

Prevailing Risks and the Way Forward Towards Safe and Resilient Tourism for Sustainable Development

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Abstract: Tourism is a well-known services industry with a significant impact in the economy. However different risks are hindering its share in countries' sustainable development. This study attempts to examine prevailing risks and the way forward towards safe and resilient tourism for sustainable development in Ethiopia. The document analysis was used to draw evidence and deeply analyze reports from international organizations, government, the World Travel and Tourism Council and internet sources. The study reveals that security is a dominant risk in the tourism sector. The study concludes that the Government should eliminate security risks and cooperate with stakeholders to make a change in the tourism sector. Finally, limitation of study, future research direction and implications for the way forward towards resilient tourism are specified in the study.

Keywords: Risks, Resilient Tourism, Sustainable Development.

JEL Classification: Q5, Q54, Q56, Q58

1 Introduction

Tourism has long been recognized as a significant economic growth and development driver. Tourism is a vital sector of the world economy, playing a crucial role in job creation, generating substantial revenue, and promoting economic prosperity. (Tourism, 2030). During the past few decades, tourism has been a leading sector and driving force for economic growth and development in developing and developed economies. (Balsalobre-Lorente et al., 2021)

World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported that in 2023, Travel & Tourism as an important economic activity have a direct economic impact, the industry has significant indirect and induced impacts. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported that in 2023, the Travel & Tourism sector contributed 9.1% to the global GDP, marking a 23.2% increase from 2022 and remaining only 4.1% below the 2019 level. Additionally, 27 million new jobs were created in 2023, representing a 9.1% growth compared to 2022 and staying just 1.4% below the 2019 level. Domestic visitor spending surged by 18.1% in 2023, surpassing the 2019 level. Meanwhile, international visitor spending experienced a significant 33.1% jump in 2023 but remained 14.4% below the 2019 total. (WTTC, 2023)

Since tourism fosters employment possibilities and economic growth in local communities, it is crucial for sustainable development. With advantages for the economy, society, and environment, its growth has a significant influence on nations' sustainable development. The goal of sustainable development is to promote economic and human growth while preserving the integrity of the social structures and ecosystems that support the economy. It also serves as the cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the preeminent worldwide framework for collaboration (*THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development*, n.d.)

The progress of human and economic growth while protecting the social and ecological systems that support local economies is the core principle of sustainable development. In many countries and regions throughout the world, tourism has played a significant role in promoting sustainable development. One of the most important strategies for promoting economic growth, lowering poverty, creating employment, and improving food security in developing countries has been the expansion of the tourist sector. Many developing countries have rich natural resources, high biological variety, and culturally important sites. These qualities attract foreign visitors, who subsequently spend their money locally to promote economic growth and job creation. Tourism has been associated with the ideas of sustainable development because of its capacity to support both environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods. (Richardson, 2021)

In 2015 a historic agreement was reached between the world leaders at the United Nations on a universal 2030 agenda for sustainable development. All the governments promised to work on 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) for the

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better future. Tourism can play a major role in achieving 17 SDGs and corresponding 169 SDG targets for sustainable solutions for people, the planet, prosperity, and peace. (*Tourism & Sustainable Development Goals – Tourism for SDGs*, n.d.)

This study focuses on the attainment of SDG 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, while SDG 8 promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

In recent years, stakeholders' participation in sustainable tourism development has received more attention. They play an immense role in practicing sustainability in the industry. In building sustainable tourism and achieving its long-term goals, primary stakeholders like the Government have a huge responsibility to create and enforce policies and regulations and also collaborate with other stakeholders like local communities, tourism businesses, NGOs, and tourists. (Ilkhanizadeh, 2021). Diverse contributions of stakeholders, connectivity and coalition, multi-level governance system, and environmental sensitivity collectively improve the adaptive capacity and resilience of tourism despite various challenges and changes like natural disasters, terrorism, demographic shifts, and over-tourism. (Hartman, 2018)

Prevailing risks such as security and international relations significantly influence the tourism sector in Ethiopia. (Engda et.al, 2020). According to Addis Standard magazine, consistent conflicts and instability in the country discourage tourists, which leads to a significant drop in the number of arrivals by large in conflict-affected areas and leads to travel restrictions. This situation creates economic hardship and job losses for those dependent on the industry (Standard, 2023)

A year before the Tigray war in Ethiopia started in 2019, tourism was one of the major contributors to the Ethiopian economy by representing 6.3% of the GDP after two years of bloody war in 2022 the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP dropped to 5.6%. Since 2020 Ethiopia has experienced various serious wars in Tigray (2020-2022), Amhara and Oromiya conflicts(2020-present), and ongoing regional tensions with neighboring countries (*Global Conflict Tracker*, n.d.) are the major risk for domestic and international travel because of safety. Safety is very important for ensuring a positive experience for visitors. It greatly influences tourists' recreation satisfaction, place dependence, and destination loyalty. (Wang et al., 2019). This paper provides perspective on building the way forward to safe and resilient tourism.

This paper uses data from existing policy and research documents on tourism, and sustainability in Ethiopia. Literature, the objective of the study, methodology, findings, and recommendations are presented consecutively. Finally, conclusion and limitation.

2 Literature

Tourism is one of the major sources of economic growth, by increasing GDP and creating jobs, especially in developing countries. It generates revenue through international visitors' spending, which supports local businesses and economies. (Richardson, R. B., 2021). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the sector contributed 9.1% to the global GDP, nearly reaching pre-pandemic levels. For 2024 it is projected to reach around 10%. In 2023, 330 million jobs are supported by this sector, and expected to support 348 million jobs in 2024. Simpson and World Travel and Tourism Council (2024) According to the WTTC economic impact report in Ethiopia in 2024, Total contributions to GDP were ETB 450 billion (5.5% of GDP) in 2023, including indirect induced impacts. In 2024 it is forecasted to rise to ETB 524.7 billion (6.2% of GDP). In terms of total employment contribution, this sector accounts for 3.3% of total employment, generating 1,965,054 jobs (WTTC, 2024). As one of the ways to attain sustainable development goals (SDGs), The Federal democratic republic of Ethiopia developed a sustainable tourism master plan from 2015 to 2025 to establish a national framework for sustainable tourism development to contribute to socio-economic development and poverty alleviation. (*Ethiopia-sustainable-tourism-master-plan-2015-2025* 2015)

Tourism safety encompasses tourists' perceptions of their safety and their confidence in managing uncertainties during their travels. Safety and security are very important for tourists, influencing their travel intentions and perceptions of destinations. ((Wang et al., 2019). Over the past two decades, safety and security reasons have gained significant attention due to natural disasters, epidemics, and social violence worldwide. dramatic decrease in tourism activities in different parts of the world; sexual assault and murder of tourists in Thailand, coup attempt in Turkey in 2016; COVID-19 outbreak; Russia's aggression towards Ukraine and other problems showed the notable spot of safety and security issues in Tourism industry (Toker & Emir, 2023). Therefore, safety in the tourism industry crucially influences future tourism sustainability short-term tourist arrival numbers, and residents' tourism revenue. (Zou & Meng, 2019)

The travel and tourism industry is vulnerable to a range of global factors, such as economic and energy price risk is one of the risks affecting travelers' spending power and travel patterns. (Menegaki et al,2023). Living cost increases greatly affect the tourism industry by altering both demand and price structures. as living expenses tourists frequently reevaluate their travel budgets, potentially leading to a decline in domestic tourism demand. This is especially true in developing countries, where travelers are more sensitive to price changes. (Garača et al., 2018).

Economies that depend heavily on tourism often see overall price increases, particularly in consumer services like hospitality and recreation. (Vizek & Tkalec, 2014).

Security risks, such as terrorism and corruption, have a profound effect on global tourism by dissuading travelers from visiting impacted locales. The research indicated that minimizing insecurity and uncertainty to their lowest possible thresholds could enhance the economic contribution of tourism by 14.3%, whereas elevating these risks to their highest levels could diminish it by 17.5%. This underscores the essential importance of safety in luring tourists and the significant economic advantages associated with maintaining secure travel conditions. ((Manrique-De-Lara-Peñate et al., 2022)

Social unrest, governmental instability, and incidents of terrorism profoundly affect the sector crucial for most economies. (Mawby, 2014). For the last forty years, the correlation between criminal offenses and tourism has attracted scholarly attention. A substantial body of literature substantiates the inverse correlation, as elevated crime rates can deter potential tourists and adversely affect the tourism sector. Conversely, it is also posited that a direct correlation may exist; tourism can contribute to an uptick in crime rates, as tourists are often perceived as easy targets due to their lack of familiarity with the locale and their propensity to carry valuable items. (Shchokin et al., 2023)

The tourism sector is more vulnerable to natural disasters. A threat or happening of an emergency in tourist attraction areas pushes them to consider other places to avoid such dangers. This can cause a decrease in revenues from tourism activities. Furthermore, the damage caused by natural disasters is much worse. (Genç, R,2018). There has been a marked escalation in the attention devoted to the implications of climate change, primarily due to its detrimental impacts on the environment and, subsequently, the tourism sector, thereby affecting tourist preferences and the choice of destinations. This escalating threat underscores the critical necessity for sustainable tourism practices to alleviate the industry's negative consequences of climate change. (Belias et al., 2022)

The COVID-19 pandemic imparted a profound lesson to the tourism sector. The circumstances necessitated the cessation of operations due to lockdown measures, travel restrictions, booking cancellations, and constrained logistical capabilities.. ((Foday & Drammeh, 2024). Travelers have meticulously sought information on health metrics and safety protocols at their destinations, significantly influencing their travel decisions. The discord between public health imperatives and the tourism sector's necessity to sustain travel was apparent, as the pursuit of information frequently led to a decline in travel demand.

Challenges of Ethiopian Tourism

As of 2024, Ethiopia housed the largest number of sites (12) in Africa declared as world heritage. Which makes the country lead in the continent. (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.d.)



Source:whc.unesco.org

The tourism sector in Ethiopia has significant potential due to its diverse natural, religious, historical, and cultural attractions. However, its development is hindered by several challenges, such as insufficient tourism infrastructure, a shortage of skilled workers, ineffective promotional efforts, and limited government involvement. (Engda, B. J.et.al, 2020). Amahara regional state of Ethiopia is rich in cultural, historical, archaeological, and eco-tourism resources, with well-known sites like the Simien Mountains National Park, Lalibela Rock-hewn Churches, and Gondar Castles. the negative perception of Ethiopia in international media, often associated with instability and famine, adversely affects tourism growth Besides the limited involvement of local communities and the need for improved service quality and diversified tourism activities are some of the major problems. (Abuhay et al,2019).

Poor infrastructure including inadequate roads, and communication networks hindered Promoting tourism in Ethiopia. Insufficient cooperation between stakeholders, lack of budget, and low awareness about the tourism potential in tourism attraction areas like Bale Zone are the major challenges. (Bayih et al,2017). “13 Months of Sunshine.” This evocative phrase has epitomized Ethiopia for the last half-century. In the year 2016, the Ethiopian Tourism Organization (ETO), now referred to as Tourism Ethiopia launched a new slogan – 'Land of Origins' – to restore the country's faltering tourism sector. Notwithstanding these efforts, the sector remains deficient in marketing endeavors, with most enterprises relying on social media as their principal instrument. Nevertheless, challenges related to accessibility, elevated media expenses, and seasonality present substantial obstacles to proficient marketing. ((Muluneh et al., 2023)

Resilient Tourism and SDG

Resilience typically refers to a system's ability to withstand disruptions and reorganize during changes, while maintaining its core functions, structure, identity, and feedback mechanisms. Tourism resilience denotes the capacity of tourism destinations to assimilate disruptions and reconfigure themselves during periods of transformation, thereby preserving their fundamental functions and organizational frameworks. This notion is vital for destinations to adjust to both abrupt shocks (such as natural calamities) and gradual transformations (like climate change). Cultivating resilience necessitates the enhancement of diversity, interconnectedness, and adaptive governance to proficiently manage and foresee changes.(Hartman,2018)

Tourism occupies a critical role in the formation of sustainable and adaptive communities by enhancing economic resilience, promoting environmental stewardship, preserving cultural heritage, and facilitating social inclusivity. It diversifies economic frameworks, creates employment prospects, and generates revenue, thereby equipping communities to withstand economic perturbations. Moreover, tourism advocates for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, consequently alleviating environmental degradation. It is also instrumental in protecting cultural heritage and

local traditions, thereby enriching community identity and pride. By involving local stakeholders in the tourism planning and development processes, tourism promotes social cohesion and inclusivity, ensuring equitable distribution of advantages while minimizing negative effects. Collectively, these strategies seek to foster resilient communities through the adoption of responsible tourism methodologies.(Khater & Faik, 2024)

Diverse sustainable methodologies can significantly contribute to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are crucial for advancing resilient tourism. By promoting local economic advancement (SDG8), homestays facilitate community empowerment, thereby enhancing their capacity to withstand economic volatility. Furthermore, homestays can strengthen community solidarity and promote sustainable urban development (SDG11), rendering destinations more capable of adapting to transformations and challenges.(Bansal et al., 2024)

Sustainable Development Goal 11 is dedicated to fostering cities that are both inclusive and sustainable, with particular attention to the safeguarding of cultural heritage, which is essential for the promotion of resilient tourism. Sustainable tourism, as delineated in Sustainable Development Goal 8, aims to generate employment opportunities and advance local cultural practices, thereby ensuring that tourism yields a positive economic impact while concurrently preserving cultural heritage. The equilibrium between the economic utilization of cultural heritage for tourism purposes and its conservation represents a considerable challenge, thereby highlighting the necessity for resilient tourism methodologies that are in alignment with these Sustainable Development Goals. (Xiao et al., 2018)

3 Materials and Methods

The study aimed to identify the various risks currently affecting the tourism industry in Ethiopia and to propose strategies for fostering a safe and resilient economy that supports sustainable development.

The author employed document analysis to gather evidence and critically assess both the risks and potential solutions for promoting safe tourism development.

4 Discussion

Safe and resilient tourism

Achieving safe and resilient tourism through Sustainable development Goal SDG 8 promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. in this goal different targets are included To attain sustainable economic progress, it is essential to aim for a minimum of 7% annual GDP growth in the least developed countries. Strategies should encompass enhancing productivity through diversification, technological advancements, and encouraging high-value, labor-intensive industries, while also advocating for policies that promote job creation and support entrepreneurship, particularly within micro, small, and medium enterprises. Furthermore, there must be a unified effort to enhance global resource efficiency, ensure fair employment practices, eliminate forced labor and child exploitation, and strengthen financial access, particularly in support of sustainable tourism and youth employment initiatives.

Sustainable development SDG 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. It also has targets like ensuring access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services for all, and upgrading slums. It also emphasizes the need for safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems, with a focus on public transport and the needs of vulnerable groups. Additionally, it aims to enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization, protect cultural and natural heritage, and reduce disaster-related losses. Other goals include reducing the environmental impact of cities, providing universal access to green and public spaces, and supporting positive links between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. By 2020, it seeks to increase the number of cities adopting integrated policies for resource efficiency, climate change mitigation, and disaster resilience.

Governance and Stakeholder Engagement

Inadequate community participation in tourist destination areas poorly engages sustainable tourism development, which hinders socio-economic benefits and environmental sustainability efforts (Datiko et al. 2023). Actively engaging local communities and stakeholders is crucial for sustainable tourism development. In Arbaminch, for example, local communities are currently not sufficiently involved(Wondirad et al. 2019).the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for Ethiopia underscores the critical role of stakeholder engagement in formulating and executing tourism initiatives, involving diverse actors such as government representatives, private sector stakeholders, civil society, and local

communities.(ethiopia-sustainable-tourism-master-plan-2015-2025) most tourist destination local communities lack strong involvement.

Insufficient coordination and policy execution among stakeholders significantly obstructs the advancement of community-based tourism and the broader tourism industry, resulting in inefficiencies and lost growth opportunities. (Woldu, 2018). Political instability and violence, whether overt or subtle, adversely influence the nation's perception, discouraging prospective tourists and diminishing tourism revenue; thus, the maintenance of political stability is essential for the favorable advancement of the tourism sector. (Abuhay et al,2019). political instability in Ethiopia significantly undermines its tourism sector by reducing tourist arrivals and revenue, with data from 139 countries from 1999 to 2009 indicating that a one-unit rise in political instability correlates with declines of 24% to 31% in tourist arrivals and 30% to 36% in tourism revenue, while the impact of terrorism on tourism demand, although negative, is less severe than that of political instability(Yap & Saha, 2013)

Political instability generates safety concerns that damage the destination's image, making it less attractive to potential tourists. Reversing this negative perception can be challenging and expensive. Because of the high levels of insecurity across the country, political instability will continue to be severe in 2024. The main threats to stability and security include an unstable peace agreement in the Tigray area and ongoing insurgencies in the Amhara and Oromia regions (*Ethiopia Insights & Analysis*, 2024)

Local communities' involvement in tourism is hampered by institutional obstacles and political upheaval. The development of sustainable tourism is made more difficult by this absence from decision-making processes. Cultural and natural heritage assets' conservation and tourist potential are also impacted by political instability. For example, present political unrest has made it difficult to document and promote hypogea churches in South Gondar.

Crisis Management and Resilience

Crisis management entails steps necessary to overcome circumstances that endanger the survival of an organization, with an emphasis on short-term, urgent issues and prompt resolution. It entails planning, coordinating, and carrying out actions to stop or lessen a crisis's detrimental impacts. (Krekova et al,2017). Ethiopia's tourism industry has suffered greatly from inadequate crisis management, mostly as a result of the nation's continuous political unrest. Inadequate management techniques may result in fewer visitors, monetary losses, and a damaged reputation for the country. (Kebede,2018). Even though the national tourism master plan underline the importance of designing and developing a tourism safety and security strategy through developing a strategy for tourist safety, ensuring the national disaster and risk management plan take tourism into account and establishing a tourist police unit and establish tourism victim support service; currently there is no clear framework for tourism safety and security in the country(tourism master plan 2015-2025).

Inadequate Human Resources The tourist industry has a severe lack of qualified workers, which has an impact on crisis management skills and service quality. **Poor Marketing** Due to insufficient marketing and promotional efforts, the industry's worldwide exposure and appeal are restricted. (Petković et al., 2022) . The primary obstacles to crisis management in Ethiopia's tourist sector include the country's high vulnerability to different types of crises, the necessity of preventative actions, efficient supply chain and human resource management, and the significance of government assistance and communication.

Marketing and Promotion

Ethiopian tourism's growth and sustainability are hampered by a number of marketing and promotion issues. Important concerns include Effective advertising efforts are severely lacking. This includes not making enough use of contemporary marketing resources that are essential for reaching a worldwide audience, such websites, social media, and manuals. Marketing initiatives' reach and extent are significantly limited by financial restrictions. As a result, the nation's abundant natural and cultural treasures are not well promoted, and there is a severe lack of qualified experts in tourist marketing, which lowers the Caliber and efficacy of promotional tactics and Among stakeholders, including public and commercial organizations, the tourist industry suffers from a lack of focus and collaboration. This results in dispersed efforts and lost chances for unified marketing plans.(Bayih et al.,2017),Fakana et al,2018),Muluneh et al,2022). `the marketing and promotion problems in Ethiopian tourism have significant economic, cultural, and environmental implications. Leveraging technology, such as smart tourism systems, can offer potential solutions to address these challenges and promote sustainable tourism development in the country.

5 Conclusion

A comprehensive strategy addressing sustainable economic growth, stakeholder participation, crisis management, and strong marketing tactics in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8 and 11 is required to achieve safe and resilient tourism in Ethiopia. Prioritizing inclusive economic policies is essential to promoting entrepreneurship, job creation, and increased productivity in the tourist industry, especially in micro, small, and medium-sized businesses. However, this vision is heavily dependent on local communities' active participation in tourist planning and implementation, which has historically been constrained by systemic institutional impediments, political instability, and inadequate stakeholder coordination. In addition to impeding the growth of tourism, this political unrest damages Ethiopia's reputation as a safe travel destination, turning off prospective visitors and lowering tourism-related income. Building a resilient tourist industry that supports local lives and natural assets despite political or economic setbacks requires addressing these governance gaps via stakeholder partnerships and community participation.

Furthermore, strengthening Ethiopia's tourist industry and protecting it from future crises depend heavily on improved marketing techniques and efficient crisis management. Ethiopia's current marketing initiatives are hampered by a lack of funding and a poor use of digital platforms, which limits the country's visibility abroad and costs it chances to promote its rich natural and cultural assets. Ethiopia's attraction to visitors worldwide would be increased by using cutting-edge marketing strategies, such as smart tourism systems, and creating a specific crisis management framework that includes visitor support services and enhanced security measures. Ethiopia may be further positioned as a competitive and alluring travel destination by cultivating qualified human resources and creating strong marketing efforts.

Recommendation

- **Augment Community Engagement and Stakeholder Cooperation:** To foster sustainable and resilient tourism, Ethiopia ought to emphasize systematic interaction with local populations and a variety of stakeholders, including governmental agencies, private sector entities, and non-governmental organizations. The establishment of participatory mechanisms, such as community advisory committees and regional collaborations, would empower local communities in the decision-making processes, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of tourism policy implementation and amplifying socio-economic advantages.
- **Enhance Policy Coordination and Political Stability:** Mitigating political volatility and advancing collaboration among stakeholders are essential for creating an environment favorable for tourism. This necessitates governmental efforts to adopt stable governance structures, bolster inter-agency cooperation, and advocate for transparency to reduce disruptions in the tourism sector. Additionally, establishing frameworks to improve the resilience of tourism destinations in politically sensitive regions will contribute to sustaining Ethiopia's reputation as a secure travel locale.
- **Formulate a Holistic Crisis Management Framework:** Establishing a well-defined crisis management strategy is imperative for the effective anticipation and response to crises that may adversely affect the tourism sector. This framework should encompass the establishment of a specialized tourism safety division, the incorporation of tourism-specific protocols within the overarching national disaster response structure, and the provision of support services for tourists to guarantee safety and prompt response during emergencies. Furthermore, enhancing crisis management capabilities among tourism enterprises and local communities is essential to mitigate economic repercussions during periods of instability.
- **Engage in Digital Marketing and International Promotion:** The tourism industry in Ethiopia stands to gain significantly from the adoption of contemporary digital marketing methodologies aimed at enhancing its global presence. Utilizing social media platforms, websites, and advanced tourism technologies, in conjunction with traditional marketing channels, can substantially elevate the visibility of Ethiopia's cultural and natural heritage. Allocating resources towards the development of digital competencies among tourism practitioners will ensure that marketing initiatives are not only innovative and professional but also capable of reaching a broader and more engaged audience.

Limitation and Scope Of Future Research

A notable constraint of this investigation is the lack of direct, face-to-face surveys at Ethiopian tourism destinations, potentially diminishing the contextual richness of the results. Subsequent studies could enhance this aspect by implementing field surveys involving both tourists and local inhabitants, thereby yielding firsthand insights into visitor

experiences and indigenous viewpoints, which would serve to deepen the comprehension of the dynamics underpinning tourism in Ethiopia.

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