



The Concept of Cultural Tourism and its Significance in Developing Economies

Professor Akhabue A. Okharedia
Graduate School of Business Leadership
University of South Africa
E-mail: okharaa@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

The paper examines the concept of cultural tourism in developing economies with particular reference to African countries in West Africa and East Africa regions of the continent. This paper discusses at length the influence of cultural tourism as a tool for developing Africa countries. For example, in West Africa, the paper discusses three countries, namely; Bukina Faso, Ghana and Mali and show clearly the various cultural sites, traditional craftwork and architectural buildings and escarpments that will promote cultural tourism in the region. In East Africa, the paper focus mainly on Kenya and shows how cultural heritage acts as a magnetic force in attracting tourist for the past years. Finally, the paper identified possible obstacles hindering the development of cultural tourism in the above regions and in the same vein offered possible solutions to the identified obstacles.

Keywords: cultural tourism, developing economies, West and East Africa regions, identified obstacles and possible solutions.

Introduction

The concept of cultural tourism revolves around cultural heritage and culture in general. Today, cultural tourism is generating a lively interest that sits well with the rising need to preserve and promote national and sub-regional identities. The cultural heritage itself plays a pivotal role in attracting visitors to a particular destination. In the case of African countries, the World Tourism Organization figures of 2002 indicate that Africa drew only 4.2 % of all international visitors, with its Northern and Southern sub-regions being the most visited. In West Africa region, despite its remarkable cultural heritage benefitted very little from international visitors. Generally, the number of tourist arrival during this period rose to 2.8 %. At this point in time, tourism in the north of the continent was hit by the international situation and the economic climate. Sub-Saharan Africa showed its mettle with an increase of 6 % well above the world average 2.7%.

In light of the above, this paper attempts to explore and critically evaluate those cultural heritages that need to be fully developed and publicised so as to attract more tourists to Africa countries. An attempt will also be made to find out how cultural tourism, with its emphasis on the human aspect and mutual discovery can become an asset and a significant tool to combat against regional disparities and stimulate equitable, sustainable development through a balanced enhancement of community heritages. We will also examine how the promotion of these cultural heritages help in the creation of reciprocally profitable partnerships, the training and skills enhancement of personnel and an improved standard of living for the local populations of the communities.

Furthermore an attempt will be made to examine the influence of cultural tourism as a trial for development in the following regions, namely; (a) West Africa and (b) East Africa countries. The rational for considering these two regions is based on the efforts made by the region in recent time to promote cultural tourism.



The West Africa Experience

One of the countries in West Africa that has paid much attention to cultural tourism is Burkina Faso. This is a country that is known for its harmonious coexistence of over sixty ethnic groups bound by deep-rooted cultural links. The tradition of hospitality in the country is in part a reflection of its heritage.

Its cultural manifestations spread across the country and goes hand in hand with diversity in respect of housing pattern, landscape, archaeological sites and fauna. One of the major occupation of the people is hunting and this represent a major tourist attraction in the December-May period each year and various measures have been taken by the government to minimise the impact of exploitation of resources on the living environment and the communities concerned.

In respect of cultural tourism, Burkina Faso has maintained the following sites:

- The vestiges of the Yatenga kingdom, notably Ouahigouya and Gourcy.
- The archaeological sites at Gande Fabon (El día grande del "fabón) and Pobé Mengao.
- The historic sites of Bama, Noumoudara and Loropeni: a historic battle site, sanctuary of the Gan Kings, and ruins.
- Evidence of the organization of the Mossi Kingdoms: architecture, Museums, Mausoleums, royal courts, the Palace of the Mogho Naba, etc.
- The sacred crocodile pool.
- The impressive buildings of Kassema and Nankana in the South, the Grourounsi cultures, the landscape of Sindou and Negueni, with their peaks and a hilltop village.

Burkina Faso has also showed its strength in film activities. At the regional level, every two years since the 1960s, it has been the host to the Pan African Film and Television Festival (FESPACO) and, since the early 1980s, the International Arts and Crafts Fair (SIAO), both located in Ouagadougou which is the capital.

The craft sector is doing well and continue to expand. The number of professionals in this sector is estimated to close to 900,000, of whom 500,000 are women. This is very impressive in terms of gender balance. In terms of generating income, the sector is led by farming and animal-raising and this represents almost 30% of the GDP. The craft sector includes the following: textiles (weaving, dyeing, embroidery and sewing), wood (carpentry, cabinet making), leather goods and metal work (UNESCO, 2001).

In conclusion, Burkina Faso has much prospects and better future if it improves its activities on cultural tourism with its natural resources and environments (Bitchibali, 2004).

In the case of Ghana, which is one of the leading countries in West Africa region, much attention needs to be given on how to promote cultural tourism. Ghana enjoys a unique tropical ecosystem, numerous virgin beaches along its 540 km of Coastline, and national parks like the one at Kakum. Cultural tourism focuses on forts and castles dating as far back as the 14th century, traditional festivals, museums and sanctuaries, notably in the south of the country. Ghana can be considered as the only country in West Africa to offer such a concentration of forts and castles built through the past centuries by the Portuguese, Dutch, Germans, Swedes and English. Example of such forts and castles are the castles of Elmina, Saint-Georges and Cape Coast, the Saint-Jago fort and the palace and museum at Manhyia.



In addition to the above is the traditional Ashanti buildings, especially northwest of Koumassi in the centre of Ghana, where the British fort and military museums are also to be found. These buildings are evidential proof to the great Ashanti civilization in the Ashanti Kingdom that reached its apogee in the 18th century.

Furthermore, Ghana also offers the chance to visit archaeological sites, the best known being Yikpabongo in the North Region, and Hani and Kintampo in the Brong-Ahato Region, situated in the West of the country and the largest of Ghana's Regions.

The Kwame Nkrumah mausoleum is another modern tourist attraction together with the W.E.b Dubois Memorial Centre and the George Padmore Library in Accra.

The socio-traditional cultures of the different ethnic groups are accessible to many visitors on the eco-tourism circuits. The points of interest on these circuits include Boabeng-Fiema monkey sanctuaries, the Tafi-Atome Site, the hippopotamus reserve at Wechiau and the reserve of the Krobo mountain community.

However, the other cultural assets that have been incorporated in the national and transnational tourist circuits are the architecture and culture of the North Ghana; the landscapes of the Ashanti territory, the museums in Tamale, Koumassi, Accra and Takoradi, the Sartorial and Culinary arts of the Ashanti, the traditions of the Ewe people of the South and the traditional chiefdoms.

Another important perspective that attract tourist to Ghana, is the traditional craftwork. Ghana has a tradition of working with gold and woodworking activities and this has been a feature of its culture. Example of this is the wooden stools (the famous Ashanti "thrones") and the message sticks and drums once used for communication, royal ceremonies and musical entertainment.

Traditionally a woman's affair, pottery is the country's oldest form of craft, dating back to 300 years. This craft work is very popular in the rural areas. From all indication in Ghana, it has a wide range of cultural assets that can help Ghana to develop a high-standard cultural tourism which, on the long run can contribute positively to the GDP of Ghana (Edward E. Komla: 2004).

Mali as a country in West Africa has also made an in-road in the development of cultural tourism. Despite the political instability in the past, the government of Mali has made effort to ensure that progress must be made in promoting cultural tourism in the following perspectives.

In the first place, our attention has been drawn to the "Marvels" of northern Mali. This is a direct reflection of the mysterious Timbuktu, with its strong and solid architecture – a crossroads for the Targui, Songhai, Bella and Arab cultures; Gao, city of the Tombs of Askia, which is one of the greatest monument of the old Songhai Empire, built in 1495. Other prominent features include the Fatima's Hand, Mount Hombori and Lake Debo. The shape of Lake Debo and the surrounding activities of the inhabitants of the area is a confirmation of the role the lake plays in the socio-economic activities of the inhabitants.

The second major feature is the Bandiagara escarpment, where the houses and granaries are sometimes built into cliff face. The people within this region still practice their traditional religion belief system coupled with divination games at Sangha, Ireli, Guimini and Kani-Kombole.

The third feature is the presence of architectural buildings in the city of Bamako coupled with museums and performing arts which include Senufo and Minianka balafon music.



All the above cultural features have contributed to tourism in Mali. According to the WTO, tourism in Mali has been phases of marked contrast: near-stagnant from 1960 to 1984, it recovered considerably in period 1995-2001: 35, 683 tourists in 1995 and 94, 300 in 2001. After cotton, cattle and gold, tourism was one of the major sources of revenue in 2001.

Undoubtedly, Mali possesses an inexhaustible cultural heritage whose use in a rational, ethical and sustainable way could provide a uniquely attractive high quality product that would remain distinctively Malian (Dagnoko, 2004).

The East Africa Experience

In respect of cultural tourism in East Africa much attention will be paid to Kenya experience. Today, Kenya is the leading economy in East Africa and much of its leading role can be attributed to the role played by the Kenyan government in promoting tourism in general. However, of particular interest in this paper is to examine how cultural and nature based tourism in Kenya have helped in promoting tourism, thus, contributing to the GDP of Kenya.

In 1994, tourism accounted for about 12 % of the Kenya's Gross Domestic product (GDP) (Government Press, Nairobi; 1995). Most international tourists are attracted to Kenya mainly because of its cultural heritage and the country unique opportunities for wildlife viewing in a pristine natural environment.

The following cultural heritage below are the magnetic forces of attraction that has increased the number of tourists in Kenya for the past years; (a) Mt. Elgon, (b) Samburu-Buffalo, (c) Lake Nakuru, (d) Shimba Hills, (e) Masai Mara, (h) Olorgesailie, (i) Mombasa Marine, (j) Impala Sanctuary and the (k) Hell's Gate and Mount Kenya.

The origin of tourists who visited Kenya from 1992-1994 is shown in Table 1:1 below:

Table 1.1 Origins of visitors, 1992 – 1994 in Kenya

	1992		1993		1994	
Country	(000s)	(%)	(000s)	(%)	(000s)	(%)
Germany	116.3	14.9	129.4	15.7	131.2	15.3
UK	114.3	14.6	126.4	15.3	128.4	15.0
USA	52.3	6.7	58.2	7.0	59.2	7.0
Italy	48.6	6.2	53.6	6.5	54.5	6.4
France	43.8	5.6	48.4	5.9	49.0	5.7
Switzerland	26.9	3.4	29.6	3.6	29.9	3.5
India	12.6	1.6	14.1	1.7	14.4	1.7
Japan	12.4	1.6	13.9	1.7	14.1	1.7
Canada	10.7	1.4	11.9	1.4	12.3	1.4
Australia/New Zealand	10.1	1.3	11.3	1.4	11.6	1.4
Tanzania/ Uganda	144.8	18.5	162.2	19.6	167.8	19.6
Others	188.6	24.1	167.3	20.3	152.0	17.8
Total	781.5	100.0	826.2	100.0	855.9	100.0

Source: Kenya Economic Survey. 1995

The above 1.1 shows that 60 % of the international tourists who visited Kenya between 1992 and 1994 came from western countries, mainly Germany, the U.K, Italy and France. The main purpose of their visits was for the sightseeing of the above listed cultural heritages.



Table 1. 2 Number of visitors who visited Natural reserves and other cultural heritage centres in Kenya: 1990 – 1994 (in thousands). Source: Kenya Economic Survey. 1995

Cultural heritage centres and park/reserve

Reserved Cultural Heritage	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Nairobi	152.8	168.8	156.4	164.6	163.2
Animal orphanage	213.8	217.6	173.2	155.3	182.0
Amboselli	237.2	189.2	168.3	121.1	159.5
Tsavo (West)	78.6	119.3	103.1	102.9	105.4
Tsavo (East)	127.7	135.9	125.5	135.8	132.4
Aberdare	66.6	56.3	63.6	60.8	60.2
Lake Nakuru	174.2	174.4	139.8	178.6	164.3
Masai mara	180.5	143.3	138.1	133.1	138.2
Malindi Marine	35.6	33.0	44.2	41.1	39.4
Lake Bogoria	53.8	53.0	39.4	37.2	43.2
Meru	11.1	9.1	7.1	7.4	7.9
Shimba Hills	60.0	38.2	31.9	24.8	31.6
Mount Kenya	18.7	14.6	15.5	18.0	17.2
Samburu	-	-	-	221.5	9.2
Kisite	27.1	33.1	28.0	27.5	34.8
Mombasa Marine	29.1	54.6	57.8	43.3	48.0
Watamu Marine	20.5	22.0	27.0	31.7	32.1
Hell's Gate	31.1	41.3	34.2	47.4	44.9
Impala Sanctuary	-	-	-	59.1	5.5
Other	13.8	14.8	14.0	16.6	9.6
Total	1532.2	1518.5	1367.1	1427.8	1428.6

The above table 1.2 illustrates that a significant portion of the tourists visit both the cultural heritage centres and the various reserves and parks. According to John S. Akama (1996), the main reason why they had decided to visit Kenya is because the country offers unique opportunities for wildlife viewing in pristine natural habitats which also include the cultural heritage centres (nature based tourism). He argued further that this nature based tourism has become a lucrative business and that tourism is currently the leading foreign exchange earner in Kenya, surpassing foreign receipts from export crops as shown in Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3 Earnings from coffee, tea and tourism – 1990 - 1994

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Coffee	4.07	4.05	4.37	7.70	5.87
Tea	6.94	7.80	8.93	19.87	-
Tourism	10.66	11.88	14.26	14.44	14.05

Source: Kenya Economic Survey, 1995.

The above table 1.3 shows that earning from tourism from 1990 – 1994 is on the increase and it exceeds the earning from the main export products of Kenya, namely coffee and Tea. This is a signal to the Kenya government that there is an urgent needs to develop and promote the tourist industry in Kenya and it needs immediate attention.

There is an urgent need for effective policy and institutional mechanisms to be put in place which encourage local participation in the maintenance and management of these cultural heritage. At the least, the local community need to be empowered to decide what forms of tourism facility and programme they want to be develop in their respective community to improve the sightseeing of those cultural heritages at the various centres in Kenya.



Cultural Tourism and Community Based Tourism - CBT

CBT is closely aligned to cultural tourism as both include crossing points between visitors and host communities in rural areas. The notion of CBT is commonly supported by a local community, local government agencies and non-government organisations (Engström & Leffler, 2012). CBT is important in augmenting biodiversity conservation through the idea of responsible tourism but also impacts on cultural tourism. CBT schemes are often created in the setting of ecotourism (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005; Snyder & Sulle, 2011), but cultural tourism, has a huge role to play here as well. Ånstrand (2006) informs us CBT includes the impact of tourism on a community and often their often limited environmental resources. **It is** vital to tourism that local businesses have the funds for opportunities to develop within their cultural and environmental settings and spread knowledge of their heritage. CBT projects with a cultural bent need to involve innovative and entrepreneurial local community members and their activities need to bring into line sustainable development initiatives.

Culture and heritage tourists usually visit cultural heritage attractions such as: historic buildings and other historic attractions; archaeological sites; state, local, or national parks; art galleries or museums; concerts, plays or musicals; ethnic or ecological heritage sites; and suchlike attractions. CBT allows local communities to try to alleviate poverty and become self-sustaining. However skills development is required by the various stakeholder inputs. Richards (1996) suggests that it helps to provide jobs for locals and not only menial tasks but mainly skilled tasks. There is also no repudiating the fact that culture and heritage tourism is inclined to attract high-yield tourists (OECD, 2009). It injects new money into the economy, increasing businesses and also tax revenues and jobs are created which is significant for developing economies. Entrepreneurial small and micro enterprises are helped to expand. In addition there is additional protection of significant local resources. From a social standpoint, cultural tourism and community based tourism forge vital associations among and within local communities and beyond (Borowiecki & Castiglione, 2014).

There is thus also a clear connection between sustainable development and Cultural Tourism and CBT. Burns and Novelli (2008) argue that CBT endeavors to assimilate the goals of sustainable development and as such must be viable economically, ecologically, socially and culturally. It is one of the foremost growth markets in international tourism (UNWTO, 2001). Tosun, (2000) argues that local-level involvement is crucial for achieving the goal of sustainable development so cultural tourism in communities is critical.

Obstacles Hindering the Development of Cultural Tourism in Developing Economies

One of the most important areas revolve around structural and cyclical obstacles. It has been observed that these obstacles are fundamentally linked to the economic poverty of developing economies. The main issues are the following:

- The isolation or inaccessibility of sites due to the poor state of the roads.
- The inadequateness and cost of aerial services and other modes of transport.
- The underdeveloped state of telecommunication networks and the high cost of communication system.
- Low level of community involvement in heritage preservation.
- Insufficient emphasis on cultural tourism resulting from the dominance of beach tourism.
- Over-exploitation of certain nature site, together with insufficient protection of archaeological and palaeontological sites.

In addition to the above structural and cyclical obstacles is the political strategy shortfalls which can be analysed as follows:



- Low level of cooperation between the tourism and culture sectors and the ineffectiveness of the main public institutions and the intermediate bodies in charge of coordinating tourism and specific cultural measures. This is especially true of promotion policies: absence or inadequacy of marketing plans and consultancy services.
- The lack of a tradition of planning and of provision of reliable, regularly updated statistics.
- Insufficient attention paid to cultural tourism by government ministerial departments.

Possible solutions to minimize above obstacles:

- A. Develop and adopt meaningful regulations that promote cultural tourism through the following structures:
- Draw up legal frameworks, together with appropriate regulations and administrative structures.
 - Increase and update cultural development budgets.
 - Create an environment favourable to creative artists and cultural enterprises.
 - Regulate access to sites.
 - Effective co-ordination of activities of ministries, private bodies and professional associations involved in developing cultural tourism by doing the following:
 - i. Setting up a Tourism Consultative Council, comprising representatives of the civil services, technical departments and professional association.
 - ii. Creating a ministerial department of tourism dealing mainly with issues on cultural tourism in its own right, or at least a Secretariat of State for Tourism.
 - iii. Increase local communities' awareness and level of responsibility in respect of how to manage tourist resources through the process of safeguarding of cultural goods and services.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this paper to highlight the concept of cultural tourism and to show how the concept has been operationalized in developing economies. Much attention was paid to West and East Africa countries where tourism has contributed greatly to their GDP and this has been helpful as a source of revenue to their economies. This paper also discussed the benefits of promoting cultural tourism. In the same vein, an attempt was made to highlight possible obstacles that have hindered promotion of cultural tourism. Finally, the paper offered possible solutions to the identified problems.

Conclusively, there is an urgent need for the various government in developing economies especially in Africa to consider and implement the suggested solutions for the upliftment of their economy and the well-being of their citizens.

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