

An Analysis of coffee stains militating sustainable tourism development in Africa

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Abstract

This study examined a litany of adverse factors that are suffocating sound tourism development in Africa. The region is well endowed with a blend of pristine natural and artificial tourist attractions of global repute. Conversely, tourism traffic into the region is disappointingly very low. The study gleaned through literature narratives and annual tourism reports to account for the mismatch. The findings of the study revealed that whilst the global community embraced tourism as a viable sector to diversify the economy, that tenacity is deficient among African countries. The level of visitation to Africa and tourism activity does not make positive reading. This is largely spawned by the unfavourable tourism environment characterised by political instability, negative market perception, poor access, and prevalence of contagious diseases all of which have depressed tourism activity in the region. It is therefore recommended that for Africa to realise her full potential she should promptly implement a universal visa regime, revise the pricing model for tourism products, enhance air access, as well as capacitating the national tourism bodies financially.

Keywords: Tourism in Africa, Sustainable Development, Negative factors, UNWTO.

1. Introduction

Tourism has been touted as a panacea to various African economies that are heavily dependent on the natural resource base for generating employment, income and foreign exchange (Reid, 1998; Boniface and Cooper, 2001, Lockwood and Medlik, 2001; and Weaver, 2000). Many countries around the globe have embraced tourism as a viable economic sector for economic diversification. Globally, Europe, The Americas and Asia Pacific regions have had success stories in their tourism industries (Reid, 1998; Teye, 1986, 1991; Richter, 1992). However, the same cannot be said about Africa whose tourism industry has largely remained depressed (Sindiga, 1996a, 1996b). Combing through African tourism literature reveals that there are inherent constraints which are negating the region from realising full scale tourism. These constraints are hereby conveniently and figuratively referred to as 'coffee stains'. Coffee stains literally leave near permanent marks when they drop onto something brightly coloured. In this context Africa has its bright side as represented by a plethora of tourist attractions that are primed globally, but her brightness has been dimmed by the presence of these coffee stains. In most cases, it requires extra effort to clear the stains, if ever the stains will clear. In service sectors like tourism no one would expect to use a cup or glass of cloth stained by coffee. In summary, people shun away from using coffee stained items. In the context of this study coffee stains are the perceived and prevailing negative variables obtaining in Africa region which have for many years scared away potential international tourists from travelling to the various destinations within the region (Essence of Africa, 2008). These coffee stains are militating the region from making an impression on the global tourism area according to statistics proffered by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) which oscillates between 2 to 6 per cent of the global tourism cake. This current study sought to identify these variables and map the way forward for the Africa region.

2. A Literature Review: Global tourism industry trends

According to Bhatia (2001) the global tourism industry is constituted by five functional tourist regions in the way of Europe, The Americas, Asia Pacific, Africa and Middle East. Tourism emerged to become a global economic activity in the early 1950s following the end of World War II. Ever since then the industry has grown in leaps and bounds (Lockwood and Medlik, 2001, Cooper *et al.*, 2001, WTO Tourism Vision 2020, 1995). Statistically, the UNWTO reported that the international tourist arrivals at global scale stood at a mere 25 million, jumped to 69 million, nearly breached the 1 billion mark in 2010, and is forecast to be 1.6 billion by the year 2020 (UNWT Tourism 2020 Vision, Lockwood and Medlik, 2001; Cooper *et al.*, 1998; Weaver and Oppermann, 2000; and Harrison, 1998). The preceding statistical data indicate that the international tourism industry has maintained an upward trend and this is projected to be maintained. On the revenue front the global tourism industry in the year 2000 generated nearly US\$650 billion (Bhatia, 2001, World Bank, 2002).

Tourism accounts for 10 per cent world gross domestic product, and tourism is the largest generator of both

GDP and employment. In the next 10 years, the tourism share in GDP is expected to increase to 11% (Page, 1999; Harrison, 1992; Gamble, 1989). In view of this, tourism and travel are the world's largest industry in terms of the numbers of people participating, the amount of resources generated and employment capacity (Reid, 1999). The geographical patterns of world tourism show great difference in international arrivals and receipts. Europe, North America and Japan generate the greatest numbers of tourists whilst Africa plays a peripheral role. According to Rahman et al (2011) also supported by Ankomah and Crompton (1990) in 1990 Europe received 61% of the arrivals, followed by The Americas 20.2%, East Asia Pacific 12.5%, Africa 3.3%, the Expanded Middle East 2.1% and South Asia 0.07% as detailed on the Table below.

Global Tourism Trends and Regional Tourism Market Shares: 1950-2020

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Europe	66.5%	72.5%	70.5%	68.4%	63.5%	57.8%	50.2%	47%
The Americas	29.6%	24.1%	23%	18.9%	18.8%	18.4%	18.6%	14.9%
Asia-Pacific	1%	1.3%	3.6%	7.8%	12.1%	17.1%	23.1%	24.2%
Africa	2.1%	1.1%	1.5%	2.5%	3.4%	3.2%	4.4%	6.2%
Middle East	0.09%	1%	1.4%	2.4%	2.1%	2.7%	3.5%	3.1
Global Arrivals	25.3m	69.3m	159.7m	284.8m	454.8m	660	940	1.6bn

Source: Boniface and Cooper, (2001); Lockwood and Medlik, (2001).

2.1 Recent and future trends in world tourism

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. Tourism can be considered one of the most remarkable socio-economic phenomenon of the 20th century (Lockwood and Medlik, 2001). From being an activity enjoyed by only a small group of relatively well-off people during the first half century, it gradually became a mass phenomenon during the post world war II period, notably the 1970s onwards. It now encompasses a growing number of people throughout the world and accounts for a significant share of economic output in many countries (Page, 1999). Many countries have given priority to international tourism, especially now that it has become the world's largest source of foreign exchange. According to the latest figures compiled by the UNWTO, foreign exchange earnings from international tourism reached a peak of US\$476 billion in 2000, which was larger than the export value of petroleum products, motor vehicles, telecoms equipment or any other single category of product or service (WTO, 2001a).

International tourist arrivals grew at an annual average rate of 4.3% during the 1990s, despite major international political and economic crises, such as the Gulf war and the Asian financial crises. According to the latest WTO figures, the turn of the millennium recorded the most impressive annual growth rates in international tourism industry. All the regions of the world, that is, Middle East, Africa, EAP, The Americas and Europe recorded a significant rise in international tourism activity in 2000. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, however, appear to have had a more serious impact on the tourist sector than any other major international crisis in recent decades (Rahman *et al*, 2011; World Bank, 2002). The attacks had a particularly severe impact on air transport, business travel and long haul travel. Worldwide travel reservations were estimated to have dropped by 15% by the end of October 2001, although not every destination nor every part of the tourism sector was badly affected (WTO, 2001a). For example, while air transport and luxury hotels have suffered from considerable fall in demand travel within the same country or region, as well as travel by rail and road appear to have weathered the worse effects of the crisis, or even benefited from it. Never the less, initial forecasts of a 3-4% rise in international tourist arrivals for 2001, made before the September 2001 attacks, were subsequently revised downwards to around a 1% increase over the 2000 figures.

In the medium to long term, however, international tourism is expected to resume its rapid growth, in view of, rising living standards, and discretionary incomes, falling real costs of travelling, expansion and improvement of various transport modes, increasing amounts of free time (so-called boom factors) and other factors. This helps to explain why WTO (2001c) has reiterated its long-term forecasts, made before the September 2001 attacks, of an average annual growth rate in international arrivals of over 4% in the period up to 2020. The number of international arrivals is thus expected to reach the striking mark of 1 billion by 2010 and 1.6 billion by the close of the visibility time scale of 2020 (WTO, 2001d). The Table below shows the tourism market share for Africa.

Tourism Market Share and Arrivals for Africa: 1950-2020

Africa:	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Market Share	2.1%	1.1%	1.5%	2.5%	3.4%	3.2%	4.4%	6.2%
Exact Arrivals	.531m	.762m	2,395m	7,12m	15,463m	21,12m	41,36m	99,2m
Global Arrivals	25.3m	69.3m	159.7m	284.8m	454.8m	660m	940m	1.6bn

Source: Lockwood and Medlik, (2001).

3. Methodology

The study combed through literature narratives detailing tourism development in Africa. At least two member countries' national tourism organisation's websites were accessed in the five functional sub-regions which make up Africa. These two were proxies for North Africa, Southern Africa, East Africa, West Africa, and Central Africa. The specific countries whose NTOs' websites were used were Tunisia and Morocco (North Africa), South Africa and Zimbabwe (Southern Africa), Kenya and Tanzania (East Africa), Senegal and Ghana (West Africa), and Chad and Central Africa Republic (Central Africa).

4. Results and Discussion

The study identified the ensuing to be at the epicentre of Africa's inability to make a grade at the international tourism arena not necessarily in order of significance: low level of economic development, a restricted tourism product, poor access, adverse media publicity, politically unstable environment, communicable diseases, punitive pricing regime, poor infrastructure and super structural facilities, dearth of vibrant marketing and promotional strategies, and absence of a universal visa system. These are now explained in detail below.

4.1 Low level of economic development

The World Bank (WB) and International monetary Fund (IMF) have indexed the entirety of Africa as a developing world that is characterised by very low levels of economic development. This is working against Africa in terms of subdued tourism demand from within the region. The majority of people in Africa are poverty stricken, rely upon primary extraction of minerals, and depend on tilling the land for subsistence. The low per capita income characteristic of developing countries implies that there is virtually no disposable income to expend on tourism. In fact tourism has long been viewed as a white men's preserve in Africa. Because of high poverty levels people are mostly concerned with the basic necessities hence tourism is pushed to the periphery as an unnecessary luxury. The depressed domestic market is quite telling as only a few are able to engage in tourism and mostly through sponsored by companies. Successful tourist destinations are buoyed by a vibrant domestic market base but ironically in Africa this is almost non-existent. Over half of the population in Africa live below poverty datum line as confirmed by Sachs and Warner (2007) hence the absence of meaningful tourism development. There is a positive correlation between the one's level of disposable income and one's propensity to engage in tourism. More disposable income implies a high propensity to travel and the reverse is equally true. The foregoing is singled out as the most significant factor stifling sustainable tourism development in Africa. To this end Africa's tourism industry depend on overseas market which has ample disposable income.

4.2 Restricted tourism product

Africa relies upon a restricted tourism product. This entails that Africa's tourism industry hinges on the pristine and unadulterated wildlife resource base. Whilst Africa's flora and fauna used to be popular, tourist tastes and preferences have changed and wildlife is no longer a selling point for the region's tourism industry. The new international tourist is seeking novelty and the trend points to preference towards modern theme parks which are conspicuously not found anywhere in Africa. These ironically have proved to be 21st Century trump cards for the tourism industry as evidenced by the impressive global tourism traffic that throngs Europe, The Americas and East Asia Pacific at the expense of Africa. The Disneyworld and Disneyland in Europe, America and Asia have given these international tourist destination an edge over Africa which continues to play second fiddle as evidenced by a paltry market share of less than 4 per cent of the global tourism traffic since 1950 up 2013. The range of tourism activities is key to satisfying and exceeding the expectation of the visitors. Africa is deficient on that and this is argued to be holding back tourism development in the region.

4.3 Poor access

Africa as an international tourist destination is geographically far removed from her key source markets which are mainly Europe and The Americas. It is the contention of Weaver and Oppermann (2000:98) that: "...an inverse relationship is likely to exist between the volume of traffic flowing from an origin to a destination region

and distance separating the two.” The closer the source market to a destination, the more international tourists a region is likely to receive. Africa relies heavily on Europe and The Americas as its source markets, which in the realm of tourism are regarded as mature markets, that is, long haul tourism market. The distance of a tourist destination from its key source market affect the total cost of the whole trip hence to an extent this is a coffee stain on Africa hence the obtaining dull tourism statistics punctuating it. Africa is poorly accessible particularly through air transport. Most of the countries in Africa are lacking it terms of direct air line carriers plying them, and in most of the cases the aviation infrastructure is inadequate to accommodate huge aircrafts (Page, 1999). Most of the reputable international airline carriers are shunning the Africa tourism destination owing to a number of reasons chief among which are the reluctance by the respective national governments to liberalise the aerospace, and the need to protect their weakling and underperforming national airline carriers. This has exacerbated the inaccessibility of Africa and put paid to the destination’s amalgam concept which says that a tourist destination no matter how appealing and well resourced it is if it not accessible it cannot be exploited hence the current position with Africa.

4.4 Negative media reportage

Bad media reportage on Africa has also affected the emergence and growth of international tourism on the Africa region. The media is pivotal in influencing and shaping opinions on travel decisions and thus diverting the flow of tourists. It is pertinent to mention that international news channels and media houses have continued to portray Africa as lagging behind in democracy, and is associated with all negatives. The media thus have a role in framing and changing the minds of tourists as asserted to by Richter (1992). Lead news channels like CNN, BBC, and FOX NEWS and many others continue to beam negative news headlines about Africa and most of the cases such news headlines are blown out of proportion. News related with terrorism, crime and civil unrest is extra ordinarily highlighted both in electronic and print media. Quite often false, fabricated and practically impossible media reports that have nothing to do with the reality can cause heavy damage to tourism business in the global arena. Africa has had civil wars and political unrest ranging from one member country to another in the region. Zimbabwe had a long liberation war from the 1960s up to 1980. Mozambique also had a civil war from the 1970s up to the 1990s. South Africa was struggling with apartheid. In Angola, Somalia, Sudan, DRC, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Niger delta, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi in fact the whole of the region has been involved in some kind of civil war. This has become easy fodder for foreign media houses to portray Africa badly. Weaver and Opperman (2000) stressed on the importance of a positive market image for the potential visitors. Prospective tourists depend on images when making a decision to visit a tourist destination. It is in this context that the destination’s image is argued as the most significant factor that is touted as the fifth column of the destination amalgam concept. Thus the bad image associated with Africa is significantly holding back sustainable tourism development in the region.

4.5 Politically unstable environment

Political stability and peace make or break a destination. This has been the biggest coffee stain the region has been facing. Right from the 1950s when the international tourism took off in earnest the following the end of World War 2 Africa has not had relative political peace. Indeed in the 1960 up to the 1980s most African countries got independence from colonial rule but intermittent civil wars, coups and numerous civil strives have become the hall marks of African politics much to the disadvantage of a vibrant tourism sector. The region is teeming with potential but the ever simmering political tensions within Africa have helped to repel prospective visitors. Serious international visitors value their safety and security when seeking tourist destination to patronise and Africa is faring very badly on this. Literature is abound with information to the effect that Africa is associated with safety and security concerns and the region is deemed very dangerous and must be avoided by tourists. This has resulted in Africa receiving paltry global tourism traffic despite having the best flora and fauna resource base. Cases abound of political disturbances in Africa: Madagascar, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, DRC, Angola, Sudan, Ivory Coast, CAR, Kenya, Somalia, Tunisia, and Mali all bear testimony to the unstable political terrain characterising Africa. To this end no meaningful tourism development has emerged from Africa and this is stifled by these political tremors which have come to punctuate the whole of Africa. The sum total of this unstable political environment has resulted in the key source markets issuing travel advisories dissuading their nationals from visiting Africa. Political stability and good governance are undoubtedly two prerequisite for a thriving tourism industry. Political instability, wars and ethnic violence have afflicted many African countries during the last decades, and slowed or disrupted the tourism industry as stressed by Mabugu (2002).

4.6 Prevalence of communicable diseases

Communicable diseases are very prevalent in Africa than in any other tourist region. This coupled with the poor

health delivery systems in Africa thus scaring away would be tourists. Highly contagious diseases such as yellow fever, malaria, cholera, and Ebola have been highlighted and publicised in Africa's key source markets so much that prospective tourists are urged to take extra precautionary health measures when visiting Africa. This does auger well with most visitors who end up avoiding the region outright hence starving off Africa the much needed custom. The whole of Africa has abundance of mosquitoes that cause malaria. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that between 300 to 500 million Africans are affected with malaria each year (<http://www.tc.iaea.org>). These are frightening figures that have the potential to scare off potential visitors to Africa. Potential visitors despite taking preventive medication before visiting Africa are still exposed, and as a result some potential travellers would not take the risk where health matters are concerned.

4.7 Punitive pricing regime

Most African countries realise that the tourism sector has the potential to provide solution to chronic high unemployment rates and scanty foreign exchange hence resolved to adopt a discriminative multi-tier pricing system for the tourism product. This pricing regime has had a backlash as witnessed by low turn- out of tourists from overseas market. The multi-tier pricing regime entails the charging of different rates to tourists depending on the country of origin. The bolts and nuts of this pricing model are that it segments the tourism market into three categories which are the local/domestic market, regional market and the international market. In terms of rates that are charged the local customer pays relatively less whilst the regional tourist forks out double what the local tourist pay, and still the international tourist pays three fold what the local tourist pays for the same service/product. To this effect there has been a barrage of criticism particularly from the international market which feels like being ripped off. Whilst the member countries in Africa thought that this pricing model was flexible enough to accommodate the impoverished and economically disadvantaged local market it did not have the intended results since the local market remain subdued and not partaking in tourism and other recreational activities. The international market which is figuratively the cash cow for the tourism industry is now having a negative perception about the region since Africa is now understood to be a very expensive tourist destination as compared to other competitive destinations like Europe and Asia Pacific. This has resulted in tourists avoiding Africa feeling that there is no value for money and substitute it with other destinations hence the low volume of tourism traffic into the region.

4.8 Poor infrastructural and super structural facilities

Africa is characterised by substandard tourism facilities. Such facilities lack top flight quality service and this is an impediment to tourism development. The infrastructure is dilapidated owing to years of neglect and insufficient funding. Due to financial budget constraints the roads are full of pot holes, very few 5 star hotels and some places of interest are hardly accessible. The physical tourism product in most African countries visibly show signs of fatigue. There has been very little in terms renovation on tourism facilities due to lack of financial resources. This is argued to be holding back the emergence of a sustainable tourism sector within the region.

4.9 Dearth of vibrant marketing and promotional strategies

Whilst significant strides have been made in establishing national tourism organisation (NTO) to market the respective member countries' tourism industry these NTOs have not been adequately resourced financially hence impeding the discharge of their mandate. Most member countries in Africa are struggling to fund key economic programs owing to lack of fiscal space and the NTOs have not been spared since they operate with a shoe string budget. This seriously undermine their effectiveness in marketing the region's tourism industry. Apart from the above, the NTOs still use ineffective marketing and promotional strategies since they are underfunded to such an extent of failing to maintain an updated website page. In other successful international tourist destinations the NTOs are well funded and have invested heavily in the information and communication technologies which have become the 21st Century marketing ammunition.

4.10 Absence of universal visa system

The use of a multi- visa system has worked to the disadvantage of the region. Ease access of international visitors without administrative hurdles is an epitome of a successful tourist destination. The need for one to have many visas for one to move from one African country to another is a cause for concern in view of the beaucratic nature of the visa application process. This adds to the disappointment of visitors as they are subjected to waiting in very long queues for the service. Added to this are the chaotic border formalities which result in a negative perception of Africa. The total sum of all this has been resentment on the part of visitors who are never come back to Africa. In this instance the region is losing in terms of repeat business, and also there is no word of mouth advertising hence the low tourism traffic into the region.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has established that there are constraints within Africa which are impeding the sustainable development of a robust tourism industry. The conclusion that Africa's tourism industry is in cleft stick is therefore instructive. It is of major concern that at policy making and implementation level Africa quickly adopts a universal visa system in a manner reminiscent of the European Union. This would completely eradicate the administrative hurdles associated with the multiple visa requirements. This would also ease on the hassles at entry points. With a universal visa a tourist can move freely from North Africa down to Southern Africa enjoying the African tourism product. The initiation of the peace park concept should be extended to each and every member country so that the region benefits from the abundant tourism resources. Equally critical is the liberalisation of the aerospace among African country. The argument for this is neither here nor there considering that the region is losing out due to non availability of effective and reliable airline carriers. Analysts posited that a symbiotic relationship exists between the performance of the tourism sector and the number of airline carriers servicing a tourist destination. It is noble for policy makers to quickly remove completely the protection on local and inefficient national airline carriers for the benefit of the region. If more airline carriers are allowed to ply the region providing direct flights with key source markets then load factors would definitely increase much to the benefit of the region's tourism industry.

More financial resources must be directed towards tourism development through the respective NTOs. These NTOs are literally the directors who direct the tourism script at a tourism stage called destination hence the underfunding such a critical player in the tourism system is a complete negation of the sustainable tourism development. The NTOs are entrusted with the marketing of the region's tourism offerings, and indeed since Africa has quite a rich menu of tourism attractions the NTOs must be adequately resourced so that they discharge their mandate effectively.

Finally, Africa must shrug off the negative perception tag associated with her politically. It is high time that political institutions and national governments embrace democracy and quickly diffuse instability through enabling the Africa Union Commission. Intermittent wars, coups and other forms of unrest must be brought to an end so that political peace prevails for the good of the tourism industry. In the final analysis Africa is not a complete write off given the projected modest market share of 6 per cent by UNWTO in the year 2020. It shows there is huge potential within the region, and the potential can be realised through wiping away the coffee stains which have identified in this study.

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