism reasons but nonetheless participates in some activities and has shallow experiences. They concluded that most cultural tourists at a multi-product destination can be classified as casual or incidental; and that the share of purposeful cultural tourists at most places is quite small, meaning products must be geared for a tourist seeking a shallower experience.

These categorisations of cultural tourists reflect the difference between formal and more informal modes of learning (Richards, 2018). This classification scheme by du Cros and McKercher (2015) is more comprehensive in that it incorporated deeper discussions on cultural tourist typology efforts that had been conducted previously (Bywater, 1993; Silberberg, 1995) who entirely emphasized the motivation aspects. Bywater (1993) for example identified three types of cultural tourists: the genuine cultural tourist, who chooses a holiday because of its cultural opportunities; the culturally inspired tourist, who makes a once in a life visit to a specific site or attraction; and the culturally attracted tourist, who would like a few cultural attractions at destination they choose for other reasons. This classification was more or less similar to ATLAS study that identified 'specific' and 'general' cultural tourists (McKercher & du Cros, 2002; Richards, 1996b).

Description of Area

Sidama zone is one of the 14 administrative zones found in SNNPRS. The zone covers a total area of 72000 square kilometres and is located in southern hemisphere around Equator in Horn of Africa at 6°14'N and 7°18'N latitude and 37°92'E and 39°19'E (SZCCTD, 2017). With the population of over 4 million inhabitants, the administrative structure of Sidama zone constitutes 15 *woredas* (districts), 532 rural *kebeles* (counties) and 4 town administrations. With over 592, 539 households, the zone has a population density $452p/km^2$, which makes it one of the mostly densely populated areas in the state (SZCCTD, 2017). The cultural and ethnographical riches of Sidama make it attractive to academic and industrial inquiries and this is the major reason the researcher was drawn to the study area.

Figure 1. Map of Sidama Zone, South Ethiopia
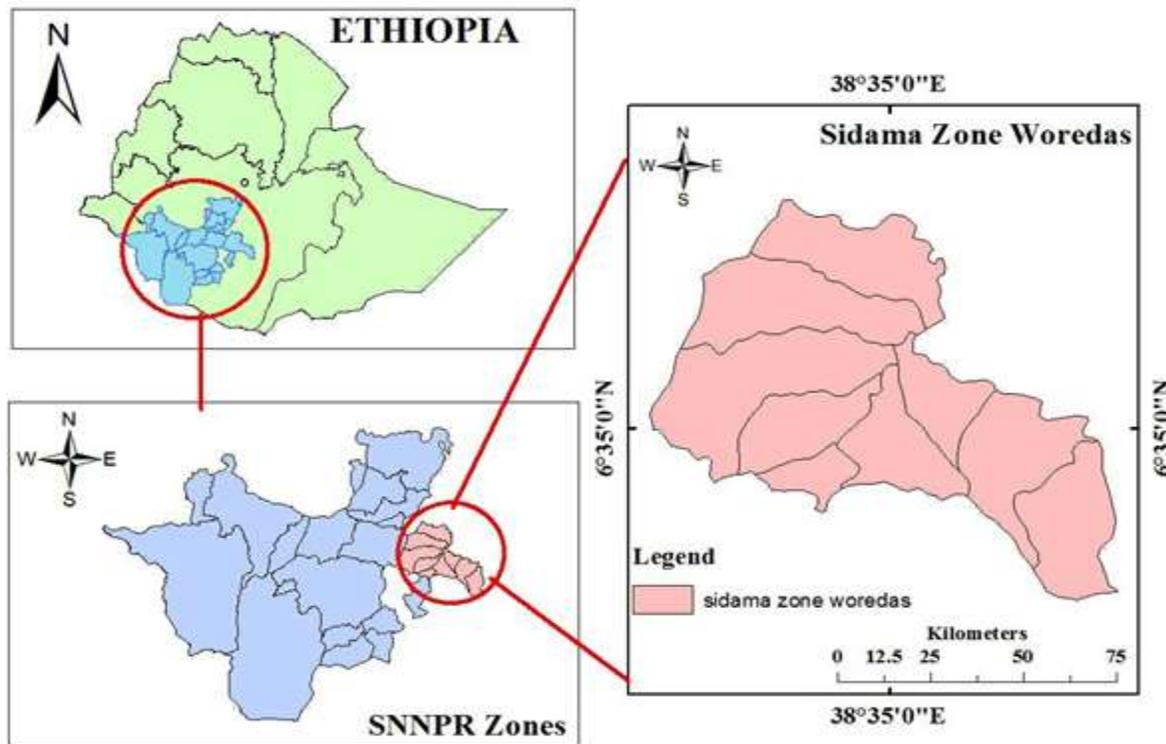
Source: SZCCTD, 2017

Methodology

This research adopted a descriptive research design employing a survey-based quantitative research approach. This is because quantitative approaches are common in cultural tourism research and have been in use since Berrol's (1981) work on the motivations of American cultural travellers. As Richards and Musters (2010) contend, the practice of conducting surveys of cultural tourists is well established in destinations around the world. This is mainly because of the advantages surveys provide in studying visitor activities, motivations, behaviour and expenditure patterns. Surveys are also a useful means of monitoring trends over time. Several surveys in cultural tourism involve visitors and in most cases, foreign tourists (Richards & Munsters, 2010).

Because including whole population in surveys is impossible or unfeasible due to factors associated with data management and cost (Richards & Munsters, 2010), taking samples becomes a necessity. As the subjects of this study were international tourists to Sidama Zone, a convenient sampling method was employed to target them. This was done with the view to catch cultural tourists as representatively as possible given the limited international visitor flow the area. Across the survey, questionnaire was administered to 375 international tourists who visited Sidama zone during the study period. The sample size of was determined by applying the Gomm's (2008) formula, $n = N/1 + N(\alpha^2)$; Where, n = Expected Sample Size, N = Population Size and α = Level of Confidence Interval 0.05 or 95 % level of confidence, out of 8,100 international tourists who visited Sidama in 2016 E.C. (2015/16) based on the data obtained from the Communication, Culture and Tourism Department (2017).

The questionnaire was designed either as an interviewer-assisted or self- completion one; and questions were translated in to German and French in addition to original English versions.

International tourists were approached for data collection after trips to cultural tourist villages and other cultural attractions in Sidama and on *Fiche cambalala* festival. The data collection was conducted between January and October 2018 as theses months embrace most cultural festivals which attract international tourists (SCCTD, 2017).

Data analysis was conducted on 302 questionnaires after 7 of them had been excluded because of partial completion out of a 309 collected papers. The data was analysed using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22; and tables have been used to present outputs of processed data.

Results and discussion

Demographic profile of tourists

The inbound tourism market to Sidama is largely comprised of German and American tourists which together account for about 48% of the total sample. This is because Germany and USA are the leading tourist generating countries internationally (UNWTO, 2018) and Ethiopia also receives tourists from these countries in bulk (Ministry of Culture and Tourism; hereafter MoCT 2018). Ethiopian Diaspora who constitute a significant portion of the county's inbound tourism (MoCT, 2018) largely live in these countries. Hence the same logical proportion is represented in tourist flow to Sidama.

About 29% of tourists are from European countries other than Germany. Tourists in this group include nationals from Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and United Kingdom, which is a manifestation that traditional powers of USA and Europe remain the main tourist sources for Ethiopia in general and Sidama in particular, as opposed to other mature destinations receiving tourists from emerging BRICS, Arab and other Asian markets.

The gender distribution in the survey showed that the number of females exceeds that of males. According to Silberberg (1995), women constitute an important part of cultural tourism market and this works for Sidama, an area endowed with cultural riches (Ermias, 2015). The survey also agrees with Richard's (1996b) observation that older tourists prefer cultural sites than the youth and children. With increase in age, people's interest in culture increases prompting them to explore historic things and develop a greater understanding of the past (Lowenthal, 1985).

Cultural tourists are better educated and more affluent than the travelling public (Richards, 1996a); and the same has been evidenced in the survey with about 71% of tourists attending graduate and/or postgraduate degree programs. This confirms the contention of du Cros and McKercher (2015) that there is direct correlation between education level and interest in such activities as cultural and heritage tourism.

According to them, the desire to learn about things beyond one's own backyard, to learn about alternative lifestyles and cultures, and to experience different things is directly related to educational levels. As illustrated by Coathup (1991), cultural enrichment and self-enlightment inspire a better-educated global public. However, findings from the survey appear to be at odds with tourism literature that suggests cultural tourists tend to stay longer at a destination. Only about 3% of them have length of longer than 5 nights, which could be explained by lack of developed festivals and cultural routes in Sidama zone (Ermias, 2015).

Table 1. Respondent demographics

Variables	Responses (%)
Nationality (*n*= 302)	
Americans	26.4%
Germans	21.5%
Other Europeans	28.8%
Other Countries' nationals	23.3%
Gender (*n*= 302)	
Female	55.9%
Male	44.1%
Age (*n*=302)	
<20 years	1.3%
20-35 years	14.2%
36-50 years	20.1%
51-65 years	54.5%
>65 years	9.9%
Educational level (*n*=302)	
High school or less	12.9%
Technical and vocational training	16.2%
College degree	46.6%
Graduate or postgraduate degree	24.3%
(Planned) length of stay in nights (*n*=302)	
2 or shorter	87.5%
3-5	9.6%
Longer than 5	2.9%

Source: Compiled Survey Data

Tourist demographics in the survey reveal the exact resemblance of inbound visitors of Ethiopia in terms of nationality, gender, age, educational level and travel experiences.

Cultural tourism products of Sidama

This section presents the major cultural endowments in Sidama zone which are developed to a certain extent in order to be consumed by visitors in general and cultural tourists in particular. Discussion of major cultural attractions and perceived level of market readiness by tourists is provided. Survey and the resulting narrative discussion is based on sources from promotional booklet published by SCCTD (2017).

Fiche cambalala festival

In past, it is believed that Sidama nation had different political, cultural and ideological structure of its own, one of the major manifestations of this being *fiche cambalala* (SCCTD, 2017). According to the zone's department, *fiche cambalala* is a new year celebration and stands out as one of the most interesting holidays of Sidama. As it marks change of the nation's calendar, it is celebrated in great feast and community rituals. All community members are involved in washing away the old year by reciprocal change of meals in the hamlet. The festival, which lasts nearly two weeks, is believed to have been celebrated for about 2000 years and features the making and playing of cultural songs; dancing and chanting on various market places (Ermias, 2015). *Fiche cambalala* is often performed on two levels: household and community level. The household level celebration involves feast with neighbours and beatification of girls, boys and the elderly by home-made jewelleries. At the community level, locals, led by the elderly called *cimeye,* head to Gudumale Park in Hawassa to perform thanksgiving ceremony.

Table 2. Market readiness of cultural tourism products

Statement	M	SD
Fiche cambala festival	4.61	.78710
Sidama Hanafa cultural tourist village	3.77	.81235
Cultural foods and drinks	3.11	.82442
Rural lifestyle	1.25	.93122
Traditional Sidama house	2.77	.82307
Sidama music	1.54	.88552
Sidama dancing	3.04	.82480
Cultural ceremonies (wedding, rituals)	1.23	.92338
Sidama cultural centre	2.33	.88552
Gudumale park	1.47	.97074
Cultural clothes and other souvenirs	1.79	.95502
Eco-lodges in Sidama zone	2.99	.84758
Enset brushing	3.71	.79610

Source: Compiled Survey Data

Local astrologers called *ayyantos* determine the date of new year by investigating the positions, movement, colour, volume, directions of moon and stars. This is often done one month ahead of the festival as community elders begin month-long fasting. Declaration of the first day of first day of New Year (*fiche*) will be announced when the *ayantos* see close approximation of the moon to five constellations of stars with defined movements in relation to each other and to the moon (SCCTD 2017). The celebration at Hawassa Gudemale Park features the eve (*fiixaari hawarro*) and first day of the New Year (*cambalala*) where horsemen; boys, girls and the elderly appear decorated with jewelleries. Once the festival is over, there comes post *cambalala* event featuring elders' dancing on "*shashiga*" day and girls playing "*hore*" dance.

The major finding from the survey is that *fiche cambalala* festival, Sidama's new year celebration stands out cultural icon of the area (see table 2). With a mean value of 4.61, *Fiche cambalala* is judged by tourists as the most market-ready attraction of Sidama zone. Possible explanations for this include its registration in UNESCO under intangible cultural heritage in 2016 and the associated level of planning and marketing to the festival at varying levels. It is common among destinations that UNESCO registered heritages often attract more tourists and generate higher spending than non-registered counterparts (UNWTO, 2018).

Sidama-Hanafa cultural tourist village

This tourist village is located 325 km South East of Addis Ababa, the nation's capital, around Yirgalem town. The village was set up for community based tourism by Sidama Communication, Culture, and Tourism Department; and features specially designed tourist facilities that cater to benefit women, youth, and the physically handicapped section of society in the area. The village boasts such services as production and processing of Sidama cultural foods; traditional coffee ceremony; coffee collection; village trekking; bird watching; and hot and cold mineral spring water facilities. According to the department, the village provides tourists with participatory activities where they can take part in coffee collection, production and serving; and water fetching from nearby streams. Tourists can also experience guided excursions of nearby localities (SCCTD, 2017). A mean value of 3.77 indicates that the village is among the tourist spots of the zone and its market readiness state relatively matches tourists' judgment of a developed cultural tourist product. This confirms the contention that in cultural attractions of developing countries, products which offer collective and one-stop experience often get market appeal advantages over those with single attraction resources (UNWTO, 2015).

Sidama Cultural House

Like many other traditional houses in Ethiopia, Sidama cultural house features two types of housing construction: highland and lowland houses (SCCTD, 2017). There exists no much difference in house set up, style and interior design, except for the purpose they are built for (lowland houses are built with much ventilation openings). While both houses have *heelicho* (a pillar at the centre), the highland house (*sheeka*) features the wall and its roof is constructed from the ground to the top, with the splinted bamboo wafted together like a basket. The lowland house has wooden walls with roofs thatched from the top to the ground with grass and its waft bamboo is wafted with sheath called "*honce*" (SCCTD, 2017). With a mean value of 2.77, traditional Sidama house exhibits a modest level market readiness as a cultural product in the eyes of international tourists. Because the ultimate purpose of cultural tourists is learning (Maccarrone-Eaglen, 2009), tourists prefer to visit tangible heritages out of which they make learning of concepts like construction. Traditional house of Sidama stands out to be a good example of this sort at the zone.

Built cultural resources

Attractions other than *fiche cambalala* festival, the Hanafa-Cultural village and Sidama traditional house stand at varying levels of market readiness stage as perceived by tourists. Among these are built resources which include Sidama Cultural Centre and Gudumale Park. Sidama Cultural Centre boasts resources in similar standings with Hanafa cultural tourist village; and exhibits collection of traditional costumes, cultural and historical ornaments. Currently the centre serves as a mini-museum of Sidama. It lies on a huge park featuring statues of the zone's heroes who lost their lives fighting for independence and freedom from ethnic oppression. The centre also has an exhibition and bazaar staging corridor and a meeting hall decorated by paintings reflecting Sidama cultural clothes and other traditional riches (SCCTD, 2017). The Centre does not match a minimum cultural tourist product state of market readiness as perceived by the tourists. An arithmetic mean value of 2.33 is a good indication here. Another tangible attraction belonging to this category is the Gudumale Park. An extensive park at the north-western shore of Lake Hawassa, Gudumale is the main venue of event staging for *Fiche cambalala* festival (SCCTD, 2017). It is also fenced with colourful walls and colons which demonstrate the different jewelleries worn by girls, boys and the elderly in Sidama. Gudumale Park often hosts large-scale religious and sporting gatherings (Ermias, 2015). However, with a mean score of 1.47, it is rated not ready for the market to consume as a cultural tourism product.

Countryside cultural resources

This category of resources includes traditional music and dancing; cultural foods and drinks; and traditional dresses. As product development and marketing normally go hand-in-hand, poor efforts exerted from development stage appear to hamper the amount and volume of marketing works in Sidama (Ermias, 2015) and hence the result is poorly marketed countryside resources. Traditional music for example falls among these poorly marketed components. Despite a considerable growth and spread in the volume of production and promotion of authentic music in Ethiopia in general and Southern Ethiopia in particular (SCCTD, 2017), their packaging does not match the current demands of cultural tourists. Traditional dances (3.04), which are often performed and presented in *fiche cambalala* festival and other cultural events, seem to be at better market readiness than the music (1.54). This could be due to the participatory nature of dancing activities and their role in helping tourists get immersed in the culture being visited (Tasie, 2015). Other resources under this category include traditional foods and drinks which are served mostly in traditional restaurants in Hawassa and the surrounding towns. While dishes like *Bursame*, *Chukame* and *Omolcho,* all products of *enset* (false banana leaf common in Southern

Ethiopia), are widely available in restaurants in Hawassa, traditional drinks are seldom served in bars. The short length of stay coupled with absence of tour packages involving cultural nights led to this modest level market readiness of traditional foods and drinks, which are rated with 3.11 mean score. Cultural dresses and other souvenirs do not make up a major part of tourist itinerary in Sidama, and mean value of 1.79 shows their market readiness as a tourism product is far below tourists' expectation. The presentation and perception of cultural clothes and souvenirs as icons of culture in developed destinations (Mckercher & du Cros, 2002), is not the case in Sidama.

Intangible cultural resources

Turning the discussion to the intangibles category, we find Sidama languages, arts and literature, which normally draw attention of learning-minded tourists (Mckercher & du Cros, 2002). These attractions, which are very difficult to measure and quantify (Swarbrooke, 1999), are regularly presented in Annual Sidama Cultural Symposium held every year in Hawassa. This resource appears to be of modest market readiness stage as a cultural tourism product with a mean value of 3.03.

Rural life style and cultural ceremonies are also among attractions at a low market readiness state as cultural tourism products. Because trips to poorly marketed destinations in developing countries often avoid deep authentic experience of local and aboriginal communities (Mckercher & du Cros, 2002), tourists end up getting only superficial holiday experience and hence their knowledge of rural life and other life ceremonies is limited (Swarbrooke, 1999). In slight contrariness to this result, brushing of *enset*, which is common and day-to-day household activity in southern Ethiopia, has a mean score of 3.71 and is in relatively better state of market readiness. Because cultural tourists demand blended products, they seek to experience demonstrations of traditional life style by visiting lodges and eco-lodges, which present commercialized versions rural life. For example market readiness state of eco-lodges found in Sidama, has a mean score of 2.99, reflecting a moderate tourist perception and impression. Lodges like Aregash Lodge and Blen Lodge, found around Yirgalem town, attract a reasonable share of cultural tourists to Sidama. In a similar accord, cultural ceremonies like weddings, funerals and rituals remain at poor market readiness level, with a mean score of 1.32. these ceremonies, which are often left out of tourist itineraries and are often organized to be presented to and performed before tourists, are thought lead to commercialization and acculturation of authentic traditions of societies (Shepherd, 2002).

To conclude, the majority cultural tourism attractions of Sidama are found at the low level of market readiness state to be consumed by tourists as cultural products. Though few attractions including *Fiche cambalala*, cultural icon of Sidama; Hanafa cultural tourist village; and *enset* brushing have relatively better score of market readiness, they merely constitute one-third of the areas' tourist appeal. Most attractions ranging from rural life to cultural ceremonies; from music to rural lifestyle and traditional ceremonies; from cultural centres and parks to clothes and souvenirs all exist in poor state of market readiness. In between these two extremes lie moderately marketed attractions like cultural foods and drinks, and Sidama dancing.

Cultural tourists to Sidama: profile

The profile of cultural tourists was analysed out of a survey which was mainly adopted from cultural tourist typologies model developed by du Cros and Mckercher (2015). To suit it into the context of Sidama as a cultural tourist destination, few variables related to visitor attributes were also incorporated. The first part of tourist profile presents the proportion of each cultural tourist component while visitor attributes as a cultural tourist are portrayed in the second section (see Table 3).

Table 3. Cultural tourists to Sidama

Trip purpose and depth of experience	Frequency (%)
Visiting Sidama cultural resources is my primary trip purpose; and I ended up having deep cultural experience	15.23
Visiting Sidama cultural resources is my primary trip purpose; yet I ended up having shallow cultural experience	22.51
Though culture was not my primary reason of visiting, I ended up having deep cultural experience in Sidama	3.97
culture was not my primary reason of visiting; and I only had shallow cultural experience in Sidama	33.77
Culture was not my primary reason of visiting; and I did not visit any culture related experience at all in Sidama	24.50
Total	100
Attributes of visitors as a cultural tourist	Mentioned by (%)
Consider myself as being on culture holiday (while coming to Sidama area)	35.43
Tasted/had Sidama cultural food at traditional restaurants or somewhere	32.45
Tasted/had Sidama cultural drinks at traditional restaurants or somewhere	43.04
Learned few Sidama language words/phrases out of my trip	17.88
Took part in *fiche cambalala* festival	44.70

Source: Compiled Survey Data

Study findings showed that the *casual cultural tourists* (33.77%), to whom cultural tourism is a weak motive for visiting a destination, and the resultant experience is shallow, make up the largest part of visitors. They are followed by the *incidental cultural tourists* (24.5%), who do not travel for cultural tourism reasons but nonetheless participate in some activities and get shallow experiences. The share of *serendipitous cultural tourists,* those who do not travel for cultural tourism reasons, but who, after participating, end up having a deep cultural tourism experience, is 3.97%. Simple summation of these three typologies of tourists yields the finding that about 62% of international tourists have trip purposes other than culture while visiting Sidama. They are either motivated by natural riches of the area or are on a package tour covering cultural visit to South Omo tribes, the biggest recipients of Ethiopia's cultural tourism (MoCT, 2018). As Hausmann (2007) contends, this group includes people travelling to a destination without a plan to visit a heritage site or any other cultural offering, but do so when some other factors force them to cultural visitation.

The rest 38% of tourists surveyed indicated that motives related to cultural tourism played an important role in visiting Sidama. This figure is closer to the percentage of tourists who consider themselves as being of culture holiday while visiting attractions in Sidama (35.43%). These tourists fall in either the *sightseeing cultural tourists* (22.51%), whose primary purpose of visiting Sidama is culture, but who ended having a shallow experience of the destination; or *the purposeful cultural tourists* (15.23%), to whom visiting cultural resources of Sidama is their primary purpose of trip while enjoying deep level of cultural experience at the same time. These are people who are 'highly motivated' and travel to a destination specifically because of, for example, its museums, cultural landscapes, churches or festivals (Hausmann, 2007).

Though learning is a primary motive of cultural tourists in standardized destinations (Maccarrone-Eaglen, 2009), problems of proper destination development and marketing in Sidama zone have appear to show an opposite figure. This is manifested in small number of tourists who learned few Sidama language words/phrases out of trip (17.88%); and who tasted cultural foods and drinks of Sidama. This is mainly due to the very short length of tourist stay in the area and the resulting shallow touring experience of attractions.

Findings from typologies of cultural tourists to Sidama area reveal two main conclusions. First over one-third of tourists to the area could be regarded as cultural tourists. But to the significant

majority of them, cultural tourism plays no role in their decision to visit Sidama. In fact, the share of those tourists, to whom cultural tourism is the primary trip purpose and who have deep experience, is very low.

Conclusion and implications

The current study has found that the inbound tourism market to Sidama is an undeviating reflection of Ethiopia's international tourism industry in terms of nationality and other demographic indicators. Except for length of stay, the variables of gender, age, and level of education conform to what the wider literature of cultural tourism depicts about tourists. Regarding marketability, the findings uncovered that most of cultural tourism products of Sidama exist at low level of market readiness. The few exceptions in this regard include *fiche cambalala* festival, Hanafa cultural tourist village, and *enset* brushing ceremonies. As far typology of tourists is concerned, cultural tourist flow to Sidama is largely characterised by holidaymakers to whom cultural tourism plays no role in their visitation decision making.

As an opening inquiry in to marketability of cultural tourism assets in Ethiopia, the study provides significant theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical point of view it analyses cultural tourism assets and their marketability as a tourism commodity in a developing destination context. Practically, the study findings offer helpful inputs to governments and destination marketing practitioners in Sidama to make the cultural tourism resources of the area market-ready and to help learn profiles of tourists consuming them. Academia and future researchers especially in tourism, marketing and anthropology disciplines are encouraged to undertake thorough analysis into cultural tourism through, for example, segmentation of tourists, typologies of cultural tourism products; level of efforts exerted in product development and marketing in Sidama and Ethiopia at large.

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