Introduction

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa are faced with bleak economic and grave human conditions. Protracted civil wars, political instability, and falling prices for agricultural and mineral exports have combined to wreak havoc on the economies in the sub-region. These countries are saddled with huge debt burdens resulting from foreign loans. Consequently, scarce resources needed for economic development are diverted to service these loans. According to Vice-president George Saitoti of Kenya, sub-Saharan Africa's debt in 1999 exceeded 250% of its export earnings, a figure that is over the 200% that the World Bank and other multi-lateral financial institutions consider sustainable for economic development (Daily Nation, September 9, 1999). The combination of a crippling debt burden, political instability, civil wars and falling export prices is that living standards are lower today in sub-Saharan Africa than they were at the time of independence in most countries (Ankomah & Crompton, 1990).

Attempts are being and continued to be made by leaders in the sub-region to alleviate these conditions. Promotion of mass tourism is one of several strategies that has been tried (Ankomah & Crompton, 1990). However, sub-Saharan Africa is still not a significant player in the world tourism industry. The sub-region accounted for less than one percent of the world's total tourism receipts in 1997 (WTO, 1999).

This paper suggests education tourism as an alternative strategy to the mass tourism development efforts. It calls for a coordinated, sustained and organised approach to education tourism to realise its social and economic potential.

What is Education Tourism? The term education tourism or edu-tourism refers to any "program in which participants travel to a location as a group with the primary purpose of engaging in a learning experience directly related to the location" (Rodger, 1998, p. 28). It is comprised of several sub-types including ecotourism, heritage tourism, rural/farm tourism, and student exchanges between educational institutions. The notion of traveling for educational purposes is not new (Gibson, 1998; Holdnak & Holland, 1996; Kalinowski & Weiler, 1992) and its popularity in the tourism market is only expected to increase (Gibson, 1998; Holdnak & Holland, 1996). Sub-Saharan African countries can increase their tourism earnings by tapping into this growing market phenomenon.
Resource Base for Education Tourism

The sub-region is endowed with abundant tourism resources that could serve as the basis for education tourism. These resources may be categorised into the following dimensions: cultural/historical, ecotourism/nature based tourism/rural tourism, and study abroad programs. Examples of themes that may be used for education tourism include: studying dolphins in South Africa to discover their ecological limits; monitoring bird migration to restore declining populations and manage habitat change; tracking the habitats of rare endemic carnivores; measuring the impact of public health education and clinical testing of intestinal parasites of remote villages; surveying traditional herbalists to preserve indigenous knowledge; finding the connection between global warming and termites by investigating South Africa’s insect engineers (Earthwatch, 1999). Cultural and historical themes include: arts and crafts, architecture, language, archaeological sites, music, dance, slave trade, etc.

Markets for Education Tourism in Sub-Saharan Africa

The size of the word market for international education travel is estimated to have increased from 4.8 million trips in 1985 to almost 8 million trips in 1996 (Smith & Jenner, 1997). This figure represents more than a 66% increase. Over the same period, spending travel increased by 73% (Smith & Jenner, 1997). For a list of the worldwide education travel trips and spending, refer to Table 1.

Table 1: Worldwide Education Travel Trips and Spending, 1980-96

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N° of educational trips abroad (mn)*</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending (US$ bn)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending per trip (US$)</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Excluding day trips
- Adapted from Smith & Jenner, 1997
### Table 2  Comparison of Education Tourism to Total Tourism Arrivals in Significant Edu-tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total Arrivals</th>
<th>Arrival for Purpose of Study</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2,996,200</td>
<td>68,700</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>51,937</td>
<td>1,222</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1,442,643</td>
<td>12,836</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>3,403,136</td>
<td>6,792</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>6,625,027</td>
<td>43,430</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>379,200</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal*</td>
<td>8,884,143</td>
<td>26,652</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>6,425,778</td>
<td>26,604</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>3,093,183</td>
<td>31,716</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>19,200,000</td>
<td>629,000</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>20,253,595</td>
<td>377,945</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1992


The Sub-region is currently not a major education tourism destination. See Table 2 for a list of the significant global edu-tourism destinations. However, trends from the U.S. market indicate the sub-region is increasingly becoming a destination of choice of many American students. The Open Doors Report 1998/1999 published by the Institute of International Education (IIE) indicated that the number of American students travelling to Africa increased by 20% between 1997 and 1998. Markets for education tourism in sub-Saharan Africa may be grouped into four categories:

(a) intercountry (domestic),

(b) intra-regional,

(c) European, and

(d) North American.

Countries in the sub-region cannot expect to develop a sustainable edu-tourism based solely on foreign tourists. These countries need to build and nurture the domestic capacity critical for the long-term success of edu-tourism. Education policies should be revamped to incorporate edu-tourism programs in school curricula from primary to tertiary levels. Students in these institutions should not only learn about these attractions/resources in their courses, but they also should be actively encouraged and required to make field trips to these sites. This is particularly important because research suggests that interest in the activities that most people engage in as adults were first developed during childhood and adolescence (Mcguire, Dottavio & O'Leary, 1987) Consequently, by encouraging the involvement of school children in their
formative and impressionable years, sub-Saharan African countries will be creating a cadre of future clients to sustain edu-tourism.

The second edu-tourism market results from intra-regional travels. According to the WTO, intra-regional travel, which is travel by Africans to other African countries, constitutes the most common form of tourism in the region. In 1998, almost 40% of tourist arrivals in Africa came from the continent. This figure represents a staggering increase of almost 118% compared with 1989 (WTO). Countries within the sub-region can tap into this vast potential market via education tourism.

To stimulate intra-regional edu-tourism travel, member countries can overhaul and strengthen existing travel and immigration protocols of their respective regional blocs to facilitate easy movement among nationals within the sub-region. Furthermore, conscious promotional efforts will have to be undertaken within the sub-region to heighten public awareness of available edu-tourism opportunities and their accessibility. In addition, national tourism organisations and universities will need to work in a coordinated manner to design and create edu-tourism programs that engender interests of nationals of the sub-region. For instance, in the area of foreign languages, universities in the sub-region rather than sending their students to metropolitan European capitals for practical experiences, may elect to send them to universities within the sub-region. Students from English-speaking African countries rather than travelling to Paris for their French language experience may travel to the Ivory Coast, Togo, Senegal, etc. Conversely, those from the French speaking African countries may travel to Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, etc. for their English language requirements instead of to London. In addition, Countries with similar colonial experiences may encourage intra-regional travels by their nationals to learn more about their common colonial experiences and heritage.

The third edu-tourism market is represented by the European Union (EU). This region is a large tourist-generating market for Sub-Saharan Africa (WTO, 1998). Most of the countries in the sub-region still have strong ties to these former colonial powers. Education tourism could benefit from this market through several bi-lateral and technical agreements. Sub-Saharan African countries can negotiate with European institutions of higher learning to encourage European students to travel to the sub-region.

The fourth market is the North American market. It comprises of universities and institutions offering area studies relating to sub-Saharan Africa, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and the largely untapped African-American market. Promotional efforts and direct contacts will have to be made with these entities to stimulate and tap into these latent markets currently underexploited by sub-Saharan African countries. See Table 3 for statistics on study abroad in Africa by American students.
### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1996/97</th>
<th>1997/98</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Africa</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Africa</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Africa</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Africa</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Open Doors 1998/99

### Organisational Framework for Implementing Education Tourism at the Country Unit

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa have to pursue the goal of education tourism separately as well as in a coordinated and structured way through regionalism (Kennes, 1997). At the country level, each country through their National Tourism Organisations (NTOS), universities/colleges and tourism stakeholders will be responsible for identifying appropriate themes to form the framework for the education tourism strategy (see Fig. 1). In addition, inputs may be solicited abroad from universities/colleges travel agents/tour operators to shape the themes and course content.

![Fig. 1](conceptual_framework.png)

**Fig. 1** Conceptual Framework for Implementing Education Tourism Strategy at the Country Unit.

The NTOs will set the tourism development policies with advice from the universities and tourism stakeholders. The universities will have the responsibility of providing facilities and equipment, expertise and the necessary academic environment to facilitate learning. The stakeholders will make available the tourism attractions, lodging and transportation. Governments of these countries will provide the infrastructure and super-structure needed to facilitate the smooth operation of the strategy.

The universities collaborating with tourism stakeholders, will produce a workable education program. This program will be divided into two sections: a) classroom
experience and b) on-site experience. The program schedule should specify the length of the classroom segment and the on-site practical experience. The governments, through their NTOs, will provide resources to set up Community Communication Centres (CCC) in the various attraction sites. These centres will have a resident expert on tourism attractions and subject matter in the curriculum to assist with the dissemination of on-site instruction. In addition, these centres will have up-to-date technological links to the universities. Lessons in education tourism could be delivered through distance learning, the Internet and email. Learning can take place in two phases. In the first phase, participants will spend some time in the university classrooms that are linked to the community centres. This arrangement makes it possible to provide participants the knowledge-base and the perceptual view of what is involved in the next phase. The second phase is the on-site experience where participants travel to the attraction location to actively participate and acquire skills that will reinforce the knowledge acquired in the classroom.

Organisational Framework Needed to Implement Regional Education Tourism Strategy

The implementation of the education, tourism at the regional level will be based on the existing frameworks of regional blocs or institutions in the sub-region. Regionalism seeks to combine and coordinate efforts and functions of different sub-Saharan countries. The regional blocs include: (ECOWS (Economic Community of West African States), EAC (East African Cooperation) and SADC (Southern African Development Community). According to Dieke (1998), the benefits of regional strategies are as follows:

a) they provide countries a more co-ordinated approach to negotiations and strengthens their bargaining position with multinational corporations;

b) create a sizeable regional market- this is particularly important because over 40% of tourist flows in the sub-region resulted from intra-regional travel (travel by residents to other sub-Saharan African countries); and

c) an increasing number of foreign tourists visiting sub-Saharan Africa are opting for tour circuits rather than resort holidays (the regional approach will prepare countries in the sub-region for this new demand).

The secretariats of the regional blocs, working with member countries, will create a composite education tourism product which is reflective of the region's diversity . The theme, curriculum, course content and schedule will be the outcome of joint efforts by both the regional secretariat and the individual countries. In addition, input may be solicited abroad from universities/colleges, travel agents/tour operators etc.
To facilitate the delivery of the tourism education program, the regional blocs can take advantage of the new African Virtual University (AVU) established by the World Bank to serve countries in the sub-region. It is an interactive-instructional telecommunications network set up to build capacity and support economic development. AVU is currently in the pilot phase and is being implemented and tested in 14 English-speaking and 8 French-speaking universities across sub-Saharan Africa. The regional blocs may request AVU to include education tourism in their course offerings.

**Description of the Process for Regional Tourism Education**

The courses in education tourism from member countries will be transmitted at the regional level through the AVU. The regional blocs will serve as the link between AVU and the sub-Saharan countries to facilitate this process. Each country will be responsible for providing the facilities, communication centres, local experts and other critical resources essential for linking that country with the AVU. Potential tourists may experience education tourism through Interactive Video Network Systems operated by the AVU and actual on-site visitations to the respective countries. Interactive Video Networks allow for two-way voice activated video systems to transmit live, high-quality audio and colour video between several sites. An instructor or trainer at the home site is able to see and hear the students in a remote site. Conversely, students in remote sites are able to see and hear the instructor and other participants.

**Pricing of Education Tourism Package**

The tuition for the education tourism program at both the country and regional level may be calculated by factoring in the cost incurred providing the education infrastructure and personnel. It should also be guided by competitive prices for similar attractions elsewhere in the world. At the country level, profit-sharing between entities involved will be determined by the size of each entity's investment and also by negotiations. A written contract should be signed by all parties before inception of the program.

**Potential Problems and Possible Solutions**

Potential problems associated with the education tourism strategy include:

1. limited financial resources to procure equipment, parts and other technology hardware;

2. lack of skilled personnel to facilitate the tourism instruction delivery via the Information Superhighway; and

3. the sub-region's negative image in the tourist generating markets.
Countries and regional blocs can address the problem of limited financial resource by taking advantage of the World Bank's proposed loan and grants for Internet projects. In addition, governments will have to liberalise their over-regulated markets to foster competition and attract potential external Internet providers. Skilled personnel may be trained through technical aid from the World Bank and other international agencies. In addition, countries could recruit qualified nationals residing abroad through the Reintegration of Qualified Nationals (ROQAN Program) based in Geneva. It was established to assist African countries to recruit their nationals who have acquired skills abroad through studies and work experience. ROQAN provides airfares, family support and luggage allowances to the individuals to help with their transition in their home countries (Ankomah, 1991).

The negative image problem can only be effectively addressed through cooperative efforts of all the countries in the sub-region (Ankomah & Crompton, 1990). These efforts may be supplemented by the activities of the African Center International (ACI) recently launched to give African business people an opportunity to trade in the U.S. According to its chairman, Emmanuel Chileshe, the centre would operate as a trade and tourism promotion initiative (Times of Zambia, September 9, 1999).

References


