

# Review on Trends of Ecotourism Development in Ethiopia

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## Abstract

Ecotourism is “a force within the industry that, in its very essence, aims to minimize tourism’s negative impacts whilst maximizing tourism’s positive impacts”. Whilst smaller in scale than external effects such as energy prices and terrorism, ecotourism represents a relatively large internal intervention in the global tourism industry, and one which has now been continued for an extended period. This provides analytical opportunities from the perspectives of tourism policy and tourism entrepreneurship. Ecotourism, a recent but widely hailed tourism alternative, has high potential to be an instrument for rural economic development and environmental conservation in Ethiopia. Therefore, the government of Ethiopia has recognized development and promotion of ecotourism and provided consultancy services for a number of potential developers of ecotourism sites. Ecotourism, a recent but widely hailed tourism alternative, has high potential to be an instrument for rural economic development and environmental conservation. Role tourism plays in poverty reduction and natural resource management in Ethiopia. Although not satisfactory, the trend of ecotourism development in Ethiopia is developing from past to present. Increasing the awareness of local communities in and around attraction area towards ecotourism or nature tourism is very important.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, Development, Protected area, Ethiopia

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background Information

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries that provide services and sales of goods for visitors who came from outside of the destination area for a period of more than 24 hours and less than one year. It is strategically important industry that is directly linked to the long term prosperity of a country. According to World Tourism Organization (2005), tourism is an activity of human beings moving and staying in places outside their permanent residence and environment for recreation, business and trade purposes. Now a day, tourism is increasingly becoming an important economic sector in many developing countries (UNCTAD, 2007). The industries were one of the major sources of foreign exchange earnings and the most viable and sustainable economic development option. It contributes 11 percent of the world GNP (UNWTO,2005).

Tourism is a large industry that supports and contributes to the economic development of many developing countries. For many developing countries tourism is the main source of foreign exchange which exceeds 80% of their total income. Moreover, it has also a high contribution for the GDP, employment rates and in improving the socio-economic conditions of the countries. In Africa, travel and tourism contributes directly and totally 3.8 and 9% of GDP in 2012, respectively, whereas, the direct and total contribution of employment is 3 and 7.1%, respectively (WTTC, 2013).

Ecotourism is a new concept in tourism, which was originally sparked off by the idea of making harmonious co-existence with nature a reality once again. As defined by the Ecotourism Society, it is the responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and sustains the wellbeing of local people. Today, ecotourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry. Its potential for growth is virtually unlimited. Any tourism program which is nature –based, ecologically sustainable, where education and interpretation is a major concept and where local people are benefited can be called ecotourism. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) define ecotourism as: “responsible travel that conserves the environment and sustains the well - being of local people”. Clearly, at a time when traditional conservation through enforced protection of natural areas was being questioned for its effectiveness and social impacts, strategies such as ecotourism offered considerable potential for integrating conservation with development.

Ecotourism is “a force within the industry that, in its very essence, aims to minimize tourism’s negative impacts whilst maximizing tourism’s positive impacts”. Whilst smaller in scale than external effects such as energy prices and terrorism, ecotourism represents a relatively large internal intervention in the global tourism industry, and one which has now been continued for an extended period. This provides analytical opportunities from the perspectives of tourism policy and tourism entrepreneurship. In addition, any framework for analyzing progress in ecotourism may also be relevant to measuring the sustainability of tourism more broadly, which is still a contested area of research (Weaver, 2009).

Ethiopia has a long way to go to benefit from tourism. For instance, according to (WTO, 2002), the share of Ethiopia from tourism sector was just less than a miniscule. A total of 156,327 international tourists visited Ethiopia and accounted for 77 million USD in revenue, with 5% growth rate compared to 2001. In 2005, international tourist visiting Ethiopia showed considerable growth although not up to expectations. The projected

international tourist arrival was 227,398; while income generated from these tourists" amounted 135 million USD.

Unto the present, Ethiopia's share from the international tourist's income is very petite. In 2008, Ethiopia received only about 157 million USD. That amounts to less than two tenths of the 2008 total international tourist arrivals world-wide. But, in the last three consecutive years, tourists" arrival is growing at an average rate of 7% per year (Ethiopian Tourism Commission).

As Weaver (2009) presuppose that, the demand of consumers for „remote“, „natural“ and „exotic“ environments have created a rise in ecotourism enterprises, especially in developing countries like Ethiopia. Of concern is the fact that it is precisely these more remote, less developed tourism areas that eco-tourists seek which are most sensitive to cultural rupture and environmental depression.

Ecotourism could be a link between protected areas and local communities by generating income for local communities while conservation goals of protected areas achieved. Brodnig (2006) also stated that ecotourism could be very important where the ecosystem is fragile and other forms of natural resource management might be impossible.

### **1.2. Objectives of the Review**

- To show the link between ecotourism and development in Ethiopia
- To identify the roles of ecotourism for protected area management in Ethiopia
- To identify what trend of ecotourism of Ethiopia looks like
- To give possible recommendation for future sustainable use of ecotourism in Ethiopia

## **2. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS OF TOURISM**

The term tourism is one of the most controversial concepts which have no distinct universally accepted definition. Therefore, different scholars define the word tourism in different ways at different times. (Brohman, 1996), defined tourism as the sum total of the operators mainly has an economic nature, which directly relates to the entry, stay and movement of foreigners inside and outside a certain country, city or region. As Hunziker and Krampf (1942) stated: "Tourism is the totality of the relationship and phenomena arising from the travel and stay of strangers provided the stay does not imply the establishment of a permanent residence and is not connected with a remunerated activity. "In this definition the time specified in which the travelers must spend and the purpose of travelling were lost. The focus was on the strangers stay in the place where not their permanent residence. Nevertheless, in order to fill limitations of the above mentioned definitions, the most used definition of tourism today is the one given and approved by the UN in 1993 by the World Tourism Organization (WTO):"

It comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited."

The development of recreation and enjoyment; resulted from the surplus production since the industrial revolution, bring the new sector known as the smokeless industry; tourism. Industrial revolution made things easier and easier; because it helps over production of goods and reduces the need of too much labor force. The beauty of nature lies in its variety which indeed is endless. So is the timeless desire in the human beings to appreciate the nature from the bottom of their heart. This is why since ancient times explorers, discoverers and travelers undertook adventurous journey in spite of all difficulties they came across. The underlying idea of visiting new places to appreciate their beauty, in course of time, has given birth to a modern industry called tourism. People go from one place to other for different reasons: temporary change of location, relaxation, recreation, getting acquainted with traditions and spending the leisure time; these all activities is called tourism. Based on the broad definition of tourism, the industry includes all socio-economic activities that are directly or indirectly involved in providing services to tourists.

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indirectly involved in providing services to tourists.

### **2.1 History, Definition and Meanings of Eco-tourism**

Like other sectors tourism, especially of eco-tourism is not one time occurrence that reach its current point. Different people have different view towards different things, and the same happened in the case of ecotourism. Buckley (2003) clearly observes the vagueness of the word ecotourism. Accordingly, Eco-tourism is a useful concept, but not a very well defined one.

Various people and organizations have put forward a range of different definitions, from precise to vague; concise to the extended. The term ecotourism is being used lightly and interchangeably with nature tourism. In doing so there is a failure to acknowledge that ecotourism is a subset of nature tourism which falls at the „purest“ end of broad spectrum of nature tourism experiences (Adem, 2008).

#### **2.1.1 Historical development of Ecotourism**

Though there is no clear point when, where and how does ecotourism started, but for the sake of this review paper let us go through some of the historical event regarding ecotourism. The origin of nature based travel goes back many centuries. Herodotus in his extensive travels visited amongst other places, the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea, Egypt and Italy. His work reveals he was interested in geography and natural environment not only history. Others such as Aristotle also travelled extensively and studied nature.

In later times, Marco polo and other explorers left vivid accounts of the new lands they „discovered.“ More recently explorers such as James Cook and Charles Darwin travelled to remote lands describing the natural and cultural world of these new places (Robyn Bushell, 2001) and James Bruce travelled to Ethiopia searching the source of Blue Nile in the 17th century, this can be considered as ecotourism; due to nature of the travel, it was nature based. Ecotourism movement was first inaugurated in Latin America and Africa as a response to the ecosystem destruction. For instance, Ecotourism in Latin America became viewed as potential alternative to the destructive industries such as logging, oil drilling, mining, and other natural resource extractive industries (Theodros, 2002). Even though the concept’s background can be traced to the movements in both Latin America and Africa, the situations in Africa were different from that of Latin America. Ecotourism first became popular in East Africa as an alternative to a failed system of a protectionist philosophy of wildlife management that separated local people from national parks. This philosophy came about as a reaction to the rampant elephant and rhino poaching. Thus, scientists and park officials argued that the only to protect these and other wildlife species was to give those living near the national parks a financial incentive in the parks, wildlife conservation, and tourism (Tedebe, 2005).

A variety of terms have been introduced to describe the same phenomenon which may be referred to as nature travel, nature-orientated tourism, nature tourism, nature based tourism, sustainable tourism, alternative tourism and special interest tourism (Hoof, V.,2006). Some people like Tenalem (2001), argues that the majority of ecotourism definitions lie between the passive position and the active position towards the high responsibility pole on the continuum. He further suggested that the desired state is to move from the minimum passive position towards a higher or active pole of the continuum. The active pole mainly emphasizes the actions of protecting the environment and the behavioral intentions of Eco tourists, whereas the passive position concentrates solely on ecotourism development, not enhancing the antagonistic impacts or the Eco tourists’ need to be satisfied. Others like Wall (1994) define ecotourism based on three criteria; the characteristics of the destinations; the motivations of its participants; and the organizational characteristics of the ecotourism trip.

#### **2.1.2 Definition and Meaning of Ecotourism**

There is a lack of consensus in the literature regarding the etymology of the term ecotourism. A number of factors have been cited to explain the reasons why a single, agreed definition has remained elusive, and is predicted to remain so. It is suggested that ecotourism attempts to „describe an activity, set forth a philosophy, and while at the same time espouse a model of development“, and it is this multipurpose nature of the concept that prevents the adoption of a common definition. Thus, Ecotourism is often used interchangeably with other terms such as nature tourism, sustainable tourism, green tourism, responsible tourism and even soft tourism.

Ecotourism is tourism and recreation that is both nature-based and sustainable (WTO, 2002e). Three features of this definition merit further discussion.

**First**, the definition clarifies the descriptive and the prescriptive components of the ecotourism concept. The nature component is descriptive or positive in the sense that it simply describes the activity location and associated consumer motivations. The sustainable component is prescriptive or normative in the sense that it reflects what people want the activity to be. An important point is that sustainability incorporates environmental, experiential, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions.

**Second**, this basic conceptual definition incorporates more complex definitions. For example, some definitions focus on minimizing negative environmental and cultural impacts while maximizing positive economic impacts. Such a focus is a means to the end of achieving sustainability. Likewise, the definitional focus on environmental education tends to reflect a desire to satisfy tourists or to use education to reduce

negative environmental impacts. In the former case, it is a means to the end of achieving a sustainable experience. In the latter, it is also a means to the end of sustainability. Because most components of ecotourism definitions either focus on the goal of sustainability or on means to achieve that goal, it is practical to use the simple conceptual definition of ecotourism being sustainable nature-based tourism and recreation.

**Third**, and related to the second feature, by focusing on ends (the desired condition of sustainability), this definition forces critical evaluation of what constitutes ecotourism. For example, is sport hunting ecotourism? Many observers feel that hunting is not ecotourism, but under this definition it would be if it met the sustainability criterion. Having the importance of sustainability within the ecotourism definition, a fundamental question is “what is sustainability?” in simplified terms, tourism sustainability is postulated to result from a positive overall balance in environmental, experiential, socio-cultural and economic impacts (experiential used to describe the effect of visitors on each other and socio-cultural impact is to describe the effect of visitors on local residents). Thus, tourism activities that generate more positive net benefit would be more sustainable, in general, than tourism activities that generate fewer positive net benefits.

Ecotourism as we all know is a vague word which became a buzzword since its origin from the 1980s, 1990s to present. And some other definitions are listed below given by different scholars (though the definition given is written in different scholars differently, let us see the 1991 definition provided by the ICUN cited in (Hoof, V. 2006).

“Ecotourism is environmentally responsible travelling and visitation to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past

and present) found in these areas”. Ecotourism is “Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the wellbeing of local people” (WTO, 2006). The definition above is viewed in light of experiential and „educational factors of the protected natural areas”. Here ecotourism is claimed as a multi-dimensional philosophical concept, which is a component of eco-development and requires planning based on strict guidelines and regulations that will enhance the sustainable operation. Ashley (2006) further suggested that eco-tourists profile characteristics attest an awareness and knowledge about the natural environment and cultural aspects, in such a way „that will convert him or her into somebody keenly involved in conservation issues”. He drew comparisons between mass tourists and eco-tourists over the nature-based utilization. Both groups are keen to go to the natural areas but the mass tourists has a more passive role with nature, participating in activities which do not relate to the true concern over nature or ecology such as water sports, jogging, and biking. Whereas, eco-tourists are attracted to a natural area and have a more active role through a non-consumptive use of wild-life and natural resources, through activities such as nature photography, botanical studies, and observing wildlife (UNWTO, 2005).

An official international definition was adopted during the UN International Year of Ecotourism in 2002 (UNEP and WTO, 2002). The major components, as analyzed by Buckley (1994) do not seem to have changed: nature-based production, minimal-impact managements, environmental education, and contribution to conservation. An alternative but congruent analytical concept suggested by Buckley (2003) namely geo-tourism with a positive triple bottom line, seems to have received little attention. An analysis of ecotourism literature by Weaver and Lawton (2007) indicated that debates over definition have remained a significant theme.

Ecotourism means more than just spending time in and appreciating an ecosystem. For example, if you took a romp through the Amazon Rainforest it would be a great vacation, but would not necessarily be considered ecotourism. That's because ecotourism requires active tourists who make it a goal conserve natural environments and improve the overall wellbeing of an ecosystem's flora, fauna and people. You can take a swim in the some of the world's Ocean or sea, but don't call it ecotourism unless you're actively making a difference while doing so.

Whether a word needs a precise definition depends on the context in which it is used. If the term „ecotourism” is used for marketing, for example, it does not need to be defined at all, as long as it persuades people to buy products. There are, however, several circumstances where a precise definition becomes important.

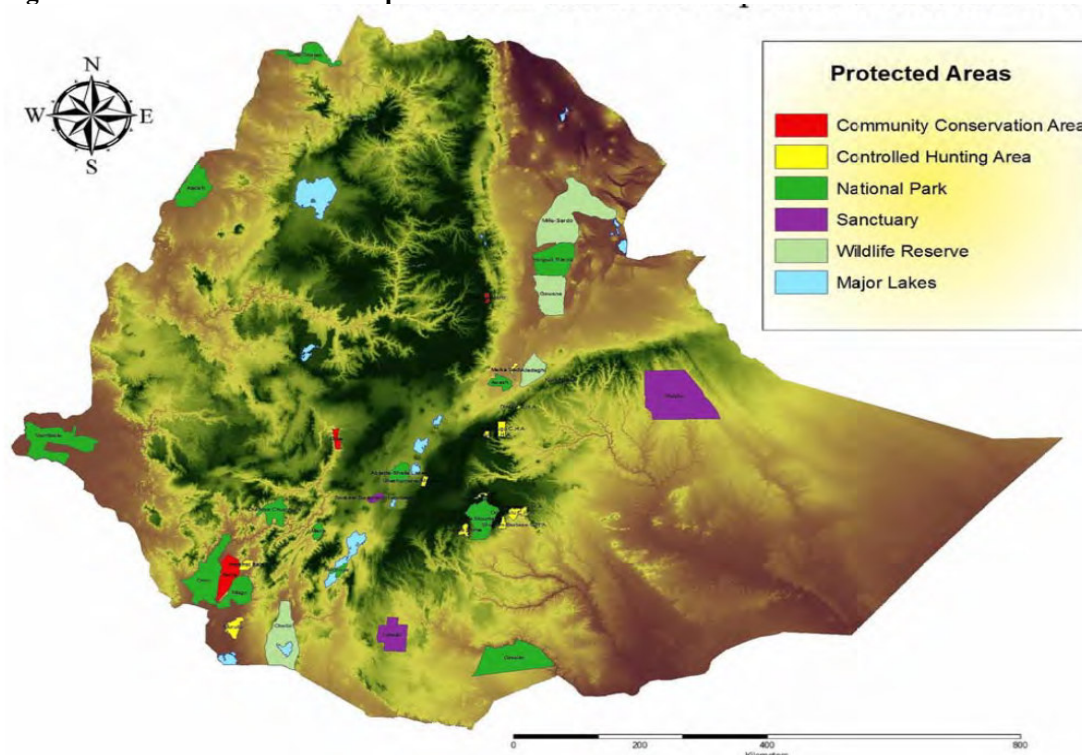
### **3. DEVELOPMENT OF ECOTOURISM IN CASE OF ETHIOPIA**

The concept of ecotourism is a new phenomenon to and it is difficult to explain its significance achievement since the approach of ecotourism is not widely disseminated in Ethiopia. The government of Ethiopia also has recognized development and promotion of ecotourism and provided consultancy services for a number of potential developers of ecotourism sites. Although, developers and policy makers do not properly take the idea of ecotourism, some investors started to involve in development of ecotourism in different regions of Ethiopia. Bishangari Eco-Lodge located at Eastern of Langano Lake in Oromia Region and Village Ethiopia located at Afar Region (Bilen) are examples of these private ecotourism developments in Ethiopia (Theodros, 2004). In past few years, LUPO aims to create alternative income generating means such as ecotourism to reduce the pressure on the natural resources of land through conducting a pre-feasibility study of proposed areas on the potentials of ecotourism (Scwenk, 2002).

### 3.1 Ecotourism and protected areas in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, there are nine protected areas (National Parks), of which only two are gazetted ones, the Semein Mountains National Park and Awash National Park. The other protected areas including the game reserves, sanctuaries, national forest priority areas etc. are not gazetted. The main objectives of these protected areas are to protect natural resources of the country (Fekadu, 2002) but recently most of protected areas of Ethiopia are exposed to severe degradations due to failure of creating alternative options like ecotourism, which are off-farm activities (Adem, 2008). Thus, to minimize these problems which expose natural resources to degradations in protected areas, some interventions, which involve ecotourism activities, have been attempted in Adaba Dodola forest priority area in Bale zone in Oromia regional state. WAJIB which said to be “Waldaa Jirattoota Bosonaa” in Afan Oromo meaning “forest Dwellers associations” is an example of an outcome of such effort. Incomes obtained by local community from provision of accommodation service to tourists, horse provision and tour guiding which contributes to reduce free livestock grazing and deforestation of protected area (Tsegaye, 2007).

**Figure 1 Protected Areas of Ethiopia**



Source: Maggie Wilder (2016)

### 3.2 Ecotourism and other segments/Forms of tourism in Ethiopia

“Eco-tourism” is a relatively new idea, as already explained above, that has dramatically captured the attention of many people from a variety of backgrounds. It seems to be a catch-all word that has different meanings to different persons. To some means ecologically sound tourism; to other it is synonymous with nature tourism, alternative tourism, appropriate, responsible, ethical, green, environmentally friendly or sustainable tourism. Despite the continued debate about exactly what eco-tourism entails, it seems that most agree that ecotourism must be a force for sustaining natural resources. Thus, ecotourism is nature travel that advances conservation and sustainable development efforts (Tsegaye, 2007).

Sustainable tourism embraces all segments of the tourism industry with guidelines and criteria that seek to reduce environmental impacts and to improve the contribution of tourism to sustainable development and environmental conservation. According to World Tourism Organization (WTO), sustainable tourism leads to the management of resources in such a way that economic, social, environmental and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled. It is in short a tourism activity that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. Sustainable Tourism is “Tourism which is economically viable but does not destroy the resources on which the future of tourism will depend, notably the physical environment and the social fabric of the host community” (Baker, 2008).

Sustainable tourism “seeks to minimize the negative footprint of tourism developments and at the same time contribute to conservation and community development in the areas being developed” (Christ *et al.*, 2003, cited in Baker, 2008).

Sustainability is a concept that is frequently used in relation with tourism development. While there does not exist a universal definition of sustainability, many scholars agree that sustainable development includes long term positive economic, social and environmental outcomes (Hunter, 1997; UNWTO, 2005; Goodwin, 2011). In relation to tourism development, sustainability often enters the discussion regarding different forms of tourism and their impacts. Conventional mass tourism, for instance, is known to have many negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts, while at the same time the economic benefits are also frequently not enjoyed by the local population (Telfer and Wall, 2000; Torres, 2003), for instance when large resort chains are owned by foreign investors. Several alternative types of tourism, such as cultural tourism and ecotourism, have been introduced as being more sustainable, and beneficial for the local population (Scheyvens, 2002; Brohman, 1996; Mowfort and Munt, 1998).

### **3.3. Ecotourism and Sustainable Development in Ethiopia**

Ecotourism as segment of sustainable tourism applies sustainability principles to its tourism activities, operations, establishments and projects. Consequently, five basic principles of sustainability came into being:

1. The idea of holistic planning and strategy making
2. The importance of preserving essential ecological process
3. The need to protect both human heritages and biodiversity
4. The need to develop in a manner that foster long-term productivity sustainable for future generation
5. The goal of achieving a better balance of equity among nations (Bram and Lane 1993, cited in Dowling and Fennell, 2003)

## **4. SIGNIFICANCE OF ECOTOURISM IN ETHIOPIA**

Ecotourism, a recent but widely hailed tourism alternative, has high potential to be an instrument for rural economic development and environmental conservation. Role tourism plays in poverty reduction and natural resource management (UNESCO, 2007).

### **4.1 Economic Benefits**

The economic benefits of ecotourism as identified by different scholar (Weggoro, 2008) include;

**Employment opportunities:** -it brought employment opportunities to often previously disadvantaged people and a significant amount of the industry remains in the form of small scale projects that can be funded by locals. Since the sector is labor intensive, its expansion generates more employment opportunities at semi-skilled, technical and managerial level than an equivalent expansion in other sectors of the economy.

**Creating new jobs:**-tourist expenditures on lodging, transportation, food, guides and souvenirs is an important source of income for local communities by providing supplemental income to rural farmers, women and young people.

**Diversifying regional economies:** -it is relatively decentralized industry that is highly capable of diversifying regional economies of less developed countries which are dependent of primary activities.

**Catalyst for development:** -tourism activities act as catalyst for the development of other sectors of the economy, that is, it provides strong forward and backward linkages so that induced macro/micro economic incentives as well as motivations for development in the region. Ecotourism stimulates profitable domestic industries like hotels and other lodging facilities, restaurants and other food services, transportation systems, handicrafts, guide serves etc.

**GDP:** -ecotourism contribute a great deal of gross domestic product. Foreign Exchange earnings: while tourism is sensitive to the level of economic activity in the tourist generating countries, it provides higher and stable earning for developing countries than those from primary products.

**Development of infrastructure:** -the benefits accruing from investment in infrastructure and super structure as air ports, hotels and restaurants, road networks, communications, power and water supply as well as other related public utilities are widely shared with other sectors of the economy, resulting in to greater economic efficiency.

**Transfer of income:** -tourism is an excellent vehicle for transferring income from wealthy nations and persons to the poorer sections of society. Ecotourism is especially effective in this transfer since travelers often venture in to remote, economically disadvantaged regions.

As far as recorded data indicated that the foreign visitors arrived in Ethiopia in 1963 were 19,836 and revenues obtained from tourists in this year was 11 million Ethiopian Birr. However, recently the numbers of tourist arrivals and the revenues can be obtained from tourists is significantly increasing. For example, in year 2005 about 227,398 tourist arrivals reached Ethiopia and about 1,202,368,339 Ethiopian Birr generated from these tourists (MoCT, 2006). Table 3 presents trends of tourists' arrivals in Ethiopia from years 2001-2005.

**Table 1 Trends of tourist arrivals and money received from these tourists in Ethiopia from years 2001-2005**

Year	Tourists Arrivals	Receipts (in millions)		Growth rate (%)
		Birr	USD	
2002	156,327	676.1	77.1	-
2003	179,910	778	89.946355	15.1
2004	184,079	994.408062	114.627850	2.3
2005	227,398	1,202.368339	138.599940	23

Source: Ethiopian Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2006

As can be observed from Table above, during the years 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05 arrival has registered high growth rates of 15.1%, 2.3% and 23% respectively in Ethiopia. Foreign exchanges earnings from tourism sector also increased from 77.1 million US\$ in 2002 to 138.6 million US \$ in 2005 increased by growth rate of 16.6% to 20.9% respectively in each year (MoCT). Annex 1 presents foreign exchanges earnings from tourism in Ethiopia from 2002 to 2005. The contribution of tourism to Ethiopian GDP is low when compared to the other Eastern African countries. For example, in 1996 tourism contribution in Ethiopia was about its 0.5 % GDP whereas its contribution to Kenya was 5.1 % of its GDP in the same year (Aden, 2008).

**Table 2 Tourism Contribution to GDP at current Market price in Million Birr for Ethiopia from 1996-2002**

Year	GDP**	Receipt	% of Contribution
1996	37,937.6	182.665	0.48
1997	41,465.1	279	0.67
1998	44,840.3	225	0.50
1999	48,687.6	252	0.52
2000	52,074.2	577.8	1.11
2001	53,011.3	642	1.21
2002	51,560.6	676.1	1.31

Source: Ethiopian Tourism Commission, (2003)

**Table 3 Trend of visitors' types and numbers of Abijata-Shala Lakes National Park from 1996 to 2006**

Year in G.C	Ethiopians	Resident Foreigners	Tourists	Students/ Education	Total customers or visitors	Total cars	Revenue collected (in Birr)
1996	593	87	229	430	1339	1339	8456
1997	2027	641	709	609	3986	3986	68524
1998	1620	800	1145	220	3785	3855	94263
1999	1208	509	386	466	2569	2570	60739
2000	1837	785	930	392	3944	3944	81800
2001	1912	741	851	842	4346	4346	77609
2002	2298	681	1387	291	4657	4657	102941
2003	1934	515	1697	535	4681	4681	115354
2004	2346	725	2101	1200	6372	6372	147090
2005	2885	907	2900	1652	8344	6692	197605
2006	2194	860	2995	1652	7701	7705	195062
Total	20854	7251	15330	8289	51724	50147	1149443
Percent	40.31	14.02	29.64	16.03	100	-	-

Source: Adem, (2008)

**Table 4 Number of visitors or tourists and revenue collected from October, 2006 to September 2007**

Month Name	Total customers/visitors	Paying customers	Not paying customers	Total cars	Revenue collected (in Birr)
October	1071	887	184	203	31,314
November	826	715	111	162	26,433
December	746	746	0	176	24,923
January	939	882	57	195	27,519
February	851	851	0	100	28,207
March	435	435	0	103	11,724
April	672	668	4	111	16,517
May	905	536	369	77	7,768
June	927	693	234	63	6,680
July	1263	823	440	108	11,640
August	1215	1173	42	203	27,973
September	1349	1349	0	174	22,550
Total	11199	9758	1441	1675	243,248
Mean	≈933	≈813	≈120	140	20,270.66

Source: Abijata-Shala Lakes National Park (ASLNP) Headquarter Office, (2008)

**Table 5 The number of international tourists arrived to Ethiopia during the FRDE and Income generated (1992-2013)**

Year	Tourist Arrivals		Income generated (1992-2013)			
	Count	% Growth	In USD	% Growth	In ETB	% Growth
1992	83,213	-	-	-	57,763,000	-
1994	98,070	-	-	-	114,135,000	-
1996	108,885	-	-	-	182,665,000	-
1998	112,000	-19.3	32,700,00	-24.0	225,000,000	-19.4
2000	135,954	18.2	68,000,000	102.4	577,800,000	129.3
2002	156,327	5.3	77,100,000	4.5	676,100,000	7.0
2004	184,078	2.3	114,627,850	27.4	994,408,000	27.8
2006	330,026	45.1	169,975,086	22.6	1,494,811,899	24.3
2008	383,399	7.1	204,855,489	-4.2	1,979,539,071	-0.4
2009	427,286	11.4	246,415,374	20.3	2,900,062,542	46.5
2010	468,305	9.6	333,352,000	35.3	4,800,268,804	65.5
2011	523,438	12.0	411,638,987	23.5		
2012	596,341	13.9	1,190,775,613			
2013	629,768		2,500,000,000			

Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism Bulletin (2013)

#### 4.2 Social Benefits

Ecotourism development, in addition to economic and environmental benefits, might contribute socially by enhancing local community esteem and provides the opportunity for greater understanding and communication among people of diverse background. Ecotourism helps for political empowerment of local communities and fosters respect for different cultures (helps to develop tolerance). It is an important vehicle for promoting cultural exchanges (Agrusa and Guidry, 1999; Nepal, 2002; Weggro, 2008).

Social sustainability: ensures that development increases people's control over their own lives is compatible with the social values of people affected by it, and maintains and strengthens community identity. A socially sustainable development must achieve distributive equity, adequate provision of social services including health and education; gender equity, and political accountability and participation. Ethiopia. However lack of exposure to tourism markets is a significant challenge in attempting to carve net market share in the region and optimize on the rents that can be obtained from these assets. Thus, one can understand the potential that tourism has in local economic development in Ethiopia.

#### 5. LINK BETWEEN ENVIRONMENT AND ECOTOURISM IN ETHIOPIA

The relationship between ecotourism and environment includes the biophysical, social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions. The maintenance of a 'good quality' environment for tourists' destination is one of the



major aspects of the development of tourism. The quality standard of the environmental resources that attract tourists determines the economic opportunity of tourism. It is evident that the very existence of tourism is unthinkable without a healthy of pleasant environment, with well-preserved landscape and harmony between people and nature. Ecotourism, if properly managed and applied, can benefit the environment in the following ways (Weggoro, 2008).

- Ecotourism is relatively less-pollutant industry, which can enhance the conservation and promotion of natural and cultural heritages.

- Ecotourism will foster responsible tourist behavior, conservation of important wild life habitats and ecosystem.

- It is best alternative activity to environmentally damaging activities like farming, logging and mining. Although ecotourism may not be able to preserve these untouched areas as they would if human contact were prohibited, it can help to protect them from the dangers of destructive agricultural practice, mining and industrialization. “The flora and fauna may be bothered [due to ecotourism development], but at least it will not be destroyed” (Dasenbros, 2002).

- Encourages individual conservation efforts-informed tour guides and educational pamphlets can incite tourists to become environmentalists, thereby promoting conservation efforts.

- Demonstrates the importance of natural and cultural resources to a community’s economic and social well-being and can help to preserve them (Abera, 2016).

## 6. CONCLUSION

Ecotourism could be a link between protected areas and local communities by generating income for local communities while conservation goals of protected areas achieved. Also stated that ecotourism could be very important where the ecosystem is fragile and other forms of natural resource management might be impossible. Ecotourism development, in addition to economic and environmental benefits, might contribute socially by enhancing local community esteem and provides the opportunity for greater understanding and communication among people of diverse background. Ecotourism helps for political empowerment of local communities and fosters respect for different cultures (helps to develop tolerance). Ecotourism, a recent but widely hailed tourism alternative, has high potential to be an instrument for rural economic development and environmental conservation. Role tourism plays in poverty reduction and natural resource management in Ethiopia. Although not satisfactory, the trend of ecotourism development in Ethiopia is developing from past to present. It is an important vehicle for promoting cultural exchanges. Incomes obtained by local community from provision of accommodation service to tourists, horse provision and tour guiding which contributes to reduce free livestock grazing and deforestation of protected area.

## 7. FUTURE PROSPECTS

- ❖ There are some ecotourism potentials and possibilities of alternative options, which are underdeveloped like local handicrafts. Therefore, reinforcing these off-farm diversified livelihoods and introducing additional alternative options is very important for sustainable management of natural resources in Ethiopia.
- ❖ There are problems of local communities linked with their livelihood and other related social problems that could contribute to extreme poverty, which in turn contributed to degradations of natural resources of Ethiopia. Thus, further study is necessary which contributes to alleviation of by using natural for ecotourism in sustainable way.
- ❖ Degradation of natural resources around tourists’ destinations sites like hot springs, the seasonality in tourism and leakages in and around are indicators of the negative impacts of tourism. Therefore, the concerned stakeholders are responsible to create alternative options for local communities, create attractive tourist facilities and services, and protect sensitive areas or sites of park and integrating the surrounding tourism activities with local economic development or agricultural activities.
- ❖ Developing and creating diversified livelihood, promoting the development of ecotourism, encouraging benefit sharing and conservation of natural resources of the park and giving the ownership sense of the local people over the natural resources of the park are very necessary for sustainable use of ecotourism resources of study area.
- ❖ Increasing the awareness of local communities in and around attraction area towards ecotourism or nature tourism is very important. Therefore, such awareness might be made through formal and informal meetings of local communities with support of concerned stakeholders.

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