


Chapter 40

Strategic Approach to Tourism Development in Namibia

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a powerful vehicle for economic growth and job creation is now a recognized phenomenon worldwide. International tourist arrivals to SSA have been on increase. This makes SSA the second fastest growing region in the world after the Asia Pacific (UNWTO 2010). The importance of the tourism system for economic development in Namibia has also been clearly acknowledged in the development policies and plans. Despite this, there are few comprehensive studies and research whatever has been sprinkled with narrow focus. This creates difficulty in holistic understanding apart from the need for strategic approach for tourism development in Namibia. In the context of such precincts and lack of comprehensive research, strategic management of tourism and thereby its development to the fullest potential is challenging. This paper through in depth literature review and grounded theory with contextual analysis aims to fill that gap.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of the tourism system for economic development in Namibia has been clearly acknowledged in the development strategies and plans. Despite the recognition of the potential significance of the tourism system for economic development there have been few detailed and comprehensive studies of the structure, dynamics and potential opportunities of tourism development. Moreover, the research that has appeared tends to be extremely narrow in sectoral and/or spatial focus. This in turn renders it unhelpful in terms of a better understanding of the need in strategic approach for tourism management in Namibia. With such precincts in context and in particular the lack of detailed research covering the tourism sector as a whole, strategic management of tourism is difficult to undertake.

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In 2002, WTTC organized the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa to identify the important factors and constraints that are facing the world travel and tourism industry. Tremendous amounts of resources and investments are made by both the government and the private sector in the travel and tourism industry (Baporikar, 2011). Long term planning and resource development is also essential. It does not make financial sense for anyone to build a multibillion dollar resort only to have to abandon it ten years down the road because it has not been able to maintain the integrity and environment in which the resort operates (Sokhalingam & Baporikar, 2011). Hence, effective strategic management of tourism is crucial and need of the hour. Tourism is a powerful vehicle for economic growth and job creation all over the world. The tourism sector is directly and indirectly responsible for 8.8 percent of the world's jobs (258 million); 9.1 percent of the world's GDP (\$6 trillion US); 5.8 percent of the world's exports (\$1.1 trillion US); and 4.5 percent of the world's investment (\$652 billion US) (WTTC 2011).

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that 3.8 million jobs (including 2.4 million indirect jobs) could be created by the tourism industry in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) over the next 10 years. The potential for growth in tourism in the region is significant and compelling. Global hotel chains are poised to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in Africa over the next few years to meet increased demand from both international tourists and the continent's own fast-growing middle class. Global international tourist arrivals have been growing steadily at 4-5 percent per year since the 1950s. Between 2009 and 2010, despite the global financial crisis, international tourist arrivals to SSA increased by 8 percent, making SSA the second fastest growing region in the world after the Asia Pacific (UNWTO 2010). The dramatic growth has been attributed to legislative reform, the development of a tourism strategic plan, and the elimination of visas for Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries.

Cape Verde has also seen a boom in its tourism sector as a result of market-oriented policies, political and banking reforms, and investment incentives. Receipts from tourism in Cape Verde were \$432 million US in 2008, comprising 72 percent of all service exports, 15 percent of GDP, and employing directly and indirectly an estimated 21 percent of the workforce (27,800 people) (Rogerson, 2011). Many other countries in SSA are on the verge of tourism success. In 2011, tourism directly generated 2.7 percent of the GDP of countries in SSA and directly and indirectly accounted for more than 1 in 20 of the region's jobs (12.8 million) (WTTC 2012). SSA has abundant tourism resources. It has expansive beaches, plentiful wildlife, and extensive nature, culture, and adventure opportunities. As disposable incomes increase, domestic travel for leisure purposes is expected to rise. Between 2001 and 2010, GDP grew an average of 5.2 percent a year and per capita income grew 2 percent a year, up from -0.4 percent in the previous 10 years. Already more than 10 million people are traveling across international borders every year within Africa for shopping, medical needs, sports, religious gatherings, business meetings and conferences, and visiting friends and relatives. For example, 58 percent of all arrivals to Namibia in 2010 were from South Africa and Angola. Regional arrivals to South Africa increased by 12.8 percent between 2009 and 2010 (South African Tourism, 2010). Yet, it is by no means easy to develop and sustain a successful tourism destination. African destinations compete for tourists against venues in Asia and South America. It is not enough to have interesting natural and cultural attractions and "friendly people." In many African countries a deep-rooted scepticism about the economic and social benefits of tourism prevails, due to a lack of accurate economic data about the sector, a genuine concern about the environment, and a discomfort with foreign investors and visitors.

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