Planning for Sustainable Tourism: Challenges and Opportunities for Ecotourism Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Gemechu Shale Ogato

Department of Rural Development and Agricultural Extension, Institute of Cooperatives and Development Studies, Ambo University, P. Box 365, Ambo, Ethiopia

This study was conducted to assess the challenges and opportunities for ecotourism development in Addis Ababa. The general objective of the study is to assess the challenges and opportunities for ecotourism development in Addis Ababa and propose sustainable planning framework for ecotourism development. The findings are based on primary and secondary data and information collected from different sources and field work. The results of the study indicate presence of critical challenges and opportunities for ecotourism development in Addis Ababa. The sub-cities taken as case studies and Addis Ababa city need ecotourism development strategies and plans which adhere to the principles of sustainable ecotourism development like: active contribution of the sub-sector to the conservation of natural, historical and cultural heritages and inclusion of local and indigenous communities in its planning, development and operation contributing to their well-being. To this end the proposed planning strategic measures are believed to have significant contribution for promoting sustainable ecotourism development in Addis Ababa in the years to come.

Key words: Addis Ababa, community-based, ecotourism, policy, sustainability

Introduction

Drumm and Moore (2005) define ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." It is claimed to help educating the traveller; providing funds for conservation; directly benefiting the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fostering respect for different cultures and for human rights (IUCN, 1997; Diamantis & Ladkin, 1999; Honey, 1999; Zambrano *et al.,* 2010). Drumm and Moore (2005) contend that ecotourism is one of the alternative economic activities and viable strategy to simultaneously make money and conserve resources.

Tourism is believed to have great potential contribution for sustainable local community development. In relation to this belief, scholars of sustainable tourism development claim that tourism is the only international industry where the customer travels to the product and lack of modern development can be an asset. It is also claimed to have the potential to be more sustainable than many other grand development schemes proposed (Ashley, 1995; Winter, 2005). Drumm & Moore (2005) contend that ecotourism can be seen as one way by which communities can resume or strengthen their traditional stewardship role in natural areas, a role that has largely been compromised by unfavourable economic conditions imposed upon rural communities in tropical countries. Tourism is claimed to be an appropriate mechanism for poverty reduction. Nevertheless, the challenge that remains is how and where tourism can intervene to provide better opportunities, empowerment and security to the poor at the local level, and boost economic growth at the national and regional level (ESCAP,2003). Tourism and its impacts in local communities is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that encompasses economic, social, cultural, ecological, environmental, and political forces (Fagence, 2001; Sonak, 2004).

Evolving out of the debate on the role of tourism in poverty reduction at local level has been the question about the centrality of beneficiaries in the tourism development process (Chirgwin & Hughes, 1997; Richins, 2000; Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001; Haig &McIntyre, 2002; Tosun & Timothy, 2003). Given the added value that community participation brings to ecotourism products and the benefits of participation for sustainable community development, active community participation in ecotourism is claimed to be good for business and good for conservation (Ashley, 1995; Potts & Harrill, 1998; Drumm and Moore, 2005). Moscardo (2008) asserts that alternative forms of tourism such as ecotourism and community-based tourism have better outcomes because they are smaller in scale, which is typically associated with more limited environmental and social impacts and greater opportunities for local businesses to get involved. Manwa (2003) asserts that ecotourism has been recommended as a

sustainable development option particularly for the ecologically depressed and underdeveloped regions of the world which has little potential for development. The above assertion seems true for Addis Ababa city as well.

Given the relevance of appropriate ecotourism planning strategic measures for Addis Ababa city, the study proposes to assess challenges and opportunities for ecotourism development and forward appropriate ecotourism planning strategic measures for Addis Ababa city. The specific objectives of the study are: to analyze the weaknesses and strengths of existing tourism development Policy and community-based ecotourism guideline; to identify multi-faceted challenges (economic, social, legal, political, cultural, and environmental challenges) for ecotourism development in case study sub-cities of Addis Ababa; to identify the diverse opportunities (economic, social, legal, political, cultural, and environmental opportunities) for ecotourism development in case study sub-cities of Addis Ababa; and to forward appropriate ecotourism planning strategic measures for case study sub-cities and Addis Ababa City. The study answered the following key research questions: What are the multi-faceted challenges (economic, social, legal, political, cultural, and environmental challenges) for ecotourism development in Addis Ababa? What are the diverse opportunities (economic, social, legal, political, cultural, and environmental opportunities) for ecotourism development in Addis Ababa? What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing tourism development policy and community-based ecotourism guideline from sustainable tourism development perspective?

Research Methodology

Given the contribution of different set of knowledge for comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for ecotourism development in Addis Ababa, the study employed combined methodologies. To this end, an exhaustive literature review was made. This combined with primary data collection from the field makes the study comprehensive. Such comprehensive approach therefore requires a multi-methodological set up, as it is important that for each aspect of this study, the researcher adapted the methodological tools that provided the most valid and reliable results.

The study employed purposive sampling method to collect data from different stakeholders. Accordingly, Ethiopian ministry of culture and tourism development, Addis Ababa's culture and tourism development office, and Addis Ababa Sub-cities' culture and tourism development offices (Yeka, Gulelle and Kolfe Keraniyo) were contacted for primary data collection. Yeka and Kolfe Keraniyo were selected because of the availability

of more eco-attractions compared to other sub-cities while Gulale sub-city was selected because of the newly established botanical garden as potential eco-attraction center for Addis Ababa and Ethiopia. The methodological tools were chosen in order to best reach the objectives set out above. The first methodological step was a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature in order to obtain both theoretical insights and secondary data. A desk or literature review is a useful way of gathering information about what policies, initiatives, projects, best practices, etc. already exist. Legal, policy, evaluation reports, and media sources were commonly used documents as secondary sources for the study. The second methodological step was data collection from the key stakeholders for ecotourism development in Addis Ababa. The primary data were gathered through semi-structured questionnaire, transect walk and field observation. The issues addressed in the questionnaire includes: eco-attractions of the study sites, challenges for ecotourism development, opportunities for ecotourism development, and suggestions for overcoming the challenges and utilizing the opportunities. The eco-attractions observed were: fauna and flora, natural landscapes, mountains and water bodies of Addis Ababa city. Moreover, the challenges and the opportunities were observed during transect walk.

The qualitative data captured through semi-structured questionnaire, transect walk and field observations were transcribed, interpreted, and analyzed in the form of descriptions and narrations. Moreover, SWOT analysis was also employed to SWOT analyze the existing tourism development policy and community-based ecotourism guideline. Accordingly, strengths and weaknesses were analyzed for internal environment while opportunities and threats were analyzed for the external environment of existing tourism development policy and community-based ecotourism guideline. The themes of analysis were: the need for ecotourism development planning strategic measures for Addis Ababa city, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of existing tourism development policy, and analysis of cases on challenges and opportunities for ecotourism development in Addis Ababa city.

Analysis of Results

The Need for Ecotourism Development Planning Strategic Measures for Addis Ababa City

According to UN-HABITAT (2006), Addis Ababa was established in 1886 and its current population is more than four million which makes it one of the oldest and largest cities in Africa. UNHABITAT estimates that this number will continue to rise, reaching 12 million in 2024. At an average altitude

of 2400 meters, it is also one of the highest (AAMS, 2007; UN-HABITAT, 2006). Being the capital of a non-colonized country in Africa, it has been playing a historic role in hosting the regional organizations such as the Organisation of African Unity / African Union, and the Economic Commission for Africa, which contributed to the decolonisation of African countries, and later bringing Africa together (UN-HABITAT, 2006). The city is a center of attraction and a melting pot to hundreds and thousands of people coming from all corners of the country in search o employment opportunities and services. Moreover, it hosts more than 80 nations and nationalities living with a multitude of cultures and languages, cultural relativism, mutual respect and collaborative work (AAMS, 2007; UN-HABITAT, 2006).

According to AAMS (2007), the natural eco-attractions are climate, water bodies (ocean, sea, rivers, lakes, hot springs, etc), flora and fauna, landscape, etc. The climate of Addis Ababa is suitable for both residents and tourists when compared to many other cities of the world. The average temperature of Addis Ababa is not greater than 16 degree centigrade and this makes it ideal for living. The city and has a number of mountains in and around it like Entoto, Wochecha, Yerer, Furi, Ziqualla, and Menagesha. There are over 250 bird species in the city of Addis Ababa and its environment. There are a few indigenous plant species in parks, churches, palaces, embassies, etc.

The city is also blessed with Finfine Hot Spring. The aforementioned eco-attractions coupled with many historical and cultural attractions have made Addis Ababa one of the best tourist destinations in the world (AAMS, 2007; UN-HABITAT, 2006). Scholars of sustainable tourism development contend that tourism has many negative environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts if it is not well planned and managed (Ashley, 1995; Winter, 2005). This assertion is also true for ecotourism development initiatives in Addis Ababa to enable the city benefits from the enormous potential positive environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of ecotourism development. In other words, careful planning and management in the sub-sector which includes ecotourism development planning strategic measures are required.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of Existing Tourism Development Policy and Community-Based Ecotourism Guideline

The author was able to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the internal environment **(table 1)** and the opportunities and threats for the external environment **(table 2)** of the existing tourism development policy and community-based ecotourism guideline based on the desk review, semi-structured questionnaire and personal observation conducted.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis for the Existing Tourism Development Policy and Community-Based Ecotourism Guideline

Internal Environments	
Strengths: • Comprehensive, concise and clear tourism development policy and community-based ecotourism guideline developed; • Ministry of culture and tourism established; • Ethiopian tourism development council established; • Prevailing situation of the tourism industry in Ethiopia well documented; • The responsibilities and roles of different stakeholders are well defined; • Best practices of community-based ecotourism development included in the guideline; • Adaptation of responsible and sustainable tourism approach appreciated; • Integration of tourism into key development policies and strategies proposed; • Participatory approach and active community participation appreciated; • Development of the existing and new tourist attractions in variety, scale and quality proposed; • Expansion of infrastructure and tourist facilities essential for tourism development proposed; • Undertaking promotional work, encouraging domestic tourism, establishing strong tourism marketing organization, using ICT in promoting tourism, and strengthening collaborative relationship among stakeholders encouraged and proposed.	**Weaknesses:** • Stakeholders are not well informed about their responsibilities in the guideline; • Sources of the best practices are not cited in the guideline; • References are not cited for the principles of ecotourism development outlined in the guideline; • References are not cited in the review of prevailing situation and the tourism development policy; • Medium-scale and big enterprises and services are encouraged; • Reliable financing mechanism for tourism development is not clearly stated; • The policy and the guideline is not well communicated to the stakeholders through ICTs; and • The policy, the strategies, and the guideline developed are not implemented with the desired pace.

Table 1. Continued.

External Environments	
Opportunities:	**Threats:**
• **Political**: Very good political will and high level of commitment to develop tourism sector for sustainable development, ratification of many international conventions in relation to conservation of natural environment; • **Economic**: existence of different economic development policies and strategies like growth and transformational plan; • **Social**: existence of formal institutions and structures promoting tourism development at different levels, high social capital and social interaction among local communities; • **Globalization**: technological advancement like internet service and telecommunication; • **Stakeholders/Collaborators**: existence of different organizations working on tourism development, availability of donor organizations favouring research and development activities on tourism and ecotourism; • **Geographic**: diverse landscape and climatic conditions; • **Cultural**: rich and diverse culture of more than 80 ethnic groups; • **Natural**: Diverse fauna, flora, and physical resources.	• Issue of property right on natural capital; • Dependence of the development of the tourism sector on external financial sources; • Unemployment and unstable labour market for graduates and citizens; • An alarming population growth rate; • Presence of harmful traditional practices, customs, discriminatory attitudes, customary laws; • Spread of HIV/AIDS in both urban and rural areas; • Inadequate information exchange system with different stakeholders. • Market failure and environmental degradation; • Difficulty in securing tourism fund;and • Reliance of the poor on the natural capital to meet their basic needs.

Source: Desk review, 2012; Semi-structured Questionnaire and Personal Observation, 2012.

Challenges and Opportunities for Ecotourism Development in Addis Ababa

A semi-structured questionnaire was distributed to case study sub-cities (culture and tourism offices of Addis Ababa, Gulale Sub-city, Yeka sub-city and Kolfe Keraniyo sub-city) on the eco-attractions, challenges and opportunities for ecotourism development, and possible measures to alleviate the identified challenges. Summary of the results is presented hereunder.

The eco-attractions of the case study sub-cities and Addis Ababa city identified include: Entoto mountain and its forest, Gulale Botanical Garden, Yeka Park, Beheretsige park, Hamile 19 park, Ethio-Korea Wodaginet park, Ambasadar Park , Africa park, Fransay park, Takle Haymanot park, Gofa Park, and Ethio-Cuba Park.

Economic, social, cultural, legal, and environmental challenges for ecotourism development in case study sub-cities and Addis Ababa city were identified. The economic challenges identified were: Fast growing construction industry, dependence of the local communities on the natural forest for their livelihood, lack of clear budget for tourism and ecotourism activities at sub-city level, low income generated from parks' entrance fee, and poor economic benefits for the local communities. The social challenges identified were: low level of local communities' awareness,

weak formal institutions to organize ecotourism activities at sub-city level, and limited concern of the local communities for conservation of eco-attractions. The cultural challenges identified were: Poor culture of the local communities about pollution control and waste management, poor culture of local communities to manage forest and protect the natural environment and eco-attractions, and poor culture of visiting eco-attractions. The legal challenges identified were: implementation and enforcement problem of environmental protection law, and lack of legally enforced measures to protect the natural environment from being destroyed by humans. The environmental challenges identified were: degradation of natural resources, deforestation, air, soil, and water pollution, extreme weather events (increase in temperature, and precipitation), and presence of eucalyptus trees in the environment.

Economic, social, cultural, legal, political, and environmental opportunities for ecotourism development in Addis Ababa were identified. The economic opportunities identified were: Increasing local and international demands for ecotourism development, establishment of Gulale Botanical Garden with good budget allocation and vision to conserve the natural environment, and the potential economic contribution of the eco-attractions for the local communities and the national economy. The social opportunities identified include:

enhancement of local communities' awareness level on the advantages of ecotourism, the presence of Ethiopian Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the presence of culture and tourism offices in Addis Ababa and its sub-cities, the presence of tourism promotion clubs in different schools and organizations in Addis Ababa. The cultural opportunities identified were: good culture of some people to protect the natural environment, increasing level of motivation by the local communities to plant indigenous trees in the natural environment, cultural change in the local communities which promote conservation of trees than using them for fuel wood, and flourishing new culture of conserving eco-attractions in the city and sub-cities. The identified legal opportunities include: the presence of Ethiopian constitution, the presence of new tourism development policy and the new community-based ecotourism guideline, and the Presence of Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and environmental protection offices in the city and its sub-cities. The identified political opportunities include: presence of very good political will and commitment of the current political system at all levels to develop ecotourism. The environmental opportunities identified were: the existence of natural and built environmental resources in Addis Ababa and its sub-cites.

Discussion

Challenges and Opportunities for Ecotourism Development in Addis Ababa

Analysis of the results reveal that ecotourism development in Addis Ababa city is constrained by economic, social, cultural, legal, and environmental challenges. On the other hand, the city is blessed with economic, social, cultural, legal, political, and environmental opportunities (AAMS, 2007). Both the challenges and opportunities were found to have similarities with the assertions of Blackman et al (2004) who identified the presence of a "champion" or leader, effective private-public sector partnerships, the identification and development of specialist attractions, government control and support, good market research, and community involvement as opportunities for the success of tourism development in peripheral regions. The same scholars also identified a lack of control over negative impacts, difficulties with finance, community opposition and a lack of infrastructure as barriers to successful tourism development.

Principles of Sustainable Ecotourism Development Planning

Tourism and its impacts in local communities is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that encompasses economic, social, cultural, ecological, environmental, and political forces (Fagence, 2001; Sonak, 2004). The negative impacts of ecotourism development in Addis Ababa city may be minimized and its potential positive impacts optimized through proper planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of tourism development programmes and projects. To this end adhering to the key principles for sustainable ecotourism planning is of paramount importance. The principles worth including in sustainable ecotourism planning are (Khanal, and Babar, 2007): active contribution of the sub-sector to the conservation of natural, historical and cultural heritage; inclusion of local and indigenous communities in its planning, development and operation contributing to their well-being; interpreting the natural, historical and cultural heritage of the destination to the visitor; and lending itself better to independent travellers, as well as organizing tours for small sized groups.

Planning Strategic Measures for Sustainable Ecotourism Development in Addis Ababa

Based on the analysis of results and review of literature, the following planning strategic measures are recommended. These recommendations are believed to help the city of Addis Ababa minimize the negative impacts of ecotourism and maximize its positive impacts if properly implemented in the years to come. The following planning strategic recommendations are forwarded with their possible considerations:

1. Increase awareness on the benefits of ecotourism and conservation of eco-attractions: Increasing awareness of the local communities and other stakeholders on the benefits of ecotourism and conservation of eco-attractions matters for sustainable management of ecotourism activities in the case study sub-cities and Addis Ababa city;
2. Participate local communities in the planning process of ecotourism development: Community participation should be mainstreamed in the planning process of ecotourism development of case study sub-cities and Addis Ababa city to motivate them for active participation and benefit sharing from the sub-sector;
3. Undertake research to identify and develop eco-attractions in Addis Ababa: Eco-attractions in the case study sub-cities and Addis Ababa city should be identified and developed based on comprehensive research;
4. Provide training and education opportunities on ecotourism management and development for tourism professionals in Addis Ababa and its sub-cities: Provision of training and education

opportunities on ecotourism management and development for tourism professionals will improve planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities of ecotourism in the city and sub-cities;

5. Develop infrastructure in ecotourism areas of the city and sub-cities: Telecommunication, information communication technologies, electrification, transport, water, food and health related infrastructure should be well developed;

6. Inform stakeholders in the city and sub-cities about their roles and responsibilities in the community-based ecotourism guideline: Informing stakeholders about their roles and responsibilities will help to coordinate the ecotourism activities and motivate them for collaborative and sustainable partnership in the sub-sector;

7. Standardization of quality related ecotourism services in the city and sub-cities: The quality related standardization criteria should include environmental and social considerations;

8. Encourage domestic and international ecotourism activities: Establishing ecotourism clubs and associations in schools and work places of Addis Ababa and its sub-cities matters for motivating citizens for domestic ecotourism activities and having effective linkage with international tourists;

9. Increase the economic, social and environmental benefits of local communities from ecotourism services in Addis Ababa and its sub-cities: It is very much important to enable women, youth and physically handicapped groups benefit from organized micro and small-scale handicraft and art fields;

10. Encourage Micro and small-scale ecotourism enterprises in Addis Ababa and its sub-cities: Micro and small-scale ecotourism enterprises will not have negative environmental, economic and social impacts while large scale enterprises will have negative impacts;

11. Strengthen collaborative relationship among actors participating in ecotourism development in Addis Ababa and its sub-cities: Collaborative relationship is very much helpful in achieving shared goals and securing technical and financial support; and

12. Undertake promotional work on ecotourism: Strong market ties and strong ecotourism marketing organization should be established; value-chain analysis for ecotourism in Addis Ababa and its sub-cities should be undertaken.

Conclusion

The results of the study indicate presence of critical challenges and opportunities for ecotourism development in Addis Ababa. The sub-cities taken as case studies and   Addis Ababa city need

ecotourism development strategies and plans which adhere to the principles of sustainable ecotourism development like: active contribution of the sub-sector to the conservation of natural, historical and cultural heritages and inclusion of local and indigenous communities in its planning, development and operation contributing to their well-being. To this end the proposed planning strategic measures are believed to have significant contribution for promoting sustainable ecotourism development in Addis Ababa in the years to come.

Acknowledgement

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