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THE POTENTIAL, CHALLENGE, AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF TOURISM RESOURCES IN KAFFA ZONE, SOUTH WEST ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

The roles of tourism in multidimensional development of global societies are undeniable. Ethiopia as cradle of humankind, the birth place of coffee, the only un-colonized African country and the founding member of UN is endowed with many amazing tourism resources. Though Kaffa is bestowed with amazing natural, historical, cultural, archaeological and coffee tourism resources, this destination is not under the category of well-known tour and travel packages of Ethiopia and receiving a smaller number of visitors compared to the destinations with low tourism resources. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to conduct potentials, challenges and the economic contributions of tourism resources in Kaffa Zone, descriptive research design was applied and 94 sample respondents were selected from tourism and culture officials, experts, youths and cultural leaders and Religious fathers or famous elders in Kaffa Zone through systematic and purposive sampling techniques. The data were collected through questionnaires, focus group discussions, key informant interview and secondary data sources are analyzed quantitatively as well as qualitatively were analyzed using SPSS version 26 Therefore, The results confirmed that the Major findings as challenges are, poor infrastructure, lack of awareness, Lack of funds for promotion and tourism development, lack of community participation, poor coordination of stakeholders, lack of accessibility, lack of skilled human resources, and lack of fair administration are challenges and also both natural and cultural tourism resources were not well identified recorded and documented. even though, the study area notability abundant tourism potentials include beautiful landscapes, unique wildlife and indigenous plant species, a clean and attractive

natural environment, caves, waterfalls, escarpments and mountains; cultural tourism resource . Further study is highly recommended, the Federal and Regional governments could collaborate to solve the challenges of infrastructure, creating awareness, promoting potential resources using different media. Furthermore, the involvement of local communities and the provision of basic tourism infrastructure amenities and facilities could encourage tourism flow and economic development at Kaffa Zone.

KEYWORDS: Challenges, potentials, economic contributions, tourism resource.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is increasingly becoming a key service industry to many developing and developed countries. As the world's largest industry, tourism development must develop in a sustainable way to provide resources at target destinations (Fentaw, 2016). In 2019, tourism is estimated to contribute about 10% of global gross domestic product (GDP) and to be the largest contributor to employment worldwide, and was responsible for creating 1 in 4 of all new jobs across the world (WTTC, 2021). Though Ethiopia contribution of tourism to GDP fluctuated substantially in recent years, it tended to increase through 2000–2019 period ending at 9% in 2019 (UNE, 2020). Thus, tourism can impact positively on local economic development and, in turn, can lead to poverty reduction in destination communities and countries (María José Zapata et al., 2011).

Tourism activity is a combination of the use of tourism products like transportation, accommodation, infrastructure, attractions, and support services to form an industry.

Among the global industries, tourism is acknowledged as sustainably developing as well as major smokeless sector (Deb R.,2019). For the last many years, tourism is among the fastest developing sectors internationally. In 2018, 1.4 billion tours were recorded which is 5% growth compared to 2017. Tourism as a sector is recognized as crucial means for socio-economic growth, global relation, employment opportunity and bringing equality through sustainable growth (UNWTO, 2019).

Tourism is all about considering the existing and upcoming environmental, economic and social effects as well as fulfilling the needs and wants of tourists, the public, the environment and the industries. Changing the life of the community, delivering superior visitors' satisfaction, environmental protection and encouraging culturally pride society are among sustainable tourism offerings (Levy SE., & Hawkins DE.,2009; UNWTO, 2017).

It is very well addressed that Ethiopia, with its distinct and tremendous wealth of cultural and

historic tourism resources, has a huge potential of earning a great deal of benefits out of its tourism development activities (Assefa, 2011). However, the country has not been benefited from the sector due to a number of key challenges to strategically and sustainably develop the tourism sector.

Tourism attractions sector form part of the basic tourism resources and are one of the major reasons why tourists visit a destination (Melese & Belda, 2021). In Ethiopia, our unique nature, culture and history merge to form a timeless appeal. Ethiopia comprises many high mountains and most of the longest rivers, highest plateaus and plains in Africa. It has spectacular alpine terrain including the Simien Mountain National Park (4543 m above sea level) and the lowest place on earth in the Danakil depression (121 m below sea level).

Ethiopia is gifted with ancient historical and cultural heritage, wildlife resources, natural attractions and attractive geographical sites (Eshetu, 2010; Teshome & Demissie, 2018b). These resources highlight opportunities for tourists and other visitors to experience Ethiopia's ecology and natural beauty (Phillips, 2002). Ethiopian cultural tourism attractions include historical monuments, archeological sites, battlefields, religious buildings, museums, festivals, indigenous architecture, dress, artifacts and handicrafts; they also include intangible components and feelings such as fantasy, nostalgia, pleasure and pride which are presented through various cultural manifestations and interpretation of physical cultural attributes (ICOM, 2012; Teffera, 2019; Teshome et al., 2021).

Tourism strengthens the local economy when tourists visit an attraction; it generates local employment and also leads to the upgrading of infrastructure facilities such as tarred roads and telecommunications (Panasiuk, 2007; Wondirad et al., 2021).

Additionally, tourism linked with cultural villages yields positive and direct benefits to local communities across the country (Moswete et al., 2015). For instance, it has contributed to poverty alleviation, employment creation for local communities and income generation, as well as encouraging cultural pride and strengthening community identity (Mthembu & Mutambara, 2018). Economically, it contributes to the economic wellbeing of local residents, generating relatively sustainable and equitable income for them and other stakeholders (Aref et al., 2010). Regarding socio-cultural contributions, tourism can be a vehicle for better understanding among people and regions at local, national and global level (Asker et al., 2010). Education and interpretation are important tools in creating an enjoyable and meaningful nature-based tourism experience. People share their cultures, lifestyle, their festivals and their special experiences (Alison & Anne, 2007). It contributes to development and maintenance of cultural attractions such as monuments, historical sites, museums and of

art and handicraft industries for tourism. It can also encourage the further development of a national identity and the maintenance of pride in authentic national and local culture (Denman, 2001). Hence, tourism should be viewed as a tool for community development and economic diversification, particularly for local communities and local development agencies in South Africa (Panasiuk, 2007; Wondirad et al., 2021). It also adds value to local tourism projects and initiatives for environmental protection, preservation and rehabilitation activities (Ermias & Azmach, 2017).

Statement of problem

Studies conducted in this regard have identified many potentials, economic contributions and challenges, including lack of effective marketing strategies, lack of human resource and capacity, weak institutional and legislative frameworks, industry quality and standards issues, insufficient tourism and support infrastructure, and uncoordinated/fragmented tourism planning and development at national and regional levels in Ethiopia (Gebremariam, 2018; Gemechu, 2014; Ketema, 2015; Melak et al., 2016; Tesfaye, 2017;

Teshome et al., 2018; Wondirad, 2020; Wondirad et al., 2021, 2020; G. Worku & Feyssa, 2016;

M. Worku, 2017). According to (Kidane-Mariam, 2015; Wondirad, 2020) the challenges facing the tourism industry in Ethiopia can legitimately be described as putting the industry in its infancy. Its current low level of development is often attributed to changes in governance systems and development policies, weak promotion, lack of trained manpower, finance, poor coordination of stakeholders, lack of government attention and knowledge and poor management capacity (Ali, 2016; Teshome & Demissie, 2018b; Teshome et al., 2018; Wondirad, 2020

Kaffa is among naturally gifted, beautiful and attention-grabbing destinations of Ethiopia situated in southwestern part of the country. This astonishing destination is ecologically important in terms of inspiring natural scenery, culturally important in terms of conserved cultures and architectures from former Kaffa kingdom as well as touristic importance for nature loving tourists being home for stunning biodiversity and sensational tourism resources (Berghofer A., et al., 2013).

As a country Ethiopia has unique natural features, with cultural, historical, and religious resources and unique biodiversity; it has great potential for tourism resources. Studies conducted in identifying tourism resource potentials, challenges and economic contribution in Kaffa Zone. Potential tourism resources like Flora, fauna, Kaffa biosphere

reserve, cultural attractions (food, song, ritual practice, fortune telling, religion), water tourism resources (waterfalls, hot springs, rivers), landscapes (mountains, valleys, caves, natural bridges), heritages (kings grave yards, cultural villages, underground war tunnels, crown and seat of kings), Museums (National coffee museum and Open-Air museum), Ancient city of Bonga in hilly area, handicrafts and coffee tourism resources (coffee history, ceremony and investment) are among attention-grabbing tourism resources of Kaffa (Tekleab and Sanjeev, 2020)

Many studies were conducted in different level and parts of Ethiopia including, potentials, challenges and economic contribution of tourism resource in the Menagesha Amba Mariam state forest, central Ethiopia (Tamenut Desalegn, 2023), and Assessment of tourism marketing strategy in tourism destination in Bale Mountains National Park (Mohammed, 2014) Potentials, challenges and economic contributions of tourism resources in the South Achefer district, Ethiopia (Endalkachew et al., 2022).

The potentials economic contributions of the country's tourism industry found to be low which calls other research like this to conduct study on assessing potentials, challenges and economic contributions of tourism resource. To the knowledge of the researchers no study has been conducted on potentials, challenges and economic contribution of tourism resource in Kaffa Zone, Ethiopia which makes this research worth studying. One of the most recent studies on southern Ethiopian tourists' route is tourism potential and constraints; Promises and Challenges of Kaffa as Tourist Destination: SWOT Analysis (Tekleab & Kumar, 2020).

However, there needs to be more information on tourism resource potential, economic contribution, *and challenges is to fill this gap and to provide realistic evidence, this study aimed to identify the* tourism potential, challenge, and economic contribution of the Kaffa zone, south west, Ethiopia.

The significance of this empirical study hinges upon the fact that it especially contributes knowledge about the tourism resources potential, the economic contribution, and challenge occurred in the study area. Such a study would be of great value for resource managers, and tourism and heritage experts who work in this area, and serve as baseline data for future researchers.

Research Methodology

Description of study area

This research was conducted in Kaffa Zone which is 465 km to south western part of Ethiopia from Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. Kaffa is exactly located between 07°8'-

07°26'N and 35°53'-36°36'E. The total land coverage of Kaffa is 1,328,923 ha with 19.5°C mean annual temperature and 1800mm mean annual rainfall. Kaffa Zone has consists of 12 Weredas (districts) and 5 city administrations. Kaffa is known as the birth place of Coffee Arabica and owns UNESCO registered forest coffee biosphere reserve (Berghofer, A., 2013; Berhan, L.A.,2008).



Fig1: Map of study area (Kaffa zone gov't communication, 2018)

Research design and approach

A descriptive study with a mixed (quantitative and qualitative) research approach was used to address the objectives of the study (Creswell, 2014). Descriptive cross-sectional studies were providing data for describing the status of phenomena or relationships among phenomena at a fixed point in time.

Sampling techniques

A systematic random sampling technique was used to include participants for the quantitative study and key informants were selected by purposive sampling.

Sample Size Determination

Therefore, key informants from Kaffa zone culture and tourism Department head (n=1), Kaffa zone culture and tourism office experts (n=3), From Bonga town administration culture and tourism office head (n=1) , Bonga town culture and tourism office experts n=5), From Woreda Culture and tourism office head (n= 12) , From 12 woredas culture and tourism office experts (n=24) , To have convenient information from each woredas of Kaffa zone the researcher were taken FGD from Elders(n=14) ,Youths and cultural leaders from each woredas (n=36) totally 94 samples were identified and selected purposely. The in-depth understanding and experience of respondents to the tourism sector, the positions they represent in different offices, the proximity and nearby familiarity of respondents with tourism resources in their community, being senior expert and generally being crucial individual or institution for the subject matter are considered as the main criteria for the selection.

Data collection techniques and tools

To gather adequate information and achieve the objectives of this study, we used primary and secondary data sources. Preliminary data was collected using open and closed ended questionnaires, interview and focus group discussions.

Data that was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected through questionnaire, interview and qualitative data was collected through key informant interview, focus group discussion. Secondary sources of data were gathered from different published and unpublished documents, books, electronic sources, magazines etc.

Quantitative data was collected using self-administered by open and closed ended questionnaires. For the qualitative parts of the study, data was collected using, interview and focus group discussion guides to catch data, which could not be addressed by the survey.

The questionnaires with a five-point Likert rating scale to indicate participants' level of agreement, employing the following ratings: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree for the qualitative aspects of the study

Data analysis

All the collected data were edited, grouped, transcribed, organized and coded before filling in the software and starting analysis. The quantitative data was analyzed by descriptive statistics (percentage, frequency and tables) with the help of SPSS version 26. Qualitative data collected through Focus group discussion; key informant interview and interview was analyzed by text explanation, description and content analysis to summarization and applicable interpretation.

Ethical considerations

During data collection, all respondents and key informants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. Due consideration was given to the culture, social norms and values of the community. Oral consent was taken from the research participants and confidentiality of the information was assured.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter was concerned with presentation, interpreting and analyzing of data using Statistical Package for the Social Scientists (SPSS) Version 26 Software was used to process & analysis the data that were collected from the sample of 94 Respondents of Kaffa Zone tourism resource and stakeholders, elders, religious elders and youths. From total of 94 questionnaires distributed, 94 (100%) of questionnaire were completed and returned

Demographic profile of the respondents

On the basis of respondents' background information's, a number of variables were investigated. The researcher's interest here was to measure the level of attachment of the respondents to their organization. The results on the demographic information of the respondents are indicated in the following presentation.

Demographic variables				
Variables	response	Frequency	Percent (%)	Remark
Experience	1-5	56	59.60%	
	6-10	11	11.70%	
	11-15	9	9.60%	
	Above 16	18	19.10%	
	Total	94	100.00%	
Marital status	Single	54	57.40%	
	Married	36	38.30%	
	Divorced	4	4.30%	
	Widowed	0	0.00%	
	Total	94	100.00%	
Educational level	high school completed	0	0.00%	
	Diploma	14	14.90%	
	Undergraduate	80	85.10%	
	Master's degree and above	0	0.00%	
	Total	94	100.00%	
Gender	male	64	68.10%	
	female	30	31.90%	
	Total	94	100.00%	
Age of the respondents	20-30	71	75.50%	
	31-40	14	14.90%	
	41-60	9	9.60%	
	above 61	0	0.00%	
	Total	94	100.00%	

Source: own survey, 2025

As we seen from the table above, total of 94 questionnaires was distributed and collected within the time frame and analyze the result of this study. Out of the total sample size, the number of male respondents was 64 (68.1%) and female respondents 30 (31.9%). Most, that is 94 (75.5%) of respondents fell into the age group of 20-30 and above, and at least 36 (38.3%) of respondents were or had been married, and the majority of respondents 54(57.4%) were single.

With regard to education level, the majority group of 80 (85.1%) had a undergraduate degree or 14(14.9%) are diploma holders. This shows that most participants have had an educational background and understand the cultural tourism potential resources of the

study area and finally with the experience level of the respondents 56(59.6%) were less than 5 years and 18(19.1%) of the respondents are above 16 years of experience in the tourism industry.

(According to the observation, key informants the study participants were involved directly or indirectly in the tourism sector, and they can provide valuable information about the potentials, challenges and economic contributions of tourism resources of the study area.

Variable	Response	Natural cave for cave expeditions	Community willingness to participate in preservation and conservation of tourism resources	There is the concept of tourism development by the host community	Endowed fascinating place for birds watching, mountain trekking and wild life viewing	Attractive and clean nature	There are unique indigenous species of plant and animal	Geographic features that includes water falls, rocks and landscape	
Strongly disagree	frequency	5	5	0	0	0	0	5	9
	Percentage (%)	5.3	5.3	0	0	0	0	5.3	9.6
Disagree	frequency	5	9	21	10	4	0	0	10
	Percentage (%)	5.3	9.5	22.3	10.6	4.2	0	0	10.6
Neutral	frequency	14	29	17	13	6	5	9	19
	Percentage (%)	14.8	30.8	18	13.8	6.3	5.3	9.5	20.2
Agree	frequency	36	35	39	49	46	47	49	45
	Percentage (%)	38.2	37.2	41.4	52.1	48.9	50	52.1	47.9
Strongly agree	frequency	34	16	17	22	38	42	31	11
	Percentage (%)	36.1	17	18	23.4	40.4	44.6	32.9	11.7
Total	frequency	94	94	94	94	94	94	94	94
	Percentage (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Community level of agreement on presence of tourism potentials

Source: own survey, 2025

As we seen the above table, the majority, 45 (47.9%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “water- based tourism examples; swimming, fishing and others are available”. A few, 3 (9.6%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table 2). The result confirmed that the study area can provide swimming, fishing and other water-based tourism activities. These potential water resources include the rivers such as Gojob river, Gumi river, Dincha river, Woshi river, Gichi river, Bitino river, Sherma river, Meni river, Mahe-dabi river, Beko river, Shinati mineral water, Shupa lake and Gedefo river are among huge and eye-catching rivers found in Kaffa. In line with our finding, it was reported that Ethiopia is the water tower of Africa (Degefu et al., 2019).

A greater proportion, 49 (52.1%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “geographic features, i.e. waterfalls, rocks, and spectacular landscape like “Barta” waterfall located in Bonga; ‘Elelo’ waterfall situated in Gesha district or woreda; ‘Shako’ waterfall situated in Saylem district or woreda; ‘Faci-guudo’ waterfall found in Saylem district or woreda; ‘Adiyo’ waterfall situated in Adiyo district or woreda, ‘Medi’ waterfall in Bitu district or woreda and ‘Woshi’ waterfall located in Shishoinde district or woreda. and others are available”. Another 5 (5.3%) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed as shows (Table 2). The result indicates Kaffa Zone has different types of geographical features, with altitudes ranging from 500 to 3,350 m above sea level, and including mountains, plateaus, caves, water basins, gorges, waterfalls, cliffs, forests, deep incised valleys, escarpments and plains; there are many spectacular views.

Similar results were reported from another Ethiopian highland (Bekele et al., 2017; EWNHS, 1996; Teshome & Demissie, 2018b). Collectively, the results indicated that the scenic beauty of the landscape is a major nature-based resource with potential for development as a nature-based tourism project.

A greater proportion, 89 (94.6%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “There are unique indigenous species of plants and animals in the study area”. An additional 5 (5.3%) of respondents neutral. This result was also supported by key informant and focus group interviews and field observation, that Kaffa Zone is endowed with varied wildlife species such as Klipspringer (*Oreotragus oreotragus*), Serval cat (*Leptailurus serval*), Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Golden/Common Jackal (*Canis aureus*), Abyssinia (*Colobus guereza*), Spotted Hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*), Anubis Baboon (*Papio Anubis*), Bush Pig (*Potamochoerus porcus*), Common Duiker (*Sylvicapra grimmia*), and unidentified Amphibians and reptiles. On the other hand, Kaffa Biosphere Reserve, encompassing the Kaffa zone in southwest Ethiopia, is estimated to have around 422,260 hectares of land

covered by forest, according to NABU. This represents approximately 55.6% of the total surface area of the Biosphere Reserve. The Kaffa Biosphere Reserve is a significant area for biodiversity, including natural coffee gene pools and Afro-montane evergreen forests, according to ResearchGate and NABU. Moreover, it is also reported that the country has a diversity of tourism attractions, which includes some of the highest (Ras Dejen Mountain, 4543 m above sea level) and lowest places (Danakil Depression, 116 m below sea level) in Africa along with immense wildlife species including some endemic species (Aseres, 2015).

The majority, 84 (89.3%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “the study the area holds attractive and clean nature”. However, few, 4(4.2%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and the rest 6(6.2) is neutral (Table 2). Indeed, all parts of Ethiopia have attractive and clean nature, this is due to those different geographical features the district consists of temperate and desert climatic conditions that could be favorable to visitors who come to any climatic regions (Young, 2012).

The majority, 71 (75.5%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “the area is endowed with fascinating places for bird watching, mountain trekking and wildlife viewing”. A few- 10(10.6%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table 2). The result confirms that the area provides a fascinating place for bird watching, mountain trekking and wildlife viewing, which could have major tourism potential. Some of the common Regarding Fauna or animals, Naturally Kaffa is bestowed with different varieties of Mammals, Birds, Amphibians, Reptiles and Primates. Mammals Like Leopard, Hippopotamus, Buffalo, Rabbit, Eland, Bushbuck, Lion, Hyena, Civet, jackal, wild cats, Honey Badger, Bush-Pig and wild cats are dominant in the land of Kaffa. Black crowned crane, Silvery/cheeked Hornbill, White-cheeked turaco, Hadad Ibis and Yellow fronted parrot are among the beautiful and endemic birds found in Kaffa. There are different types of eye-catching primates like De Brazza's monkey, Grivet Monkey, Olive Baboon, Colobus monkeys and Vervet Monkey identified in Kaffa. Moreover, Kaffa is endowed with diversified Reptiles (Montane Chameleon, African Python, House Gecko), Amphibians and Invertebrates.

This potential is also supported by the key informants and focus group discussion, The study area is endowed with many types of bird species to attract bird watchers, mountains for mountain climbing/trekking and varied wildlife for wildlife viewing activities (Aseres, 2015). The majority, 51 (54.2%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “there is community willingness to participate in preservation and conservation of tourism resources”. However, a few 14(14.8%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table

3). Therefore, in the study area, the communities are willing to participate in preservation and conservation of tourism resources.

The majority, 70 (74.3%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “there are natural caves for cave expeditions”. However, not many, 10(10.6%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table 2). Of the popular caves, the unique feature showee wammo cave telo, is an outstanding phenomenon. Moreover, beside the cave there is a breathtaking view of densely forest and topography.

Cultural tourism resource potentials in Kaffa Zone

variable	response	Sport tourists promote cross cultural exchange and mutual understanding in the study area	The battle fields are known by the host community with its history	There are historical sites and culture in the study area	There are religious sites which attract health tourists	There are historical monasteries and churches with unique religious collections	There are museum collections which show evidence for ancient civilizations	There are fascinating religious practices that can attract tourists	There are religious places that serve for pilgrimage	There are indigenous handicrafts practiced in the study area
strongly disagree	frequencies	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	15.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Percent (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	16.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
disagree	frequencies	0.0	0.0	12.0	16.0	11.0	23.0	7.0	5.0	14.0
	Percent (%)	0.0	0.0	12.8	17.0	11.7	24.5	7.4	5.3	14.9
neutral	frequencies	4.0	7.0	6.0	24.0	11.0	20.0	13.0	6.0	7.0
	Percent	4.3	7.4	6.4	25.5	11.7	21.3	13.8	6.4	7.4

	(%)									
agree	frequencie s	72.0	66.0	58.0	52.0	56.0	29.0	50.0	71.0	67.0
	Perce nt (%)	76.6	70.2	61.7	55.3	59.6	30.9	53.2	75.5	71.3
strongly agree	frequencie s	18.0	21.0	17.0	2.0	15.0	7.0	24.0	12.0	6.0
	Perce nt (%)	19.1	22.3	18.1	2.1	16.0	7.4	25.5	12.8	6.4
Total	frequencie s	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0
	Perce nt (%)	100.0	100.0	100. 0	100. 0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own survey, 2025

As indicated in the above table 3, All 73(77.7%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement and 14(14.9%) of respondents disagreed “there are indigenous handicrafts practiced in the study area”. The availability of indigenous handicrafts practices were agreed by the most of respondents, these could provide materials for souvenir sellers. Handcrafts in the study area include pottery products, traditionally woven cloth, and jewelry manufacture (Table 3).

A greater proportion, 83 (88.3%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “there are religious places that serve for pilgrimages”. Another 5(5.3%) of respondents disagreed,. There could be potential for religious tourism/ pilgrimage and health tourism development (Kahissay et al., 2020). The result was also supported by key informants, field observation and focus group discussions. Based on their responses religious places such as; Andracha Medehaniyalem monastery, Gidi and Beha St Georges monastery, sherada mariam, kuti Michael and Tongola mosque mentioned. These show that Kaffa Zone possesses a remarkable range of existing and potential tourism products and assets.

A greater proportion, 74 (78.7%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “there are fascinating religious practices which could attract tourists”. Hardly any, 7(7.4%) respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table 3). The key informants and focus

group discussions supported this finding, stating that there are fascinating religious practices and festivals which celebrate with interesting cultural activities, chanting, unique dressing styles; these include festivals such as Mashqaree/yemane shadiyee/ Baro, Epiphany and also included are traditional weddings and funeral ceremonies which, in combination with interesting and welcoming hosts, add further potential for attracting tourists (Table 3). Previous studies show that in most parts of Ethiopia there are fascinating religious practices that can attract tourists (Kahissay et al., 2020).

The majority, 56 (59.6%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “there are museum collections which show evidence for ancient periods”. 38 (40.5%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table 3). These museums were mainly church museums near monasteries that have big collections of religious items and evidence for ancient periods of Ethiopia. Information obtained from key informant interviews and focus group discussions, further confirm that culture and tourism office, churches and monasteries have wonderful museums with large collections. Some of these churches were founded as early as the third and fourth centuries in the reign of Emperors Abräha and Wo Atsbäha.

The majority, 54 (57.4%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “there are religious’ sites which attract health tourists”. Very few, 16(17%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table 3). The resources that attracted health tourists were holy water i.e. Gete Semane kidist Arsema holy water, and Kidus Michael holy water and Dadiben hot spring water. Visitors to these health tourist destinations mainly come from Jimma-Agaro, Addis Ababa, Adama , and other nearby cities.

The majority, 75 (79.8%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “there are cultural places and historical sites in the study area”. However, few, 12(12.8%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table 3). These historical sites and cultural resources were lifestyles, social structure, artifacts and traditional management systems, architecture, paintings, and other places of historical values such as historical buildings, battlefields, with connected stories and oral tradition. These resources give indispensable values in developing tourism in the area (SADCTO, 2017).

94(100%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: there is historical battle field which is used for potential resource for tourism which is called Hiriwoo.

Challenges of tourism development in Kaffa Zone

vari able s	resp onse	Politic al conditi on can cause challen ge for touris m industr y	Secur ity is major challe nges to the touris m and travel indus try	The mona strie s are not secur e and beco me expos ed to theft.	Parki ng areas and toilet s are not avail able in the desti natio n	Cultu re, touris m office has poor relati on coord inatio n with stake holde rs	Lac k of heal th servi ce and relat ed facil ities	The stud y area does not hav e suffi cien t elec tric pow er.	Lack of telecom municati on services	Lac k of awa rene ss
stro ngly disa gree	frequ ency	9.0	10.0	0.0	5.0	5.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	6.0
	perce nt %	9.6	10.6	0.0	5.3	5.3	0.0	5.3	0.0	6.4
disa gree	frequ ency	49.0	41.0	30.0	19.0	10.0	20.0	15.0	11.0	9.0
	perce nt %	52.1	43.6	31.9	20.2	10.6	21.3	16.0	11.7	9.6
neut ral	frequ ency	15.0	11.0	20.0	6.0	14.0	21.0	15.0	16.0	4.0
	perce nt %	16.0	11.7	21.3	6.4	14.9	22.3	16.0	17.0	4.3
agre	frequ	5.0	22.0	30.0	51.0	54.0	34.0	42.0	33.0	46.0

e	ency									
	perce nt %	5.3	23.4	31.9	54.3	57.4	36.2	44.7	35.1	48.9
stro ngly agre e	frequ ency	16.0	10.0	14.0	13.0	11.0	19.0	17.0	34.0	29.0
	perce nt %	17.0	10.6	14.9	13.8	11.7	20.2	18.1	36.2	30.9
Tota l	frequ ency	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0
	perce nt %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100. 0	100. 0	100.0	100. 0

Source: own survey, 2025

From the above table 4, the majority, 75 (78.7%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “there is a lack of transport services such as public bus, bicycle, mules and horses”. However, a few, 15 (16%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table 4). The result shows a lack of infrastructure is confirmed as a challenge in the study area. Key informants and focuss group discussions depicted that insufficient traditional transport (mules, horses, and donkeys) is not a challenge but rather an opportunity for tourism development in the area.

The majority, 60 (64.3%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “lack of awareness” as a challenge. However, a few, 11(11.7%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. On the statement: “there is a problem with telecommunication services” (71.3%), and lack of electricity (62.8%) and “lack of health-related services and facilities’ (56.4%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Moreover, a greater proportion, (69.1%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “the culture and Tourism office has poor relations and coordination with stakeholders”. These results were also supported by key informants that culture and tourism office coordinates poorly with different sectors. For example, the agriculture office is a source of forest conservation but culture and tourism office has poor coordination with this sector (Table 4).

A fewer more than a half, 64 (68.1%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “there is a lack of parking areas and toilets”. However, few, 20(25.5%), of

respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table 4). Key informants and field observation support the finding that most of the destinations in rural areas do not have parking areas and toilets. Lack of parking sites and toilets were reported as a challenge in many tourist destinations in Ethiopia (Tesfaye, 2017; Teshome et al., 2021). A greater proportion, 44 (46.8%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “monasteries are not secure and become exposed to theft, and there is a lack of parking areas and toilets”. However, a few, 30(31.9%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table 4). These challenges were supported by key informants, who said that the main challenges include lack of security to monasteries, man-made damage, and natural destructions of resources, theft; flooding, wildfire, and fire. A fewer more than a half, 58 (61.7%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: “political conditions can cause challenges for the tourism industry”. However, only some, 21(22.3%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (Table 4).

A greater proportion, 51 (54.2%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: “security challenge and a few, 30(34%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (Table 4).

Level of community agreement on economic contributions of tourism

Table5								
variable	response	Tourist hotel, loges, local to ur available	The site e quipped by ancill ary servi ce	Tourism d evelopmen t decision m ade by loc al	Tourism provides money w orthwhil e employ ment	Have qualit y of goo ds an d servic es	The site can generat e incom e	Touri sm encour ages emplo ymen t
strongly disagree	Freq uenc y	3.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	4.0	6.0	0.0
	perc ent %	3.2	0.0	0.0	5.3	4.3	6.4	0.0
Disagre e	freq uenc y	26.0	16.0	15.0	45.0	21.0	48.0	18.0
	perc ent %	27.7	17.0	16.0	47.9	22.3	51.1	19.1
Neutral	freq uenc	20.0	19.0	23.0	9.0	20.0	12.0	22.0

	y							
	perc ent %	21.3	20.2	24.5	9.6	21.3	12.8	23.4
Agree	freq uenc y	37.0	54.0	48.0	30.0	41.0	22.0	37.0
	perc ent %	39.4	57.4	51.1	31.9	43.6	23.4	39.4
strongly agree	freq uenc y	8.0	5.0	8.0	5.0	8.0	6.0	17.0
	perc ent %	8.5	5.3	8.5	5.3	8.5	6.4	18.1
Total	freq uenc y	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0
	perc ent %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own survey, 2025

A greater proportion, 54(57.5%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “tourism encourages a variety of employment activities for the local population”. Another 40(42.5%) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similar finding were reported in different countries (Asker et al., 2010; Kiss, 2004; Wondirad et al., 2021) that tourism encourages and creates a variety of employment activities for the local population. Information obtained from key informants’ interviews and focus group discussions suggests that local populations participate in the accommodation sector, infrastructure development, and cultural dresses, indigenous handcraft, monastery leaders and church leaders. This brought income and work within the local community. This finding was supported by Kaffa Zone Culture and Tourism Office. A greater proportion, 54(57.5%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: “the study area has a potential to generate income”. Another 28 (29.8%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. This potential includes both natural and cultural resources, and its economic contributions were income generation, employment opportunities, and infrastructure development. In addition to subsistence agriculture, people who lived in a rural area generate income from tourism-related activities in many Ethiopian highlands (Teshome et al., 2020). The economic contribution of tourism to

economic growth and development in such areas is a catalyst for economic growth that tourism is most favored (Richard, 2002; Wondirad & Wondirad, 2019).

A greater proportion, 50(53.2%), of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: “quality goods and services for tourism development are available in the study area”. Another (37.2%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

The majority, (47.9%), of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “tourist hotels, lodges, campsites, local tour operations, etc. benefited from tourism development in the study area”. Another (30.9%) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. According to the key informant and field observation, Tourism can provide work opportunities; support the establishment of small, medium and large enterprises; lead to skills development in tourism and support services; contribute to rural development; improve infrastructure; and ultimately contribute to the government’s coffers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study addressed a research gap by establishing empirical evidence for the development of sustainable tourism through describing the tourism potentials, challenges, and economic contribution in the study area. Kaffa Zone has huge natural and cultural tourism resources with great potential to develop community-based ecotourism. These potentials include beautiful landscapes, unique wildlife and indigenous plant species, a clean and attractive natural environment, caves, waterfalls, escarpments and mountains; cultural tourism resource potentials are accompanied by other tangible and intangible cultural tourism resources.

The results confirmed that the Major findings as challenges are Lack of funds for promotion and tourism development; lack of awareness, poor infrastructure, lack of accessibility, lack of skilled human resources, and lack of coordination among stakeholders are major challenges in the study area of Kaffa Zone. Moreover, both natural and cultural tourism resources were not well identified recorded and documented.

The current economic contribution of tourism in the study area delivers a variety of employment opportunities for the local population in Kaffa Zone. These include participation in accommodation, in government offices, in infrastructure development, and in souvenir production development (such as the production of cultural dresses, indigenous handicraft).

RECOMMENDATION

Increasing the awareness of local communities in and around the district towards ecotourism resources is very important. To make Kaffa and its environs attractive eco-tourist destinations, the potential tourism resources of the area should be well promoted through different media/tools. The main challenges facing the development of these major tourism resources include lack of funds for promotion and development, lack of awareness, poor infrastructure, lack of accessibility, lack of skilled human resources, and lack of coordination among stakeholders; they must be solved.

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