

Potentials of tourism essay sample

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Eastern Africa is a leading tourist destination in Sub Saharan Africa. The potential of the tourism industry in the region can be attributed to its endowment of natural resources, which have contributed significantly to the economic growth and development of countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Seychelles and more recently Rwanda (Atsbeha, 2015). Ethiopia was one of the African countries to establish a tourist industry in the 1960s. Tourism became part and parcel of a national economic sector in 1966 when the first Tourism Development Master Plan was developed.

During the imperial period, a good investment was made in this sector. The establishment of Ethiopian Airlines for international and domestic air access, opening of airfields and hotels at key tourist attraction sites and establishment of national tour operators were good cases in point (Atsbeha, 2015). Literature shows that Ethiopia ranks 14th among African countries in terms of tourism development. South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana and Namibia rank first, second, third, fourth and fifth respectively.

Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Uganda and Ghana rank sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth respectively. Senegal, Rwanda, Gambia, Ethiopia and Mali rank eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth respectively (Ibid). Over 1.6 million people of Ethiopia are employed in tourism. This constitutes 6.9% of the population. The country has some of the highest and most stunning places on the African continent. In fact, 80% of the highlands of the whole of Sub Saharan Africa are found in Ethiopia. The country is old and as Abyssinia, its culture and traditions date back over 3,000 years.

Many people visit Ethiopia because of the remarkable manner in which ancient historical traditions has been preserved the basis of Ethiopia's tourism product is cultural, historical and natural sites. The long-term vision of the currently ruling government is to make Ethiopia one of the top ten tourist destinations in Africa by the year 2020, with an emphasis on maximizing the poverty-reducing impacts of tourism, and utilizing tourism to transform the image of the country. Even though the country is endowed of many sources of tourism, the sector is not well developed (Ethiopian sustainable tourism master plan 2015-2025, 2015).

The under development of this sector is the result of two things. One, the expansion of tourism infrastructures such as transport, hotels and accommodations did not meet what the sector needs. Second, several potentials of tourism development of the country remained unstudied. " Ecological sustainability is development that is compatible with the maintenance of essential ecological process and conservation of biophysical resources" In Ethiopia the natural forest which are found in various parts of the country have been still being destroyed .

According to the Ethiopian action Ethiopian program , 1994, vii " longs ago from the total land of Ethiopian about 40% Was under the coverage of Forest; but at the peasant time this has been reduce to about 2. 7%," from this numerical value anybody can understudy how much the count lost its natural heritages . Ecotourism is a dynamic industry with a growing market trend that operates in a unique environment of eco-sustainability and social conditions of responsible practices, breaking through some barriers linked to seasonality, unlike other sub-sectors of the industry.

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Ecotourism is also predominantly developmental, operating frequently by providing year-round jobs to the people the destinations as livelihood options, especially for the people in agrarian societies. It promotes conservation linked enterprise developments with sustainable results. Ecotourism generates income to the community as well as revenue for reinvestment in local economic development. It is also known for its eco-sustainability by conserving natural areas, and educating visitors about sustainability with a clear understanding of the value of biodiversity and healthy environment while benefitting the local people.

(Participatory tourism, the future of Ethiopia, community based eco-tourism development from research to implementation, PHD, Mulugeta Feseha). According to Dr. Mulugeta Fesaha participatory Tourism related some concepts of:- Protection of environment- its flora, fauna and landscape, respect local cultures- traditions, beliefs and established heritage resources, Benefit local communities-both economically and socially and Conserve natural resources promote conservation linked community enterprise development.

(UNESCO and UNEP: 2002). Ecotourism rates to a responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people and community based ecotourism refers to a form of ecotourism where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community.

This aspect of the training dealt with interactive training on issues related with how community based ecotourism providers should exercise, how to actively listen, understand, acknowledgment, resolve problems and advance their relationship with their customers, (Participatory tourism: The future of Ethiopia, Dr. Mulugeta). According to responsible travel . com community based tourism is in which local residents (often rural, poor and economically marginalized) invite tourists to visit their communities with the provision of overnight accommodation.

Community-based tourism is providing by sustainable travel internationals, it is socially sustainable tourism. Which is initiated and almost always operated exclusively by local people. Shared leadership emphasizing community well being over individual profit. Balances power within communities, and fosters traditional culture, conservation, and responsible stewardship of the land. Depending on the above definition we can say the community based ecotourism is tourism business, which is initiated and run by local communities for their own benefits.

In order to better elaborate the concept here are few points on the nature of community based Tourism. Community based tourism enables the tourist to discover local habitats and wildlife, and the community will be aware of the commercial and social value placed on their natural heritage through tourism and this will foster community based conservation of these resources. Community based ecotourism affords travelers with rare opportunities to experience local communities.

According to Guassa Area General Management Plan 2007 – 2012, The Guassa Area of Menz of the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS), in the central highlands of Ethiopia, is of critical importance for both biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation and is also home to an ancient common property resource management system. This 100 km² area is an important component of the Afroalpine habitat of Ethiopia (3200 to 3700m asl), falling within Conservation International (CI) Biodiversity ‘ Hotspot’ of the Ethiopian Highlands.

There are high levels of endemism and important populations of endangered and rare species such as the Ethiopian wolf, gelada baboon and Ankober Serin. The area is also vitally important for the livelihoods of local communities who harvest Guassa grass and graze their livestock. The grass is most important as a thatching material, being used for 96% of the houses in the area. The grass is particularly important for the lowest economic group of the community as a cash crop and therefore a coping mechanism, during severe drought seasons.

The area is also a refuge for the full Menz livestock herd during severe droughts. For 400 years, the area had a well-defined and ancient indigenous common property resource management system, the Qero system which tried to fairly distribute and protect the resources through pass and enforcing byelaws. The Qero system could close the Guassa Area for community resource use for as long as five years.

The length of closure largely depended upon the growth and recovery of the grass, community requirements for resources, success of the local crop

harvest and on the frequency of drought in the Guassa Area. When this management system was effective, it benefited both the community whose livelihoods were intricately associated with this Afroalpine area and also the rare and endangered biodiversity. Following the 1975 Agrarian Reform, as land ownership was transformed from communal tenure into the state or public land tenure.

The state of the natural resources declines as a result, as the area was essentially treated as an open access resource. Livestock is grazing continued all year and grass cutting intensified and was uncontrolled until the grass became too short to be of use. In recent years, with support from the Darwin Initiative, and the FZS Afro alpine Ecosystem Conservation Project, the community re-formed a conservation management group and agreed to reinstate the traditional management system, commencing with a 3-year moratorium on natural resource use.

Day to day management of the area and supervision of the community scouts is conducted by the Guassa Committee, comprising 5 representatives from each of the 9 kebeles with rightful users. More recently a menz Guassa Woreda Committee has been formed as the highest authority, consisting of a representative from the administration, judiciary, police, agriculture, environmental protection agency, private army and security offices, as well as the representatives from each Kebele Guassa Committee.

The communities have however; realize that a vision and strategy was required to guide future the management of the area. This paper will attempt to assess some key practices, challenges and prospects of

community based ecotourism development in menz guassa community conservation area. The linkage between environmental protection and securing the needs of local community to harmonize this situation we need to have an integrate approach to combat the natural heritage degradation problem like menz gussa conservation area community based ecotourism development.