

Peace & Stability as a decisive factor for Tourism Development in Ethiopia; a case of Gondar City

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Abstract

The modern travelers are concerned about their safety. Political violence leads tourists to opt for places where there is peace and sometimes may decide not to go at all. Travelers (tourists) are generally very sensitive to their security and safety of the country they go for holidaying. The purpose of this research is to investigate the effects of instability and unrest in tourism business in Ethiopia; a case of Gondar city. The research has used descriptive research design in combination with qualitative and quantitative research approach. The population of the research were hoteliers, travel agents, tour operators, souvenir shop sellers, and other tourism outlets. Besides, the data were analyzed and presented by using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage) and narrative & argumentative essay writing techniques. The research reveals that the tourism business of the city has been heavily affected in terms of tourist arrivals and revenue. Furthermore, a lot of human power has been temporarily unemployed due to forcefully expelled from the tourism organization as a result of business collapse. The tourism business of the city and even in the country has experienced the worst records of failure and severe recession period. The researcher has recommended that the government shall strive to bring back peace and stability to the city and to the country as quickly as possible. Lastly, the tourism business outlets and key tourism stakeholders should eagerly work hard in promotion and good will campaign to restore the business once and for all.

Key words: *Peace, Stability, Tourism Development, Ethiopia & Gondar*

Introduction

There has been much public speaking about tourism's role in promoting world peace. Those advocating tourism as a peace maker cite quotes from internationally renowned figures to support their case. The same author describes that political figures, religious leaders and movie stars provide examples of the commonly held view that tourism contributes to world peace. For example, the tourism- brings-peace proponents point out (John F. Kennedy's; no date).

“Travel has become one of the great forces for peace and understanding in our time. As people move throughout the world and learn to know each other's customs and to appreciate the qualities of individuals of each nation, we are building a level of international understanding which can sharply improve the atmosphere for world peace”.

The International Institute for Peace & Stability through Tourism, established in 1986, is essentially a lobby group, representing both public and private sectors of the travel and tourism industry. This non-government organization seeks to foster and facilitate tourism initiatives that contribute to international cultural understanding and cooperation, improve the quality of the environment, preserve heritage and ultimately bring about a peaceful and sustainable world (Gibbons, Hill, Illum, & Var, 1995). While it is generally agreed that peace is something to strive for, there is less consensus about what peace looks like (Kreck, 1989).

There is minimal study on the impacts of instability & unrest on tourism activities in Ethiopia. While most studies on tourism and peace, stability examine only as generally, this study takes a local perspective examining the relationship between peace and tourism activities in Gondar city.

The tourism industry has been affected by numerous forces in its Environment. It is necessary for the industry to identify major forces that are most likely to impact its value; one of the factors is lack of Peace&Stability. The instability of Gondar in 2016 has led to bad business, wrong city image, and cancellations of many bookings.

Objectives of the Research

The general objective of this research is to assess the impacts of absence of peace and stability on the tourism activities in Gondar city.

Specifically, the research would address the following objectives;

- To analyse the economic impacts of absence of peace and instability on tourism activities in Gondar city
- To describe the tourist arrivals in Gondar city in 2016

Literature

Tourism & Peace

Mahatma Gandhi said that “I have watched the cultures of all lands blow around my house and other winds have blown the seeds of peace, for travel is the language of peace”

UNWTO's third article of its statutes reads “*The fundamental aim of the organization shall be the promotion and development of tourism with a view to contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity*”. In the late 1980s, several international conferences were held advocating tourism's role as a vital force for peace & stability (D'Amore, 1988; Jafari, 1989).

There has been an ongoing debate among academics, tourism practitioners and government policy-makers about the relationship between tourism and peace (Kelly, & Moufakkir, 2010). Tourism, it is argued, can be a vital force for world peace by bridging cultural and psychological gaps between people groups (Nyaupane, Paris, & Teye, 2008).

In 1980, a declaration by the World Tourism Organization in Manila highlighted the fact that tourism could contribute to the establishment of a new international economic order, and could be a vital force for world peace. That declaration served as the basis for a number of subsequent conferences on this theme. A conference on ‘Tourism – a Passport to Peace’, held in 1987 in Shannon, Ireland, was followed by the first ‘Global Conference on Tourism – A Vital Force for Peace’ in Vancouver 1988.

Political Instability, Wars, Violence in relation to Tourist Flow

The modern travelers are concerned about their safety. Political violence leads tourists to opt for places where there is peace and sometimes may decide not to go at all (Baker, 2012). Travelers (tourists) are generally very sensitive to their security and safety of the country they go for holidaying (Nyaruwata et al. 2013). The worst events which affect tourism sector are those caused by mankind such as wars, violence and political turmoil. These events succeed in frightening travelers (Cavlek, 2002; Heng, 2006).

Both developed and developing nations have been affected and have seen reduction in travelers' arrivals once a threatening event occurs. These events include: terrorist bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York (September 11, 2001); the USA and its allies were against Iraq (2003); the Tsunami tragedy in South East Asia (December 2004); the long civil war in Angola (ending in 2004); terrorist bombing in Bali, Indonesia (2005); the political turmoil in Kenya (2007); political turmoil in Thailand (2008-2010) (ibid)

According to the United Nations (2013) although the Egyptian economy generally had defied the odds in registering minimum growth of 1.7% in 2011 and 1.8% in 2012 the tourism sector had been largely affected as a result of political turmoil, and unrest. Political stability is a critical success factor in establishing a solid tourism sector. Tourism in Cyprus after independence became a major source of revenue, however, the invasion of Turkey which took place in 1973 – 1974 drastically affected tourism (Clements, & Georgiou, 1998).

Peace & Tourism in Ethiopia

Under the shadow of the boiling political crisis, the Ethiopian tourism sector launched its new logo ‘The Land of Origin’. To make matters worse, the ongoing protest has already over shadowed the promising trend observed in the sector in recent years. Last year, it was able to bag a record amount of foreign currency in tune of USD 3.4 billion after hosting one million tourists, which is said to be one of the highest tourist flows to Ethiopia in recent times. (MoCT, 2016)

In addition, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT, 2016), expects.

However, the ministry's forecast of the sector's performance, which expects 1.4 million tourists and over three billion dollars by the end of July 8, 2017, raises serious doubt in the face of recent protests in Amhara and Oromia regional states delivering a serious blow to the tourism and hospitality industry across the two regions. The series of travel alerts issued by foreign countries to their respective nationalities is certainly not helping the case. This also casts more doubt over the country's economic growth that is expected later at the end of the year. Over the last month several reports on social media

indicated a rising death toll following security crackdown against a stay-at-home protests in Bahir Dar (the region’s capital) and Gondar (a historic city), which are visited by thousands of tourists.

According to some observers, the unrest – a rare in the nation – highlights the conflict between Ethiopia’s government’s development model and its system of federalism, which guarantees the rights of nations and nationalities.

Gondar & Its Tourism Status

Gondar, Ethiopia – Ethiopian News Agency (ENA, 2016) – Over 19 million Birr (USD 950, 000) was secured from tourists, who visited historic, cultural and religious sites in Gondar city. Department Head, Getahun Seyum told ENA on Thursday October 4, 2016 that the stated sum was obtained from more than 16,300 tourists, who visited the sites. Some 12,300 of the tourists are domestic visitors, while the remaining more than 4,000 are foreigners. According to the head, the number of tourists, who visited the sites and the amount secured from the sector exceeded last year’s same period by 6,000 and 12 million Birr (USD 600, 000), respectively. The castles of King Fasiledes and his successors, Fasil’s swimming pool, Churches of DebreBirhan Selassie and Kuskwam Mariam are among the major sites visited by the tourists.

On the contrary, the country in general and the city in particular has experienced sever protest and unrest, which devastated the tourism business and other economic activities of the city, has a tremendous negative consequences on the revenue and tourist arrivals in Amhara region in general and in the city in particular. The protests against government has stayed for a couple of months (June-September, 2016). This situation severely hurts the government inside and outside the country. Furthermore, the government has declared a state of emergence for about ten months (October 2016-July 2017). In these times, the country experienced the worst tourism experiences in history. Though the government via the House of people’s representatives has left the state of emergency, the shadow effects of the case will continue to affect the tourism industry for unknown period as the projection showed. The government and other concerned bodies should work hard in promotion and publicity internally and externally.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: A conceptual framework of the study



Source: own source

Research Methodology

Study Area: Gondar is a city located in North Gondar Zone of the Amhara Region. It is north of Tana Lake on the Lesser Angereb River and southwest of the Simien Mountains National Park. It has a latitude and longitude of 12°36’N 37°28’E with an elevation of 2133 meters above sea level.

Gondar traditionally was divided into several neighborhoods or quarters: Addis Alem, where the Muslim inhabitants dwelled; Kayla Meda, where the adherents of Beta Israel lived; Abun Bet, centered on the

residence of the Abuna, or nominal head of the Ethiopian Church; and Qagn Bet, home to the nobility. Gondar is also a noted center of ecclesiastical learning of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, and known for having 44 churches – for many years more than any other settlement in Ethiopia. Gondar and its surrounding countryside constitute the homeland of most Ethiopian Jews. (Source)

The modern city of Gondar is popular as a tourist destination for its many picturesque ruins in FasilGhebbi (the Royal Enclosure), from which the emperors once reigned. The most famous buildings in the city lie in the Royal Enclosure, which include Fasilides' castle, Iyasu's palace, Dawit's Hall, a banqueting hall, stables, Empress Mentewab's castle, a chancellery, library and three churches. Near the city lie Fasilides' Bath, home to an annual ceremony where it is blessed and then opened for bathing; the Qusquam complex, built by Empress Mentewab; the eighteenth century Ras Mikael Sehul's Palace and the DebreBerhan Selassie Church.

Based on the 2007 national census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), Gondar had a total population of 207,044, of whom 98,120 were men and 108,924 women. The majority of the inhabitants practiced Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, with 84.2% reporting that as their religion, while 11.8% of the population said they were Muslim and 1.1% were Protestant.

The 1994 national census reported a total population of 112,249 in 21,695 households, of whom 51,366 were men and 60,883 women. The three largest ethnic groups reported in Gondar Zuria were the Amhara (88.91%), the Tigrayan (6.74%), and the Qemant (2.37%); all other ethnic groups made up 1.98% of the population. Amharic was spoken as a first language by 94.57%, and 4.67% spoke Tigrinya; the remaining 0.76% spoke all other primary languages reported. 83.31% adhered to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and 15.83% of the population said they were Muslim. Gondar was once the home of a large population of Ethiopian Jews, most of who immigrated to Israel in the late 20th and early 21st century.

Research Design: A descriptive research approach has used in combination with qualitative and quantitative research approach.

Population for the Study: the population were consist of hotel establishments, visitors (local and foreign), tourist guides, tour operators, travel agents, souvenir shops, car rental companies, experts from Gondar City Culture, Tourism and Sport Department and experts from Gondar City Security Office.

Sampling Techniques: Both probability and non-probability sampling methods has been employed for the study. In order to gather the relevant data from experts from Gondar City Culture, Tourism and Sport Department and Gondar City Security office, purposive sampling method has been employed. Whereas, simple random sampling has been used for gathering relevant data from travel agents, tour operation companies and souvenir shops in Gondar city.

Methods of Data Analysis

The close ended questionnaires have been analyzed through the use of descriptive statics methods like percentage and average. Whereas the qualitative data was analyzed through narrative data analysis has been employed.

Results & Discussion

In this section, the main research findings and results would be identified and analyzed in a more elaborative and descriptive ways.

Question 1: Is peace & stability affecting your interest in selecting a destination?

Table 1: the impact of peace& stability in selecting a destination

Item 3.	Option	No	Percentage
Is peace & stability affecting your interest in selecting a destination?	Yes	72	90%
	No	7	10%
	Total	80	100%

Source; own survey May 2017

The above table indicates most of the tourist respondent said peace & stability affecting their interest in selecting a destination that 90% are answering yes and 10% of the tourist respondentsaid peace & stability are not affecting their interest in selecting a destination.

As the open ended Questionnaire indicates that 90% of the respondent said “yes” & when they explained their reasons concerning to item 4, all of the respondents replied that peace and stability play pivotal role for the betterment of life at large.

Question 2: Did you find any political instability in your stay in Gondar city on the stated time schedule (2007-2009 E.C)?

Table: 2 the political instability in Gondar city on the stated time schedule (2007-2009)

Item 2	Options	No	Percentage
2. Did you find any political instability in your stay in Gondar city on the stated time schedule (2007-2009 E.C)?	Yes	24	30%
	Sometimes	40	50%
	Never	16	20%
	Total	30	100%

Source: own survey 2017

Indicated that 24 (30%) of respondents have replied that they find political instability in their stay in Gondar city on the stated time schedule (2007-2009 E.C), 40 (50%) respondents have replied sometimes they find a political instability 16 (20%) of respondents replied they never find any political instability.

As the open ended Questionnaire indicates that 24% & 50% of the respondent said “yes” & “Sometimes” when they are explain their reasons concerning to item 7, all of the respondents ratified that they observed political instability at Gondar city in 2008 and 2009 E.C.

Regarding to item 8, all of the respondents replied that the political instability of Gondar city has an impact on the tourism industry. They also revealed that the means of generating additional income and the decreasing number of tourists were the major constraints of the town attributable to political instability.

As airline ticket office managers Ato Musa replied that “Peace and the tourism industry are two things that cannot go separate if there is no peace there will not be much tourism activities”.

As the Florida international Hotel manager Ato Biniyam replied that:-

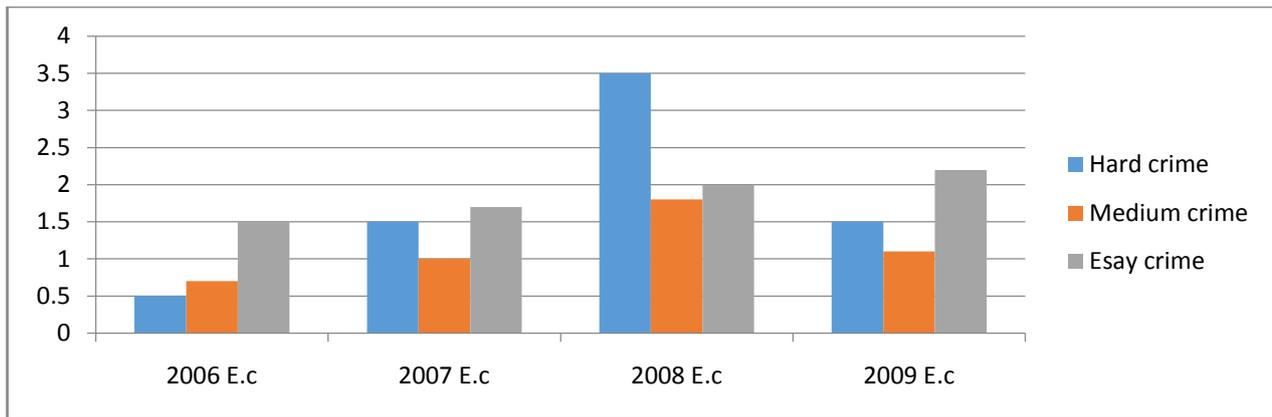
” the instability from year 2007-2009 has affected the tourism industry highly, number of customers has declined, the annual year income has declined, but this short term instability did not have much effect on the city’s image”.

The evaluation of the owners of travel agents on political instability of 2008 E.C related with their business they replied that As a tourism stakeholder to bring back the industry to its position (before the instability) satisfying the customer creating awareness for the customers that the problem is being solved and the city is now at peace.

One tourism experts of the city has said that peace and security are vital to provide and sell more tourism products and confidently market destination, the success or failure of a tourism destination depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors Besides, he said that number of arrivals is very low; the lack of peace and instability is causing the current tourism activity of the city to be very weak.

The 2nd respondent from the tourism office said that the tourism activity from year 2007-2008 June was good, but after the 5th of July the number of arrivals has declined dramatically. The instability has caused tourist to feel insecure and unsafe

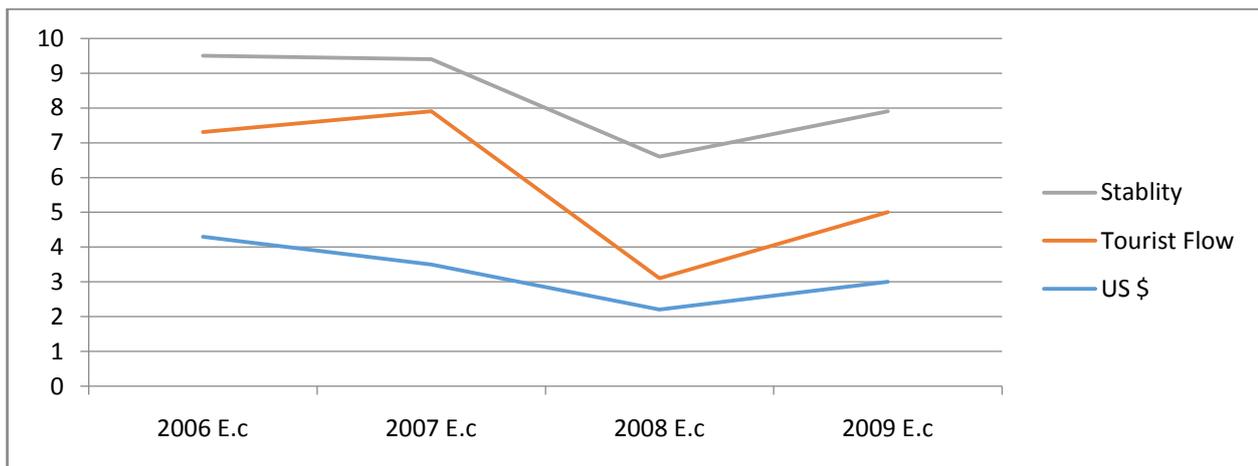
As North Gondar security office reports indicated that the compression of crime number in four consecutive years listed as follow



Source: Gondar city security office report 2009

As the above chart indicated that the crime number of the city has growth festally from the year of 2006 to 2007 E.c due to the political instability of the area & also in the year of 2008 has reached treat stage due to the political instability & protest of the people in the region & in the year of 2009 become decline due to state of Emergency.

As Gondar tourism office report indicated that the political instability reduced the foreign and domestic tourists flow in Gondar city and thereby reduced the income from tourism receipts and affected tourism stakeholder’s employees in tourism sector. As the result of the political instability the foreign exchange earnings of Gondar city has been reduced. The below graph show us the tourist flow of three consecutive years.



Source: Gondar city tourism office 2009

As the above graph indicated that the tourist flow decrease from the year of 2006 up to 2009 it seems like this 2.4%, 4.4%, 1.1%, and 2% and also the foreign currency becomes as decrease rate of tourist flow decreases.

And finally the all tourism stakeholders replied that their recommendation as tourism stakeholders for future plan to improve the instability The respondents replied that since they are dependable on peace and security it is necessary for efficacious tourism industry, tourism stakeholders must work together to get the tourism industry where it was before the instability.s

Conclusion

Based on the data analyzed in the previous part the following conclusions are drowning for the successful assessment of the influence of peace & stability on Gondar city tourism activities. Peace & stability are of vital importance to the tourism activities. However as per the findings of the study, the researchers conclude that the tourism activities of Gondar city as follow.

- ✓ The collaboration of the stakeholders is not sufficient to satisfy the need or request of the tourist.
- ✓ The relationship between public & government very weak.
- ✓ The commitment of the stakeholders for prevalence of peace & stability is very weak.

- ✓ There is lack of standards criteria used to select right suppliers; suppliers are selected only based on their capital and lowest price criteria.
- ✓ There is lack of tourism experts. As a result there is a communication gap (misunderstand) with the principles and ethics of tourism industry.
- ✓ The tourism department of the city is not well committed to prevalence peace & stability & to provide sufficient information for the tourism stakeholders.
- ✓ Lack of government activities to ensure peace & stability.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings of the study and conclusion down the researcher recommended the following:-

- ✓ When tourism services are provided it must consider the interest of the host community.
- ✓ Create awareness for all tourism stakeholders in order to prevalence peace & stability.
- ✓ As tourism is the promoter of peace & stability the government should answer the questions raised from the host community.
- ✓ The tourism staff should be considering the overall tourism activities and criteria to select the right tourism suppliers.
- ✓ The tourism office should prepare a special training (improved skill) program for tourism stakeholders on other hand to provide basic information about tourism activities and to implement effective decisions making. The office should give great emphasis to tourism experts.
- ✓ The stakeholders should implement clearly defined guide lines for sustainable tourism development.
- ✓ The tourism staff should be professional expert rather than related professional & conduct well specialized tourism market survey frequently in order to manage the tourist flow fluctuation in the market.

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