

The Role of Media in Promoting Tourism

A Study of Harari TV

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the role of media in promoting tourism with a case study of Harari television. Development theory and tourism have evolved along similar timelines since the Second World War. This study used development theory as a main theoretical framework. The study employed qualitative research method. Semi structure in-depth interview was employed as a data gathering instrument. Interviews were with journalists, editors and media manager of Harari television. In addition, an expert from Harari region tourism bureau was interviewed. The findings indicate that tourism sector is not given attention by the media organizations. Moreover, Harari television is not working enough on giving coverage and promoting the tourism sector of the region. Journalists use Harari region tourism bureau as a key source of information. The findings also revealed lack of coordination between the media organization and stakeholders.

KEYWORDS: Tourism, Media, Television, Promotion, Harari

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism as “a social, cultural and economic phenomenon, which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for leisure, business and other purposes.”

Tourism these days has become a major sector and is one of the largest and fast growing industries in the world. According to World Tourism Organization (2015), Ethiopia is one of the tourist destination countries in the world. The country is endowed with many tourist attraction places including historical sites, religious and cultural festivals, endemic wild life, national parks and many more. The United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recognized 13 World heritage Sites in Ethiopia. Among these are Axum’s obelisks, the monolithic churches of Lalibela, Gondar's castles, the Omo Valley, Awash valley, konso Cultural Land scape, Tia's carved standing Stones, Semien National, Park, and the walled city of Harar (UNESCO, 2016).

Harar, an ancient city in the Eastern part of the country, has a lot of tourism attractions. Among these is the historical Jugol wall, the house of French poet Arthur Rimband. Harar is also regarded the fourth holiest city of Islam and has 82 mosques and 100 holy graves. Harar also called a city of peace, was awarded UNESCO’s Cities for Peace Prize for the African Continent in 2002 / 2003 (Harari Region Tourism Bureau, 2017).

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Media a force multiplier, can play a significant role in the enhancement of various sectors. Both media and tourism are very important service sectors. According to S. Praveen Kumar (2014), media has an important role to play in the growth, development and promotion of places by creating greater awareness and understanding in order to cater to the needs and requirements of domestic and international tourists. Every traveler is a 'potential' tourist. It depends upon the skill and campaign of media professionals and tourism experts of the industry to tap this potential and convert it into the 'actual' clients (tourists).

Harari TV broadcasts programs in three languages - Haderegna, Amharic and Afan Oromo. The programs in three languages cover social, cultural, political and economic issues. This research intended to investigate the role of Harari TV in promoting tourism.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ethiopia is a land of many remarkable and magnificent tourism attractions. The exceptional combination of historical, cultural, and natural attractions marks the country as a unique tourist destination in the African region (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2009).

Today Harar is one of the top tourist sites in the country with a number of cultural and religious attractions. The flow of tourists visiting is constantly registering an upward graph each year (Harari Region Tourism Bureau).

Media has always played a pivotal role in accelerating and revitalizing mass tourism in the modern society and popularizing tourism places. As a result, variety of tourist destinations have been discovered and developed generating high growth in the industry evident from the significant increase in the number of tourists registered during the last few years (Yeo, 2011).

There are some researches on tourism issues in the country conducted locally. But little work has been done specifying and explaining the role of media in tourism. A research as a case study in Ethiopia conducted by Mekonnen (2016) focuses on the role of media in tourism promotion. Mekonnen in his work attempted to assess the tourism potential of the country and its actual gain from the sector. The findings of his research reveal that the country has not benefited from its potential. This indicates a dearth of research concerning the role of local media in promoting tourism.

Harari TV transmits different programs in three languages. These programs cover and raise various vital issues. No research has been conducted so far to explore what and how Harari TV is promoting the tourism sector in the region and in the country. The researchers believed that conducting this research was important.

1.3. Objectives of the study

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this research is to investigate the role of Harari TV in promoting tourism.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To explain the role of Harari TV in promoting tourism in influencing domestic tourist motivation;
- To explain stakeholders' role in promoting tourism in the city;
- To identify the challenges faced by journalists while reporting tourism related issues.
- To identify the sources of information while covering tourism issues

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the role of Harari TV in promoting tourism in influencing domestic tourist motivation?
2. What are their sources of information while covering tourism issues?
3. What is the role of stakeholders in promoting tourism in the city?
4. What are the challenges faced by the journalists while reporting tourism related issues?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- This study will help media organizations understand how they can help in promoting tourism.
- It will help the media organizations understand the strong and weak issues while covering tourism related issues.
- It may be used as a source for the media organizations and stakeholders to work on tourism related issues.
- It will be useful for other researchers who want to work on tourism and related issues.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research focused only on the role of Harari TV in promoting tourism in three languages (Haderegna, Amharic and Afan Oromo).

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Since little work has been done or is available on the subject, the study faced lack of precedents and adequate authentic material on this and related issues.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

DEFINITION OF TOURISM

According to the definition of UNWTO, tourism comprises activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.

Sharply (2015) tried to put tourism in two classifications - technical and conceptual definitions. Technical definition of tourism interprets tourism as the activity of a tourist defined as someone who travels for 24 hours or more outside his country of residence. The type of travelers identified here travel for business, pleasure, health or other purpose. In addition, conceptual definition of tourism given from anthropological perspective sees tourism from the person perceived to be a tourist.

OVERVIEW OF TOURISM WORLDWIDE

Tourism a leading industry in the world, figures of late a major social, economic and political phenomena.

According to the World Tourism Economy Trends (2017), global tourism has become a vital drive for global economy as it sustained a high growth rate while the global economy has been recovering slowly and the international trade has slowed down. For the first time, the global tourist arrivals in 2016 passed 10 billion, reaching 10.5 billion which is 1.4 times of the global population, up by 4.8 per cent over last year. The global tourism revenue reached USD 5.17 trillion which amounts to 7.0 per cent of the global GDP, 3.6 per cent rise since last year. The growth of global tourism economy contributed 5.49 per cent of global GDP growth in 2016. The global tourist arrivals and tourism revenue are expected to increase by 7.5 per cent and 4.2 per cent respectively in 2017.

THE TOURISM SECTOR IN ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is a country endowed with unique and diversified cultural, historical and natural resources, which are the foundation for its tourism attractions and destinations. It is often referred to as the origin of humankind, symbol of ancient of civilization, and a country of immense cultural diversity. Ethiopia is also known for its remarkable natural beauty and wild life resources. At present Ethiopia has registered nine tangible and two intangible world heritage sites under the UNESCO (UNWTO, 2016).

According to the World Bank Report (2006), from 1974 for two decades the industry in Ethiopia was suffering from various adverse effects such as prolonged civil war, recurrent drought and restrictions on entry and free movement of tourists.

For many years, Ethiopia has also attracted the discerning traveler. Thousands of years before the appearance of the Lonely Planet Guides, visitors extolled its attractions and wonders (World Bank, 2006).

TOURISM SECTOR IN HARAR

Harar is the world's heritage, the old walled city of 82 mosques, the fourth most holy site in Islam. This welcoming city with its unique city houses was founded in the 10th century and exudes an aura of cultural and architectural authenticity (Ethiopian Tourism Organization, 2016).

TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT

Tourism having a strong bond with growth brings social, economic and political development for countries. Tourism generates foreign exchange, increases employment, attracts capital and promotes economic independence (Britton, 1982).

DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Development theory has been applied to tourism by many scholars and institutions.

As per Telfer (1996, cited in Harrison, 2015), Development Theory and tourism have evolved along similar timelines since the Second World War; yet there has been little work connecting the two fields of study. This is surprising considering tourism continues to be a growing focus of economic development policy in many regions and nations.

Eschborn, (1999) stated that tourism is one of the largest and steadily growing economic sectors world-wide in

which developing nations have a considerable stake. For this reason alone, tourism is a relevant factor in terms of development policies.

MEDIA AND TOURISM

According to Praveenkumar (2014), media plays an important role in the growth, development and promotion by creating better awareness and understanding about the requirements of domestic and international tourists. Every traveler is a 'potential' tourist. It depends upon the campaign of professionals (media professionals and tourism experts) of the industry to tap this potential and convert the 'potential' into the 'actual' clients (tourist).

As former secretary general of UNWTO Francesco Frangiali stated: "Tourists are scared away from destinations caught in round-the-clock disaster coverage, causing communities dependent on tourism to lose their source of livelihood. I believe it is because of this reason that the WTO also has repeatedly called on the media to avoid over-sensationalizing the effects of disasters".

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

RESEARCH METHODS

This study has employed a qualitative research method. Hennik et al. (2011) state that one of the most outstanding features of qualitative research is that it allows the researcher to identify issues from the perspective of the participants and to understand the meanings and interpretations that the informants attach to behavior and events in the context of their experiences. This research has assessed the role of Harari TV in promoting tourism in influencing domestic tourist motivation, to see the role of stakeholders in promoting tourism in the city and to identify the challenges faced by the journalists while reporting tourism related issues.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

This research has used non-probability sampling. From non-probability sampling, it used purposive sampling to reach the respondents relevant to this study and who are in a position to provide valuable information. These are four journalists and three editors from three languages who had been reporting and editing tourism issues. In addition, media manager of Harari media agency was interviewed. Besides, an expert from Harari region tourism Bureau was included in the interview.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

This research has employed semi-structured in-depth interviews. Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research and can occur either with an individual or in groups. Most commonly they are only conducted once for an individual or group and take between 30 minutes to several hours to complete. So, semi-structured in-depth interview was used with journalists, editors, media manager and an expert.

DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

The gathered qualitative data were analyzed through thematic approach that requires preliminary explanation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL-DEVELOPMENT

Tourism contributes immensely to a country's social, economic and political development. Nowadays, our country is benefiting from the sector though it is not enough. Although it has a lot of tourism sites, the country is not generating high income as expected. When we compare with countries that have less tourist sites, our country is not generating a high income on the field. However, it can be said that the sector is contributing in the country's social, economic and political development. Arthur Rambo, who is a French citizen, visited Harar and learned the cultures of Harari people. This creates a strong social bondage between Ethiopian and French people **(Interview with Journalists, August, 2017)**

In terms of economy, tourism is a smokeless industry. Here while benefit potential is high, Ethiopia is not benefiting high from the sector. Nowadays, there are initiatives being taken by the government. The country recently launched a new tourism motto called "Land of Origin". This helps the country so that the sector generates better income to the country. It is believed that those sites found in different regions, towns and districts could contribute a lot to the economic growth of the country. In addition, it creates job opportunities. When tourists come here, the people of Harar benefit directly or indirectly. In terms of hotel, tourist agencies and guides, tourist destination areas get benefit. **(Interview with editors, 2017).**

Political stability and tourism are complimentary and have strong inter-relationship. Examples are uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia that adversely affected tourism in the two countries. Ethiopia's tourism sector is no exception and has been affected adversely because of the political instability during 2016 **(Interview with Journalists and editors, 2017).**

Tourism makes difference in other sectors in Ethiopia too, as it generates income. Though not compatible with our neighboring countries, the sector is generating better income comparing from our past history. Currently, the flow of tourists is increasing continuously and is now in the third and fourth place in terms of GDP contribution. It has become a big sector and industry in the world in terms of creating job opportunities involving a number of citizens. Eleven per cent of the world population is involved in this sector. Harari region is one of the country's tourist destination areas. There is a gradual change in the flow of tourists to the region. It has grown up by 10 per cent on average. This is due to infrastructure developments in the region. Although a sensitive industry, it is contributing a lot in the country's capacity building and is building a strong bondage in culture and language among people. Socially, it has a negative impact to some extent. **(Interview with an expert from Harari region tourism bureau, 2017).**

The findings of this research show tourism contributes a lot to the overall development of a country. According to World Tourism Economy Trends (2017), tourism has been working as a crucial force to connect the world and bridge different civilizations with its widespread impact on economy, society, culture, politics, ecosystem and other areas. So, it can be concluded that tourism is contributing to the social, economic and political development of the country and the region even though there is scope for more.

The role of Harari TV in promoting tourism in the region

As we know Harari region is small both in population and size. The region should generate income from tourism and for that the sector has to be developed. Nowadays, the regional government is taking different initiatives to enhance tourism. Media also has programs focusing on tourism issues. We are working on promoting tourist attractions of the region. Tourism programs are broadcast on Harari television every week in Afan Oromo 'Soorata Qalbii', Amharic 'Tourism' and Harari 'Z'yara'.

These programs promote the region's historical and religious sites for various audiences though they are different in content. We are not only producing programs located in the region but also tourism sites in our nearby regions such as the Eastern Haraghe zone of Oromia region tourism sites. As for media, we are working on realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) related to tourism. We can hardly say that we are working enough as Harar has a lot of tourism attraction sites and recognized by UNESCO. We have also websites that promote the tourism attractions. But we have to do more. The coverage that we are giving to tourism is not enough. In order to reach the wider and international audience, we must produce documentaries and upload programs on our websites regularly. Our television reaches 100-150 Km radius. Only people who are around the city and surroundings could see our programs. The other audiences can be reached through the selected programs that we send to EBC. This is not enough in terms of production and quality of programs. We are still unable to reach the international audiences as we must (**Interview with Media Manager, editors and journalists, 2017**).

As to Beeton (2006) fictional genres in television series have been the major mass media and have been influencing especially in tourism in the twentieth century. Brown et al. (2003) states that media is essential for tourism. As a result, many countries have developed media-induced tourism. Films and television programs will continue to influence beliefs and behaviors individually and socially as the use of television and video popularize quickly. Unlike this, the findings of this study show that Harari television is not influential and not accessible source of information due to several factors.

THE COVERAGE OF TOURISM ISSUES IN HARARI TV

There is 20 minutes tourism program every week in three languages. We mainly focus and work jointly with Harari region tourism bureau. In addition, we go to fields and work on historical sites in or surroundings. This is hardly enough. If we want to conduct an interview with officials of the tourism bureau, they do not treat and welcome us. Emphasis is not given to the sector. The regional government is not working enough on enhancing the tourism sector. The initiations taken by the regional government tourism bureau are event based. But, we are doing efforts on our own covering tourism issues. We have weekly programs mostly presented in terms of interview. (**Interview with journalists and editors, 2017**)

In Harari newspaper we have our own column focusing on tourism. However, we do not have a permanent air time in Harari television. As an expert, I do not believe that tourism is being given enough coverage. This is due to lack of commitment among stakeholders. In our case, we are unable to buy air time due to shortage of budget and manpower. (**Interview with an expert, 2017**).

The finding of this research is similar with the research conducted by Mekonnen in 2016. His findings spotted a gap between the potential that the country has and its benefit from the bridge is widened by lack of promotion through the different media outlets. Although the region has a number of tourist attractions, it is not getting attention. Therefore, it can be concluded that Harari television is not giving wide coverage to tourism issues.

Sources of information while covering tourism related issues

Our main sources of information on tourism are government officials especially experts from Harari region tourism bureau, historians, books from the region's libraies, tourists and tourist guides, community and religious leaders and residents. (**Interview with journalists,2017**).

The findings of this study show that their main source of information is the region's tourism bureau. From the interview, the researcher tried to understand that the television house and the tourism bureau are not working hand in hand as it is expected. The journalists are not also exerting their maximum effort in using various sources of information.

THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN PROMOTING TOURISM

The sector needs marketing and promotion. As to our office, we are trying our best to promote Harari region tourism attractions. We are working with Harari television, radio and newspaper. We are working not only with local media but also with national (FBC and EBC) and international media like CNN and BBC. Moreover, we are also promoting through social media. But we believe that we are not working enough. **(Interview with an expert from Harari region tourism bureau, 2017).**

In our region, there is a governmental office responsible for tourism and culture. This office is expected to do a lot on the regions, cultural and tourist attractions. However, it can be claimed that it is not working closely or in coordination with Harari television. There is lack of commitment from stakeholders especially from the region's tourism bureau. Whenever our journalists go to conduct interviews, they are mostly not welcoming them. The office is also not informing the people about the tourism sites of the region as expected. Journalists go to the office to get and explore information but the experts are not knowledgeable enough to offer more than we already know. Stakeholders can contribute a lot but their help is not forthcoming often. The communities being not exposed much to media are also not active participants. **(Interview with journalists and editors, 2017).**

It can be deduced from these findings that there is little coordination among stakeholders especially between Harari television and Harari Tourism bureau.

THE CHALLENGES JOURNALISTS FACED WHILE REPORTING TOURISM RELATED ISSUES

We are trying to produce programs based on the resources we have. But, the challenges come from the media management, stakeholders and the community. If we see the management in other media organization like Addis TV or Dire TV, they are letting the journalists produce programs on historical, religious and other tourist attractions about their regions and surroundings. Leave aside covering other regions tourist attraction sites, we are facing challenges covering our surroundings. We have shortage of resources in the television house such as cameras, vehicles, historical book and lack of trained journalists on the field. We do at times fail to meet even our appointments due to shortage of camera and vehicles. Due to this and other factors, tourism is not given attention in terms of quality and quantity. **(Interview with journalists, 2017).**

In our region, there is a governmental office responsible for tourism and culture. This office is expected to contribute a lot to the region's cultural and tourist attractions. However, it can be claimed that it is not working closely with Harari television. There is lack of commitment from stakeholders especially from the region's tourism bureau. Whenever our journalists go to conduct interviews, mostly they do not entertain them. The office is also not informing the people about the tourism sites of the region. Journalists go to the office to get and explore information but the experts are not well informed. Although stakeholders can contribute a lot the tourism sector, we do not meet and help each other quite often. The communities are not active participants; they are not media exposed. **(Interview with journalists and editors, 2017).**

It can be concluded from the findings that the challenges of journalists while covering tourism issues are lack of skilled manpower, shortage of resources, lack of managerial commitment and lack of coordination among stakeholders.

CONCLUSIONS

For many years, Ethiopia has been attracting millions of tourists. The country is endowed with a lot of cultural, historical and religious sites. Media has a pervasive power in promoting tourism.

The findings of this research indicate that the tourism sector is contributing to the social, economic and political development of the country and the region specifically. Although Harar is rich in historical and religious heritages, it is not benefited to the expected extent from the tourism sector. It can therefore, be claimed that tourism sector is growing and enhancing social, economic and political development of the country and the region only to a limited extent but not enough.

According to Beeton (2006), television is one of the most powerful and influential medium. However, the findings of this research indicate that Harari television is not working enough in promoting tourism and is not easily accessible by the domestic and international tourists.

Regarding the sources of information, the media organization is mostly dependent on the Harari tourism bureau. It can be concluded that journalists are unable to use a wider variety of sources of information. Stakeholders are not working hand in hand to enhance and promote the tourism sector of the region. The findings clearly put that there is lack of coordination between the tourism bureau and the media organization. Journalists also face challenges coming from the media management, governmental offices and community members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion, the researchers forwarded the following recommendations:

- There has to be adequate skilled manpower and resources in the media organization.
- Tourism issues should be given emphasis and covered widely in terms of quality and quantity.
- Stakeholders should work hand in hand with media to develop the tourism sector.
- Harari Television should expand its reach and let the people get exposed to media.

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