

# Developing Tourism in Africa: Issues for Policy Consideration

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## Introduction

In 1973, Robert Erbes put forward the view that “Everything seems to suggest that developing countries look upon tourism consumption as manna from heaven that can provide a solution to all their foreign settlement difficulties” (1973:1). To some degree, this description of tourism as “manna from heaven” has gained some support, in part because tourism is a highly visible activity. Critics might conversely argue that the statement is rather absurd, if not over-simplistic, given the well-recognised weaknesses of tourism as a viable development strategy for less developed countries. Whatever the outcome of this particular debate, Erbes' statement and research since then (see de Kadt, 1979; Jenkins, 1994; Sinclair, 1998) have focused attention on the far-reaching implications of tourism (for example, its strengths and limitations) as being a means of assisting in the process of development.

In the context of this paper, development is defined as an improvement of both the economic opportunity and social life in a country and society. Issues refer to the challenges and opportunities associated with the process of developing tourism. Policy consideration relates to strategic development scenarios to overcome the “areas of concern” through a prioritisation to formulate a tourism policy. First, the paper briefly reviews the general principles of tourism development and considers Africa's place in the international tourism market and considers tourism's significance in some African countries. Second, the paper presents the problem statement by identifying and analysing the main development issues. Finally, parameters for policy for the tourism sector in the region are suggested.

## Principles of Tourism in Development and Africa

### *Tourism in Development*

As noted in the introduction, many developing countries now regard tourism as an important and integral part of their economic development strategies (see also Sinclair, 1998). In many developing societies, tourism is perceived as a panacea for their fragile economies that are characterised by a scarcity of development resources such as finance and expertise. These resources are needed to increase the economic surplus, without which these countries would be forced to rely solely on international aid to support development efforts. Therefore the well-recognised benefits of tourism are the usual reasons advanced for governments' support for tourism.

The benefits are usually felt at two levels: macro or national level and micro or sub-national or local level. At the first level, tourism is expected to foster economic growth

through foreign exchange earnings and an increase in state revenue and, at a second level, an improvement in the people's well-being in the areas of job creation, revenue/income distribution and balanced regional development. In this respect tourism is described as an industry although it has no single production characteristics or defined operational parameters. Tourism is also multi-faceted and its economic dimension cannot occur without inputs of a social, cultural and environmental nature.

Further to the foregoing point, it needs to be stated that as demand for tourism increases, so too will it bring with it not only opportunities for linkages with other sectors in the economy, but also consequences of a social, cultural, and environmental nature. These consequences, such as crowded airports and urban traffic congestion, affect both the public and private sectors. In these areas where tourism impacts on the country and society, there may well be conflicts with competing demands for other sectors of the economy, or with community interests at large.

It is however, necessary to remember that tourism is more than an economic activity. It is, in essence, a massive interaction of people, demanding a wide range of services, facilities, and inputs that generate opportunities and challenges to host countries. For this reason, it is necessary to manage the growth of the tourism sector and to have clear guidelines to ensure that growth is compatible with national and sectoral objectives. Policy provides the guidelines and the reference point against which any development in the sector should be evaluated.

Although tourism development results in the provision of facilities and services, there are, however, instances when these facilities are not accessible to local residents, particularly if tourism development involves the creation of tourism enclaves. In addition, tourism has been criticised for exacerbating the problems of societies: the destruction of social patterns, neo-colonialist relationships of exploitation and dependence, inflationary pressure, among others.

### **Africa in the World Tourism Economy**

The World Tourism Organisation (WTO, 1999) provides figures that estimate the extent and impact of international tourism in 1998. The estimate is that the 625 million tourists who travelled world-wide in 1998 generated about US \$445 billion (excluding transport). For the period under consideration, Africa received nearly 8% of the global tourist trips (25 million arrivals), an increase over the 1997 level of 6.1% (23 million tourists). Similar increases in receipts were recorded, and the region's share rose from 3.3% (US \$9 billion) in 1997 to 5.9% (US\$10 billion) in 1998.

Within Africa, the Northern sub-region had the highest share of traffic (34.6%) and revenue (33%), followed in descending order by Southern Africa, Eastern Africa, Western Africa, and Middle Africa, as indicated in Table 1.

In terms of tourist source regions (see WTO, 1999: 36-37), almost 40% of all visits in 1998 originated within the region (i.e. intra-regional tourism), with Europe accounting for about 36% of total arrivals market (see WTO, 1999). The remaining markets were, in descending order of importance, the Americas (3.6% ), Middle East (3.3%), Asia/Pacific (2.8%).

Tables 2a& 2b respectively indicate the most visited destinations and top earners in Africa in 1998. In terms of arrivals (Table 2a), of the 20 countries profiled here, South Africa was the most favoured destination, taking 24% of total traffic, followed by two Northern countries, Tunisia ( 18% ) and Morocco ( 13% ), and two Eastern African countries, Zimbabwe (6.4%) and Kenya (4.3%). The pattern of receipts is similar (as shown in table 2b ), with South Africa the leading earner (24.8%), followed by Tunisia and Morocco. However, although Zimbabwe and Kenya attracted considerable numbers of tourists, Mauritius and Tanzania were able to gain and earn more from tourism.



Table 1 : Tourism Trends by Sub-Regions, 1995-1998

| Sub-regions  | Tourist Arrivals<br>(000s) 1998 | % Change-Over<br>1997 | Market Share of<br>Total Africa (%) |        | Tourism Receipts<br>(US\$mn) 1998 | % Change-Over<br>1997 | Market Share of<br>Total Africa (%) |        |
|--------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
|              |                                 |                       | 1995                                | 1998   |                                   |                       | 1995                                | 1998   |
| Eastern      | 5,761                           | 7.7                   | 21.7                                | 23.1   | 2,426                             | 5.75                  | 23.4                                | 25.4   |
| Middle       | 483                             | 7.81                  | 1.4                                 | 1.9    | 82                                | 5.13                  | 1.7                                 | 0.9    |
| Northern     | 8,623                           | 7.79                  | 38.7                                | 34.6   | 3,176                             | 9.90                  | 38.1                                | 33.3   |
| Southern     | 7,671                           | 7.94                  | 29.9                                | 30.8   | 2,950                             | 2.54                  | 28.1                                | 30.9   |
| Western      | 2,365                           | 4.97                  | 8.3                                 | 9.5    | 917                               | 4.23                  | 8.5                                 | 9.6    |
| Total Africa | 24,903                          | 7.5                   | 100.00                              | 100.00 | 9,551                             | 5.9                   | 100.00                              | 100.00 |

Countries of the Sub-regions :

Eastern : Burundi, The Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Réunion, Seychelles, Somalia, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Middle : Angola, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tomé & Príncipe, Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa).

Northern: Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia

Southern: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland.

Western Bénin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sénégal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

Source: World Tourism Organisation (1999:14-29)

Table 2a

Top 20 Tourism Destination in Africa, 1998  
(International Tourist Arrivals, 000)

| Rank |      |      | Country       | 1998 Arrivals (000)                  |                                     | % Change<br>1998/1997 | % of Total 1998 |
|------|------|------|---------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1990 | 1995 | 1998 |               | Estimated figures<br>up to 11 Jan'99 | Figures received<br>after 11 Jan'99 |                       |                 |
| 4    | 1    | 1    | South Africa  | 5,981                                | 5,981                               | 10.0                  | 24.0            |
| 2    | 2    | 2    | Tunisia       | 4,700                                | 4,471                               | 10.7                  | 18.9            |
| 1    | 3    | 3    | Morocco       | 3,241                                | 3,243                               | 506                   | 13.0            |
| 6    | 4    | 4    | Zimbabwe      | 1,600                                | 1,600                               | 7.0                   | 6.4             |
| 5    | 5    | 5    | Kenya         | 1,062                                | 951                                 | -5.0                  | 4.3             |
| 7    | 7    | 6    | Botswana      | 740                                  | 740                                 | 0.8                   | 3.0             |
| 3    | 6    | 7    | Algeria       | 648                                  | 678                                 | 6.8                   | 2.6             |
|      | 8    | 8    | Nigeria       | 640                                  | 640                                 | 4.7                   | 2.6             |
| 13   | 9    | 9    | Mauritius     | 570                                  | 558                                 | 4.1                   | 2.3             |
| 8    | 10   | 10   | Namibia       | 510                                  | 560                                 | 11.6                  | 2.0             |
| -    | 15   | 11   | Tanzania      | 447                                  | 447                                 | 28.8                  | 1.8             |
| 15   | 11   | 12   | Eritrea       | 414                                  | 414                                 | 1.0                   | 1.7             |
| -    | 20   | 13   | Zambia        | 382                                  | 362                                 | 6.2                   | 1.5             |
| 17   | 12   | 14   | Réunion       | 377                                  | 377                                 | 1.9                   | 1.5             |
| 11   | 14   | 15   | Ghana         | 335                                  | 335                                 | 3.1                   | 1.3             |
| 16   | 13   | 16   | Swaziland     | 325                                  | 325                                 | 0.9                   | 1.3             |
| 9    | 16   | 17   | Sénégal       | 309                                  | 332                                 | 6.1                   | 1.2             |
| 10   | 18   | 18   | Côte d'Ivoire | 302                                  | 301                                 | 9.9                   | 1.2             |
| 12   | 18   | 19   | Uganda        | 238                                  | 238                                 | 4.8                   | 1.0             |
| 30   | 17   | 20   | Malawi        | 215                                  | 205                                 | 5.7                   | 0.9             |
|      |      |      |               | 23,036                               | -                                   | 7.6                   | 92.5            |
|      |      |      |               | 24,903                               | -                                   | 7.5                   |                 |

**Table 2b** Top 20 Tourism Earners in Africa, 1998  
(International Tourism Receipts, US\$ million)

| Rank |      |      | Country       | 1998 Receipts (US\$ Mn)              |                                     | % Change<br>1998/1997 | % of Total 1998 |
|------|------|------|---------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1990 | 1995 | 1998 |               | Estimated figures<br>up to 11 Jan'99 | Figures received<br>after 11 Jan'99 |                       |                 |
| 2    | 1    | 1    | South Africa  | 2,366                                | 2,366                               | 3.0                   | 24.8            |
| 1    | 3    | 2    | Morocco       | 1,600                                | 1,600                               | 10.9                  | 16.8            |
| 3    | 2    | 3    | Tunisia       | 1,550                                | 1,550                               | 8.9                   | 16.2            |
| 5    | 4    | 4    | Mauritius     | 502                                  | 503                                 | 3.7                   | 5.3             |
| 11   | 7    | 5    | Tanzania      | 431                                  | 431                                 | 9.9                   | 4.5             |
| 4    | 5    | 6    | Kenya         | 400                                  | 358                                 | -5.0                  | 4.2             |
| 9    | 6    | 7    | Namibia       | 339                                  | 339                                 | 0.9                   | 3.5             |
| 10   | 8    | 8    | Ghana         | 274                                  | 274                                 | 3.0                   | 2.9             |
| -    | 9    | 9    | Réunion       | 250                                  | 250                                 | 0.4                   | 2.6             |
| 13   | 11   | 10   | Zimbabwe      | 246                                  | 246                                 | 7.0                   | 2.6             |
| 8    | 10   | 11   | Botswana      | 185                                  | 185                                 | 0.5                   | 1.9             |
| 6    | 12   | 12   | Sénégal       | 165                                  | 161                                 | 5.2                   | 1.7             |
| 33   | 14   | 13   | Uganda        | 142                                  | 142                                 | 5.2                   | 1.5             |
| 25   | 19   | 14   | Nigeria       | 124                                  | 124                                 | 5.1                   | 1.3             |
| 7    | 13   | 15   | Seychelles    | 120                                  | 111                                 | -9.0                  | 1.3             |
| 16   | 15   | 16   | Côte d'Ivoire | 97                                   | 97                                  | 10.2                  | 1.0             |
| 18   | 21   | 17   | Zambia        | 90                                   | 75                                  | 0.0                   | 0.9             |
| -    | 17   | 18   | Eritrea       | 75                                   | 75                                  | 0.0                   | 0.8             |
| 19   | 16   | 19   | Madagascar    | 74                                   | 74                                  | 1.4                   | 0.8             |
| 20   | 18   | 20   | Sierra Leone  | 57                                   | 57                                  | 0.0                   | 0.6             |
|      |      |      | TOTAL         | 9,087                                | -                                   | 5.9                   | 95.1            |
|      |      |      | Total AFRICA  | 9,551                                | -                                   | 5.9                   | 100.1           |

Source :WorldTourism

Organisation,

1999:32-33

This brief background illustrates the nature and scope of international tourism in Africa and the significance of tourism in some countries, which is clearly influenced by the wider nature of economic development. But it needs recognising that tourism in Africa is a low-volume industry very reliant on regional markets. For the purposes of this paper, this profile provides a framework within which to discuss the wide range of issues influencing tourism development in Africa, now the subject of , consideration in the following section.

## **Some Issues**

In Africa, as elsewhere in the developing world, governments have already accepted not only the importance of tourism but also have played the dominant role in the planning process. This role might be adopted through political preference or necessity, or both. No two countries or sub-regions in Africa are similar in the range and difficulty of problems they face. Many African countries have weak, embryonic tourism sectors, while other countries have vigorous, more developed tourism sectors. In the latter countries, much of the investment, management and development in tourism is from private sector initiatives. But few African countries have given careful consideration to the type of tourism they want, and to what extent their declared aims are realistic, and what needs to be done to achieve those aims.

Against this brief background, it is possible to identify a number of issues relating to the development of tourism in Africa. Addressing the issue areas is important, not least because the issues are crucial ingredients to maximise tourism's contribution to Africa's development. The issues are really of two kinds: those for the tourism industry itself and issues for African governments (see Dieke,2000).

## **Issues for the Tourism Industry**

The first of these issues is the need to delineate the relative roles of the private local and foreign tourism partners in development decisions on the continent. In particular, the decisions in the areas of investment, marketing and operation of the tourism enterprises appear to be critical to the tourism industry. The key issue for all concerned is to recognise that the development decisions made by them do have wider economic consequences for Africa. It is therefore imperative that investors recognise the implications of their actions in the overall interest of the long-run economic sustainability of the tourism sector.

The second major challenge is the need to develop human resources, particularly indigenous personnel, both for reasons of delivering quality services for tourists, as well as enhancing general skills of the local workforce. Achieving these broad objectives will potentially encourage sound utilisation of local suppliers and thus enhance not only their productivity but also intersectoral linkages. In this sense, the spin-off effects are obvious: foreign exchange will be retained locally and further income would be earned.

Thirdly, there are problems facing the local tourism industries in Africa that are characterised by a large number of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMEs). Although SMEs serve useful functions in tourism (e.g. the development of linkages, providing personal service, etc), but for most of them, life is a daily struggle, with many of them operating at the margin of survival. They also lack the requisite experience to run tourism business along modern management principles. Even the nature of tourism demand renders them uncompetitive as they are unable to capitalise on the advantages that accrue from the economies of scale. The real challenge is for them to develop marketing strategies that would enable them to overcome some of these difficulties and thereby sell their products. Again, their limited resource base makes this objective hard to achieve.

### Issues for African Governments

The traditional role of government is to formulate policy for the tourism sector. Today the focus has changed because of changing priorities occasioned by development in the international tourism scene (e.g. the emergence of consumer interests). The challenge for national governments is to formulate tourism sector policies that best reflect the new thinking. Some important areas needing policy re-orientation or re-focusing are consultation with local communities in the planning process; forging partnership with the private sector; liberal immigration regulations to facilitate free tourist movement; tourism infrastructure development policy to facilitate tourism development, for the benefit not just for tourism but the wider society. The last policy issue needs to be linked to devising viable and sensible options for financing tourism infrastructure. Other aspects of policy re-focusing include entrepreneurial development initiatives, policies to enhance tourist length of stay. Last but not least, the policy to identify ways in which the benefits from tourism activity can be spread more evenly throughout the society.

### Policy Considerations

*As a basis for identifying the policy considerations, the view of Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, on the African development challenge (which also includes tourism), is instructive :*

The basic strategy for achieving sustainable development through economic growth is now well established. The core components of the strategy include macroeconomic stability and a stable investment environment; integration into the international economy; a reliance on the private sector as the driving force for economic growth; long-term foreign direct investment, especially in support of export-oriented activities; adequate investment in human development areas such as health and education; a fair and reliable legal framework; and the maintenance of basic physical infrastructures. ...Long-term success can be achieved only if African Governments have the political will not just to enact sound economic policies but also to persevere in

their implementation until a solid economic foundation has been established ( cited in ECA, 1999: 1).

As tourism is essentially an export, international economic activity, we identify and examine in this section some of those elements of the strategy that are relevant to the long-term sustainable development of tourism in the African region. The following considerations are particularly striking because of their importance in shaping a coordinated African tourism development policy in practice.

First, international tourism has come to stay for the foreseeable future and cannot casually be cast aside or treated less seriously than it deserves. The economic and other benefits and disbenefits accruing from its development are well recognised in Africa. Despite the mounting criticisms of the negative effects of tourism development, there is groundswell of evidence that many African countries, encouraged by positive developments elsewhere, continue to pursue its promotion as part of their economic development strategies. Thus tourism has now merited inclusion in national development plans of most African countries.

Second, as tourism develops and becomes intricate it will require strategic management of the process. The objective is to maximise the benefits, contain and mitigate the negative impacts in order to ensure that development conforms with national policy objectives. Additionally, the development of the sector needs to be supported by large inflows of foreign resources ( e.g. financial, personnel). Foreign involvement will obviously have wider repercussions for the decision making sovereignty of the host government and thereby threatening the long-term , sustainability of the sector. In other cases, the role of government institutions and technocrats may not help advance the cause of tourism.

This brings us to a third point, namely, that tourism development cannot be separated from other facets of economy, society and politic. Merely creating national, sub-regional and regional institutions or planning bodies responsible for tourism is hollow in the absence of the political mandate and adequate re- sources to do their jobs. Here lies much of the difficulties with developing tourism in Africa-resulting from ineffectual policies. This holds the key to future advances in tourism development in the region.

Fourth, in the same way that politica<sup>1</sup> support and adequate resourcing hold the key to Africa's future tourism development, so too is the need to empower the African masses. This can be done in a variety of ways: by creating in them an awareness of the benefits of tourism, by allowing them access to entrepreneurial opportunities offered by tourism, permitting women a role in the industry , and perhaps finally giving them a sense of ownership in the sector. That said, these are proactive measures and ones that negate the spirit of state capitalism, also gender inequality .

African tourism policy strategies should aim to redress these deficiencies. It then means, as noted, that the existence of credible political , commitment on the part of African governments is a sine qua non to the realisation of such strategies.

## **Conclusion**

In developing tourism in Africa, the following areas for policy consideration are important, including:

- . well conceived and well articulated but realistic tourism policy objectives;
- . local involvement and control over tourism development;
- . forging private-public sector partnerships for tourism development;
- . raising gender awareness to enhance women participation in the tourism sector;
- . promoting regional tourism co- operation and integration;
- . availability and allocation of appropriate resources ( e.g. financial, human, product);
- . developing equity in tourism benefits-sharing;
- . promoting community tourism awareness campaign;
- . availability of appropriate legal framework for tourism;
- . building image of a destination through a marketing and promotional campaign;
- . expanding tourism entrepreneurial initiatives/investment opportunities

In the final analysis, it should be added that for the tourism sector in Africa to respond to changing realities in the international tourism market scene, the strategic development of the industry is paramount. This requires co-operation from all concerned -the tourism industry , the national Governments and indeed, the international community -to make it happen, provided there is political.

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