

**Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism in Ethiopia**

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**Abstract**

Tourism has been a major source of intercultural and societal ties among hosts and guests. As many research findings on many touristic countries suggests that socio cultural structures have been changing dramatically as a result of tourism. These changes, both positive and negative, have varied from country to country. The reactions of the hosts in the face of negative changes have been quite diverse, ranging from an active resistance to a complete adoption of the guests' culture. The choice of strategies to cope with changes wrought by tourism depends on the socio cultural characteristics of the host community and the level of change affected by tourism. Studies on the impacts of tourism have so far done neither in economic analysis nor in socio-cultural in Ethiopia as a result has it not been clear whether the benefits outweigh the costs. This study, therefore, aimed at evaluating the impacts of tourism on the socio-cultural spheres of the local communities. Methodologically, the research used descriptive research design with both qualitative and quantitative research approach. This study revealed that there has been tremendous contributions of the tourism industry in terms of social cohesion, new language, and inter-cultural fusion. On the contrary, a lot has been counted as negative consequences. This paper strongly recommends that the community should be involved and empowered in planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation stages of tourism development and management.

Key words: Social, Culture, Impact, Tourism, Gondar

**Introduction**

Tourism's movement of people, ideas, and capital has created many positive and negative socio-cultural, environmental and economic impacts, as tourism development can transform regions into entirely new settings (Fennell, 1999). Tourism has played a role in value transformation, the creation of black markets, drugs, prostitution, reinforcement of stereotypes, and violence (Schwartz, 1997). In addition, conflicts between tourists and hosts are caused due to the differences in natural origin, communication, and cultural values; often resulting in a superficial relationship (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). However, tourism also creates positive intercultural interactions and communication that include a sense of cultural enrichment and psychological satisfaction, an increase in positive attitudes, a break in isolation of cultural groups and a cultural exchange of ideas (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Tourism, in Ethiopia in general & Gondar city in particular, is supposed to be influenced by social and cultural changes to host societies that include changes in value systems, traditional lifestyles, family relationships, individual behavior or community structure. The city is known as Camelot of Africa as its history and culture depicts the diverse nature of the continent. There are ancient churches, palaces, tangible and in tangible heritage sites which has been inscribed by UNESCO in 1989 (Richard Pankhurst, 1967). Furthermore, Gondar city is considered as one of the perfect cultural destinations in east Africa and also the hub for Simien Mountains National Park, which is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest mountain in Africa (4543m above sea level) (Yenesew, 2015).

As Gondar city is rich in priceless and valuable cultural resources which has dated back to 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, studies on the impacts of tourism have so far done neither in economic analysis nor in socio-cultural in relation to tourism. Thus, the gap in the knowledge of assessing the socio-cultural impacts of tourism promoted this study to be done. In spite of all negative and positive impacts of tourism on the socio-cultural structure of Gondar city, it is not yet clear whether the benefits outweigh the costs. Since the success of tourism depends very much on the human attitudes and behavior of the residents of a destination towards tourists, this seems to be an encouraging result for the future of tourism development.

**Objectives of the study**

The main objective of the study is to evaluate the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in the city. Specifically the work;

1. To evaluate the cultural impacts of tourism in Gondar city

2. To assess social impact of tourism in Gondar city
3. To assess the residents' awareness of the socio cultural impacts of tourism on the community

This research would have tremendous contributions and supports for various emerging and existing tourism destinations, organizations and stakeholders in terms of mitigating the problems of tourism, make sound decisions for planners, policy makers, implementers, cultural & tourism practitioners, and a springboard for undertaking further future researches.

### **Literature Review**

The tourism industry generates multiple socio-cultural benefits to the receiving countries and to the tourism-sending countries. In the developing countries, one of the main reasons to sustain and promote tourism is the expected economic and socio-cultural growth. Thus, tourists spent an important amount of money to buy products in a tourist destination, starting with accommodation, food and beverage, recreational activities and so on, generating a direct effect on business and on the economy measured by incomes that are paying the wages and taxes. At the same time, the tourism businesses have to buy goods and services necessary to satisfy the visitors' needs, and the direct incomes are used further to make investments and to buy other goods and services (Brunt and Courtney, 2003).

According to Gursoy& Chen (2000), Tourism is a product that is produced and consumed at the same time. Tourism affects the economy and lives of communities and has proven to be a lifesaver for many destinations. Impacts occur when tourism changes the value systems/ behavior, threatening native identity and that changes occur in community structure, family relationships, ceremonies, collective traditional styles and morality. Tourism can also cause positive impacts as it can serve as a helpful force for peace, help avoid urban rearrangement by creating local jobs and foster pride in cultural traditions. The type of tourist will have a differing effect on the host community. The mass tourist is less likely to adapt to the local cultures and will seek facilities and standards found in his home community. On the other hand the independent tourist will adapt more willingly. The tourism development strategy should aim to protect local culture, respect local traditions and promote local ownership and management of programs and projects so as to foster community supervision arrangements of the natural resource base (Hampton, 2003; Schwartz, 1997).

Culture is a very wide concept which includes the material and immaterial that provides significant value. It is the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively. It also includes the customs, institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or group. It further indicates the identity of a place and is expressions of the relationships between human and nature. Thus, Culture shows the significant developments or an historic event in relation to the socio-cultural changes (Barnes, T. J. (2002). Culture is generally defined in the context of ancient remains, cultural property, cultural asset, cultural resource, moveable and immovable objects and cultural environment (Venice charter, 1964). 'Culture' means all cultural products comprised of both physical and non-physical objects, produced by humans living in the past and in the present. The products have significant values, rarity and authenticity. They signify the identity of a place and are expressions of the relationships between human and nature (UNWTO, 2007). Gondar city is a historic place with a rich cultural heritages which includes tangible and intangible assets, centuries old handicraft production, exceptional variety of ceremonies, festivals, celebrations and rituals, as well as cultural heritage sites registered on the UNESCO's World Heritage list in 1989 (Hampton, 2003).

According to Williams (1998), each arrival of foreign tourists in to a local community inevitably provokes positive and negative influences. The main positive influence refers to the increased knowledge and understanding of hosts societies and cultures, which refers to positive interaction (Bochner, 1982) etc. On the other hand, tourism can provide negative effects such as degradation and the commercialization of culture, increased tensions between imported and traditional lifestyles, erosion of strength of a local language, new patterns of local consumption, and risks of promotion of harmful activities (gambling, drugs, violence, etc.). The relationship between residents and foreign tourists is created by the ratio between the behavior of foreign tourists in the tourist destination and the way local people perceive this behavior. How the local people perceive the behavior of foreign tourists, and evaluate it as positive or negative, is determined primarily by cultural and moral norms of the population of a certain destination. However, one must take into account that the behavior of tourists during their stay in the tourist destination often does not reflect the everyday lifestyle of foreign tourists. It means that tourists' behavior seems more relaxed during holidays which is perceived in wearing unintended clothes, increased food and beverages consumption, as well as in the trend of getting more entertainment. Such

behavior commonly creates a negative image of the country of their origin for the local population (Williams, 1998).

Tourism often brings many social benefits to a country, but there can also be several impacts if it is not done in a respectful manner. Poor countries receive the largest impacts due to the breakability of their economic infrastructures and social systems (Burns and Holden, 1995). Social impact of tourism includes loss of local identity and values, cultural clashes, physical influences causing social stress, crime generation and prostitution and sex tourism. Cultural clashes in turn may arise through economic inequality, irritation due to tourist behavior and job level friction.

### **Research Methodology**

**Study Area:** the scope of the research covered the entire city of Gondar as it has a varied cultural and historical heritage legacies and sites which has been inscribed by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1979. The city is hosts about 400000 inhabitants who have led their life mainly by tourism and commercial businesses. It could be far clear to think about the impacts of the tourism business in the life of the population as they mainly are depended on it.

**Research Design:** the research employed an ex-post-facto research design (based on actual results rather than forecasts). It allows examination of effects which have taken place after the treatment has naturally occurred. That means, the study relied on a cross sectional data (data collected at one point in time).

**Sources of Data:** the research used both primary and secondary data sources to come up with a very well inclusive and comprehensive research findings as the issue of the research needs intensive and extensive data to reveal the existing situations.

**Research Instruments:** Self-administered questionnaires, focus group discussion (FGD), structured interview and document review has used to collect pertinent and quality information and data from relevant respondents and key research participants.

**Sampling techniques:** This study used both probability and non-probability sampling techniques via simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques, respectively.

**Data Analysis and Presentation Techniques:** the research used descriptive statics to analyze the raw data via frequency, and percentage to assess the level of agreements of the research respondents against the proposed questions in the help of likers scale formats. Furthermore, table, narrative and descriptive analysis have been used to present the findings of the research.

### **Results**

The inclusion of the research respondents were varied in terms of age, sex, marital status, religion, ethnicity, income, and educational level in a more sound demographical characteristics as it has impact on the findings of the research.

Questionnaires to assess and evaluate the cultural Impacts of tourism stated as below.

Table 1: Opinion of respondents to cultural impact of tourism in Gondar city

Question 1	S.N	Impact	Freq.	%
What is your opinions towards the cultural impact of tourism in Gondar City?	1	Significantly worsen	2	1
	2	Worsen somewhat	4	2
	3	Not make any difference	11	5
	4	Improve somewhat	99	45
	5	Significantly improve	104	47

The majority (about 92%) of the respondents felt that the cultural impact of tourism in Gondar city people have improved somewhat or significantly as a result of tourism activities (table 1). However, very less proportion of the respondents (about 3%) felt that the cultural impact in Gondar city people have worsened somewhat or significantly worsened. In general, the residents of Gondar city have a positive perspective toward tourism.

Table 2: Feelings of Gondar city residents about the presence of carnival during *Epiphany* in Gondar city

Question 2:	Level of residents' Feelings	Freq.	%
What is your feeling about the presence of carnival during Epiphany in Gondar City?	Support for presence of carnival	20	9%
	Neither oppose nor support	5	2%
	Oppose the presence carnival	195	89%
		220	100%

The majority of the research participants (about 89%) of Gondar city opposed the presence of carnival in Gondar city during Epiphany, however 2% of them neither opposed nor supported it (Table 2). Since the success of tourism depends very much on human factor, i.e. the attitudes and behavior of the residents of a destination towards carnival, this seems to be discouraging result for the future of tourism development. But we should also take in to consideration that 9% of the respondents support the presence of carnival which is a relatively low proportion.

Table 3: Local residents' opinions towards tourists' number who come to Gondar city

Question 3	Opinion	Yes	%
What is your opinion on the tourists who come to Gondar city?	The number of tourists should increase significantly	95	43
	The number of tourists should increase somewhat	75	34
	The number of tourists is appropriate	40	18
	The number of tourists should decrease somewhat	10	5
	The number of tourists should decrease significantly	-	-

Even if Gondar city is crowded during the few weeks of the tourist season, about 77% of the respondents would prefer the number of tourist arrivals to increase to a certain extent or significantly, as opposed to only 5 per cent who would prefer tourist numbers to decrease (Table 3). Tourists in Gondar city are mainly from Europe (i.e. from different European culture, with different history and traditional relationships), so the culture distance between tourists and local residents is supposed to be large. Findings of the survey are agreed with the belief that the majority of respondents (88.3 %) perceived significant or some difference between themselves and tourists. Their perceptions are probably partly the consequence of the different social roles of hosts and guests: hosts are stationary, at home, living their everyday life, catering for the needs of visitors, while guests are flexible, mobile, enjoying their leisure time, away from home. In addition to this, the economic characteristics of tourists are also different from those of the hosts.

**Questions which evaluate the social impacts of tourism**

Question 1: what are the major adverse social impacts of tourism in the city?

Table 4: level of social problems of the households in the city as a result of Tourism

Level of Social Problems	Crime generation		Culture clashes		Physical influences causing social stress		Ethical issues		Child labour		Prostitution & sex tourism	
	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%
Critical	48	21.82	35	15.91	37	16.82	17	7.73	43	19.55	65	29.55
Moderate	38	17.27	36	16.36	32	14.55	39	17.73	31	14.09	33	15
Low	44	20	30	13.34	41	18.64	23	10.45	38	17.27	42	19.09
Negligible	34	15.45	42	19.09	20	9.09	20	9.09	34	15.45	24	10.9
Unknown	27	12.27	71	32.27	86	39.09	14	6.36	68	30.9	53	24.09
Not stated	29	13.18	6	2.72	4	1.82	7	3.18	6	2.72	3	1.4
Total	220	100.0	220	100.0	220	100.0	220	100.0	220	100.0	220	100.0

As shown in Table 1 above, the survey identified social problems such as crime generation, culture physical influences, ethical issues, child labour, prostitution and sex tourism which has linked with the tourism activities in the city. When the percentage of residents who has attended the study is taken into consideration, crime generation, 21.82% of residents were preferred critical, 17.27% of residents were preferred moderate, 20% of residents were preferred low, 15.45% of residents were preferred negligible, and 12.27% of residents were preferred unknown and 13.18% not stated. Culture clashes, 15.91% of residents were critical, 16.36% of resident were moderate, 13.34% of residents were low, 19.09% of residents were negligible, and 32.27% of resident were unknown. Physical influence causing social stress, 16.82% of residents were critical, 14.55% of resident were moderate, 18.64% of residents were low, 9.09% of residents were negligible, and 39.09% of residents were unknown and 1.82% not stated. Ethical issues, 7.73% of residents were critical, 17.73% of resident were moderate, 10.45% of residents were low, 9.09% of residents were negligible, and 6.36% of residents were unknown and 3.18% not stated. Prostitution and sex tourism, 29.55% of residents were critical, 15% of resident were moderate, 19.09% of residents were low, 10% of residents were negligible, 24.09% of resident were unknown and 1.4% not stated. In general the result of the study of social impact of tourism indicated that the level of social problems of household members among (crime generation, culture clashes, physical influences causing social stress, ethical issues, child labour, and prostitution and sex tourism), prostitution and sex tourism is the most critical (29.55%) and crime generation was the 2<sup>nd</sup> in rank (21.82%) but cultural clashes would take the least (15.91) as compared to the variables.

Table 5: Residents’ mean response to tourism’s positive impacts in Gondar city (the response used five options of the likers scale from 1 to 5 as worst to best)

Question 2	S.N	Variable	Mean	Std. dev.
What is your perceptions on the socio-cultural benefits impacts of tourism in the city?	1	Employment opportunities	4.61	1.46
	2	Income and standard of living	3.76	1.46
	3	Language skills	3.76	1.58
	4	Opportunity for learning more about other nations	3.70	1.59
	5	Opportunity for shopping	3.57	1.59
	6	Opportunity for meeting interesting people	3.40	1.54
	7	Quality of life	3.33	1.47
	8	General infrastructure	3.26	1.57
	9	Leisure facilities	3.21	1.50
	10	Tolerance toward difference	3.03	1.49
	11	Attitude toward work	2.91	1.48
	12	Cultural identity	2.04	1.29
	13	Conservation of old buildings	1.77	1.15

As it can be seen from table 5 above, the perception of Gondar city residents’ on the socio-cultural impact of tourism has indicated that employment opportunities, income and standard of living, language skills, opportunity for learning about other nations and opportunity for shopping were perceived to be improved or increased as a result of tourism development in the city.

All the surveys supported the original hypothesis that tourism has positive and negative socio-cultural impacts in Gondar city. The experts working in tourism office in Gondar city tourism office were involved in selecting 13 positive and 7 negative tourism impacts. Respondents perceived tourism’s impacts in a complex way: the changes attributed to tourism development vary from significant improvement (e.g. employment opportunities or income) and not make any difference (negative changes in values and customs) to significant worsening and somewhat worsening (e.g. conservation of old buildings and cultural identity) and decrease somewhat (excessive drinking, alcoholism, gambling or crime, and drugs). Though the tourists obviously have a limited knowledge of tourism impacts in the area, they showed a relatively strong consensus in listing both positive and negative changes. The main difference between tourists’ and residents’ perceptions is that the changes tourists mentioned are mainly of those kinds that affect the holiday experience, while residents’ perceptions covered all areas of their own quality of life. Table 4.12 and 4.13 present the perception of Gondar city residents on the impacts of tourism development on 20 socio-cultural variables. Residents had evaluated the pre-defined variables. Moreover, they had the opportunity to add anything if they wished to do so.

**Discussions**

Gondar city is one of the three largest metropolitan cities in Ethiopia, next to Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. The major economic and socio-cultural wealth’s of the city has emanated from tourism and tourism related activities. The city is bellied to have host about 400,000 inhabitants. The majority of the inhabitants have led their life predominantly by tourism. As a result, it would be far clear that what a tourism could bring an impact on the life of the people positively and negatively. As the research finding revealed that more than 90% of the respondents were perceived the positive contributions of tourism towards cultural development and promotional strive. But, there is undeniable fact that the originality and authenticity of the aboriginal elements of culture has been affected by tourism gradually especially in terms of commercialization, acculturation, demonstration effects, and change in life style and adaptation of western culture in dressing code by the teenagers and Youngers. As remedy to mitigate

the adverse effects of tourism on cultural components, the key stakeholders of tourism should work hand in hand in cultural education, awareness raising program, culture pride festivals and activities, setting rules and regulations which prohibit any member of the community from committing any immoral and unethical cultural practices in the city and its surroundings. Though culture is dynamic through time due to certain national and international factors, the dynamicity of culture should not lose all the original elements of culture. According to Williams (1998), each arrival of foreign tourists in to a local community inevitably provokes positive and negative influences.

The majority of the research respondents (about 89%) have strictly criticized the practices of Carnival during Epiphany. The main argument of their opposition that epiphany is purely a religious ritual celebrations whereas carnival has practiced for secular fun and entertainment. As a result, there would be a huge difference between these two big blocks of celebration at a time in terms of norms, cultures, traditions, materials used, meaning, and overall consequences at the end. From the total participants, almost 9% of them were showed their opinion in favor of the carnival practices. Such percentage of the research participants might be those who have worked in the government offices that have a direct responsibilities in charge of the carnival (such as city culture and tourism, city chamber of commerce, mayor office and others) or part of the community have engaged in commercial activities by providing goods and services for carnival participants. According to Lewis (1991), and Neill (2005), once a destination is sold as a tourism product, and the tourism demand for remembrances, arts, entertainment and other commodities begins to exert influence, basic changes in human values may occur. Sacred sites and objects may not be respected when they are perceived as goods to trade.

The number of tourist arrivals to the city to be increased has been approved by the majority (77%) as opposed by the minority (5%). The country, Ethiopia, has strived to increase the number of tourists from domestic and foreign by using special offer and discount tourist packages. These efforts has made meaningful impacts in the tourism sector especially since some years. However, there a lot of criticisms and opposition from some segments of the population (especially educational institutions, tourism advocacies, environmentalist, heritage conservators, etc) that the country should have to work hard in terms of environmental pollution, water and air pollution, drainage system, waste management system, proper price discrimination for tourist and locals, carrying capacity of the sites, proper entrance fee mechanisms, proper benefit mechanisms among the public and government, etc as a result of tourism infrastructures, tourism services and tourists as a whole.

The research findings showed that tourism has created a lot of sever effects and burdens on the community and other segments of the population as a result of Tourism. When we cited the figures under consideration, committing crime, conducting prostitution and sex tourism has been the top most effect of tourism in the city as a result mismanagement of the sector. In the streets of the city, anyone could find very teenagers and underage who are looking for a commercial sex partner as livelihood option. On the other hand, the rate of crime has increased in the city especially in the high tourist season of the year (September-October & December-March as a result of Meskel (finding of the true cross) and Epiphany celebration in the city). According to Burns and Holden poor countries receive the largest impact due to the breakability of their economic infrastructure and social systems (1995). Furthermore, the commercial sexual exploitation of children and young women has paralleled the growth of tourism in many parts of the world. Though tourism is not the cause of sexual exploitation, it provides easy access to it. Tourism also brings consumerism to many parts of the world previously denied access to luxury commodities and services (Kmilng, B, A.Pizam, and A.milman, 1993). The key tourism stakeholders should devise appropriate sustainable tourism development and management plan to alleviate the negative consequences of tourism in the city and the country as a whole.

The research also proved that tourism bears positive and constructive impacts in the city as it creates great employment opportunity especially for young and women, source of revenue for both private and public, widen the language option in educating the engaging people a foreign language mostly, English, French, German and Spanish. Moreover, tourism in the city has also positive constitutions in terms of infrastructure expansions, leisure facilities, quality of life, etc.

## **Conclusion**

This study assessed the socio cultural impact of tourism in Gondar city. The literature review identified six main themes: tourism development, cultural tourism, cultural impact of tourism, cultural tourism promotion versus cultural commoditization, social impact of tourism and residents' perception of the socio-cultural impacts of tourism on the community. A qualitative and quantitative survey, questioner,

interviews with local residents, was carried out in order to determine the perceived socio cultural influences of tourism on the local community.

The key issues noted from the literature review were developed into questions to examine the extent to which they coincided with residents' own views. To conclude, tourism resulted in a range of social impacts, both positive and negative depending on a variety of factors present in a destination. The data obtained in this study revealed us that the residents emphasize both the positive and negative impacts of tourism. The positive views were mainly focused on the effects of tourism on social and economic aspects while negative views were concerned with the distortion of the culture and significantly decreasing conservation of old buildings.

The results of the study of cultural impact of tourism has shown that the majority (about 92 percent) of the respondents felt that the cultural impact of Gondar city had improved somewhat or significantly as a result of tourism activities. However, very less proportion of the respondents (about 3 percent) felt that the cultural impact of Gondar city had worsened somewhat or significantly worsened. Besides, 89 percent of the respondents opposed the presence of carnival in the city. Since the success of tourism depends on the attitudes and behavior of the residents of a destination towards carnival, this seems to be discouraging result for the future of tourism development.

The result of study of social impact of tourism indicated that the level of social problems of household members among (crime generation, culture clashes, physical influences causing social stress, ethical issues, child labour, and prostitution and sex tourism), prostitution and sex tourism is the most critical (29.55%) and crime generation was the least (20%). It was assumed that residents perceive tourism's socio-cultural impacts more strongly and more positively than economic impacts. However, economic impacts such as employment opportunities, income and standard of living were found more positive. Thus, the most strongly perceived positive impact was the improvement of employment opportunities and the most strongly perceived negative one being declining of conservation of old buildings

“To get the local people here to participate in any new forms of cultural value protection, such as committed to keep values as their property, is very hard. This is mostly because people did not choose tourism, tourism chose us, and it has been a challenge for all the locals to adapt to this rapid transformation, since tourism was irresponsibly unorganized in using value for investment.”

### **Recommendation**

Based upon the results of this study, several recommendations can be made to achieve the goal of favorable host community support for tourism development and ensure its tourism sustainability. To this effect, understanding residents' perception of the socio-cultural impacts of tourism is crucial because tourism relies heavily upon the goodwill of the local communities. Thus the following recommendations were made:

- The difference in understanding the values of celebration of 'Ethiopia in Gondar Carnival' with Epiphany can be negotiated by celebrating the carnival few days after or before the festival of Epiphany.
- Careful planning and design, based on an understanding of local livelihoods, can greatly enhance the positive impacts of tourism.
- Cultural resources should have a mutual relationship with the local society, from which both benefit. The local people should protect, maintain, preserve and promote cultural and natural resources of the surrounding. In turn, the people should benefit from the resources through tourism or in any other way. The failure of this symbiotic relation to benefit the local people legally, may lead the people to exploit the cultural resources illegally as a fertile and potential area for wealth.
- A community involved in planning and implementation of tourism has a more positive attitude, is more supportive and has a better chance to make a profit from tourism than a population passively ruled -or overrun -by tourism. Therefore, involving the local population is essential
- Development of specific program for preservation of cultural heritage (customs, rituals, language, cooking, traditional livelihood activities, etc.
- Teaching and promotion on sustainable socio-cultural practices and techniques is crucial



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