Unrealized tourism potential

The case of sub-Saharan Africa

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Many countries of sub-Saharan Africa have made efforts to transform their tourism potential into a profitable industry. However, these efforts have largely failed. After discussing the primary motives of countries in the sub-region for undertaking tourism development, five inhibiting factors which appear to account primarily for this failure are identified. They are a negative image; lack of foreign exchange to procure parts, equipment and other resources for tourism development; lack of skilled manpower; weak institutional frameworks for tourism planning; and political instability, resulting from civil liberation wars and military coups, which compounds the other four problems. The paper concludes with suggested strategies for mitigating the impact of these inhibitors to tourism development.

Keywords: sub-Saharan Africa; tourism; inhibitors; motives; mitigating strategies

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Sub-Saharan Africa consists of those countries south of the Sahara excluding Namibia and the Republic of South Africa (see Figure 1). It is a vast landmass of contrasting human and physical geography covering more than 7.2 million square miles with a population of 474 million. The most dominant geological feature in the sub-region is a series of plateaux of crystalline rock of Precambrian origin. Generally, elevations of the plateaux complex are higher in the east averaging 4000 feet in some places and declining towards the west where they average about 2000 feet above sea-level. In some sections, the plateaux are heavily dissected by river systems and their basins, or by the Rift Valley Complex, or by volcanic mountains.

The climate and vegetation of the area are similarly varied, ranging from hot deserts to equatorial rain forests, and from Mediterranean woodlands and scrub to tropical savannas. In terms of human geography, the sub-region as a whole has an average population density lower than the world average. However, there are variations with pockets of high population concentrations found along the lower Nile, sections of West Africa, the lakes region of East Africa and parts of Southern Africa. (The countries constituting the Southern African region are Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.) The diverse characteristics of people making up the various countries offer a rich amalgamation of vibrant cultures. In addition, the varied ecology has endowed the sub-region with large concentrations of wildlife.

Tourism is driven by attractions, and most major attractions derive from the distinctiveness and diversity of geographical features. The geographical resources of sub-Saharan Africa combine to provide the sub-region with substantial tourism development opportunities. It has been suggested that:

Among all the continents, Africa is remarkable for the great diversity of its environment. Her beautiful and varied scenery, mountains, lakes, beaches, wildlife and sunshine, and numerous other special features provide the continent with a diversified environment unmatched in any part of the world.

Filani goes on to describe a host of attractions that emerge from these geographical features, and illustrations of them are given in Appendix 1.

Despite these substantial potential natural assets, significant tourism development in sub-Saharan Africa has not emerged. This paper first
discusses nations' motives for undertaking tourism development; then it defines inhibitors, that is, the primary reasons why efforts at such development have been frustrated; and finally strategies are offered which may enable nations to overcome at least partially the inhibitors and lead to more successful tourism development. A conceptual framework showing the inter-relationship of these elements in the development of tourism opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa is shown in Figure 2.

Motives for undertaking tourism development

The reasons advanced to support the development of tourism in the sub-region include reasons of principle such as tourism facilitating international understanding and goodwill. For example, former President Nyerere of Tanzania stated:

To have visitors is a special honor, and to treat a visitor well and hospitably is an act of good manners. A visitor comes to Tanzania, stays for a while, and leaves praising this country, is a good ambassador of us abroad, and he is an ambassador who costs us nothing.  

The government of Zimbabwe views tourism as contributing to the education of its citizens as well as to that of the visitors. For this reason, the Zimbabwe Tourist Board explored the possibility of creating cultural centres in close proximity to highly visited areas, where a visitor could meet with local people and learn the history and culture of the area.  

However, the strongest reasons for supporting tourism development appear to be economic. The responsibilities of governments include

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seeing that there is an adequate supply of foreign exchange to purchase essential imports; ensuring that the level of economic activity is such that there is no widespread and persistent unemployment; and maintaining a rate of economic growth which is not embarrassingly less than that achieved by their neighbours. Many sub-Saharan countries view tourism as a potential vehicle for contributing to these goals. It is seen as an opportunity to diversify the monocultural economies of many countries, because the prosperity of the sub-region is excessively dependent upon the export of a few primary products – mostly minerals and agricultural produce. Indeed, 75 out of the 46 sub-Saharan countries are totally dependent on agricultural exports for their foreign exchange earnings, and only six earn less than 25% of their foreign exchange from agriculture. Seventeen countries derive over 80% of their export from three or fewer commodities. Over-dependence on limited primary commodities has subjected these nations’ economies to damaging fluctuations in the unstable world primary export commodity market. For example, in 1986 sub-Saharan Africa lost $19 billion due to a 29% drop in export earnings.

The long-term impact of declining revenues from primary commodities is well illustrated by the case of Zambia, whose major export is copper. This was selling for £1400 per tonne in 1974 but in 1987 was worth only £684, its lowest price in real terms for 40 years. A similar pattern has emerged for most countries in the sub-region. The result of falling export prices and declining revenues is that living standards are lower today in sub-Saharan Africa than they were at the time of independence in most countries. Efforts have therefore been directed towards exploring other sources of foreign exchange earnings which will reduce dependence on monocultures and improve economies.

In reviewing the economic challenges confronting the sub-region, a number of writers have suggested that tourism development could be a major contributor to alleviating the problems. Many countries view tourism as an invisible export that has foreign exchange generation potential for economic development. Some West African countries, such as Ghana, Nigeria, The Gambia and Senegal, impose a series of taxes: hotel taxes (bed and land taxes), land premiums, taxes on profits earned in the tourism sector, airport embarkation taxes and casino and

Figure 2. A conceptual framework of tourism development in sub-Saharan Africa.
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In some parts of the sub-region, tourism has become an important source of foreign exchange earnings. For example, Zimbabwe earned $53m from tourism in 1982. Tourism was Malawi's fourth biggest foreign exchange earner in 1983. Kenya, perhaps the best known tourism success story in the sub-region, earned £118m (Kenyan) in 1982.

Closely related to the foreign exchange benefits is the belief that tourism creates employment and helps spread economic development within a country. Lee reported that studies undertaken by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development indicated that the traditional view that services are the logical conclusion of a process of economic development involving growth in agriculture and industrialisation is not accurate: 'In fact, the development of a whole range of services is a necessary precondition to stimulate growth in the other sectors and the services industry finds itself in a key position at the heart of the national economic fabric.'

There is evidence to support findings in the context of tourism. In Kenya, for instance, a 70% increase in tourist spending between 1971 and 1976 is believed to have increased agricultural output by 262% and expanded the output of the food preparation industry by 720%.

Kenya represents perhaps the best example of the tourism multiplier effect among sub-Saharan countries, but at the other end of the continuum there are many countries which do not receive such economic stimulation from tourism because the industry is controlled by foreign interests. For example, in The Gambia tourism is vertically integrated, with foreign interests owning the airlines, tour operators and hotels, so most of the tourist's money leaks out of the country. Farver reports that the role of Gambians is limited to that of waiters, bartenders, receptionists, kitchen help, room cleaners and maintenance, while higher positions are filled by expatriates.

Many Gambians are laid-off during the six-month off-season and wages are low: Farver concludes: 'Tourism-related employment remains very limited as a contributor to The Gambia's development or as a potential benefit for the local population. (It) has not employed many Gambians, nor has it provided wages to allow them to live above the near-poverty level they were existing in prior to the beginning of tourism.'

Some claim that tourism generates development in hitherto unattractive and hostile environments. The Zimbabwe minister for tourism said the tourism industry 'Provides jobs and economic growth points in areas that would remain undeveloped because they are not fit for either agriculture or resettlement purposes. The gains of tourism are plowed back to the development of areas where they are generated.'

Tourism provides an economic rationale which has encouraged several sub-Saharan countries to engage in conservation of their flora and fauna. Indeed, the number of national parks and reserves has more than doubled since the surge of African independence in the 1960s. There is a saying in east Africa: 'Wildlife pays, so wildlife stays.' Thus, it has been suggested that hunting privileges, rather than serving the gaming taxes.
subsistence of several people, should go to the highest bidder, and that park fees should be raised to levels affordable only by the rich so that foreign exchange can be brought in. Tourism can also validate traditional culture and help local people see some value in preserving and restoring historical artifacts and cultural traditions.

Revenues from wildlife tourism may be used both to support the operation of national parks and game reserves, and to support development of communities that are affected by the establishment of these natural resource areas. This inflow of economic resources is critical because, in most countries of the sub-region, establishing these parks involves removing large tracts of land from use by local communities which are often living in conditions of poverty and have an acute shortage of land. For instance, in Malawi, 11% of the country's land (most of it arable) is devoted to conservation, while Botswana has set aside 17% of its land as national parks and wildlife reserves, a percentage perhaps unequalled by any country in the world.

The government of Kenya assigns part of the tourism revenue it accrues from the Amboseli and Mara National Parks to the chiefs in whose areas the parks were established. Malawi has similar plans to reallocate a portion of the professional hunting revenues accruing from the Vwaza Marsh Game Reserve to the District Development Committee for the development of the affected community. In the context of cultural artifacts, tourism provided the economic rationale for Ghana to invest in conserving the colonial forts and castles along the coastline as a basis for developing a combination of beach centred resort destinations and cultural tourism.

Belief in the value of tourism has led to efforts to facilitate tourism development and illustrative examples are listed in Appendix 2. However, despite such efforts, sub-Saharan Africa is still not an important destination for tourists. The sub-region accounts for less than 1% of the global international tourist industry.

Inhibitors to tourism development

There appear to be five major sets of factors which inhibit tourism development in the sub-region. They are its negative image; foreign exchange constraints; lack of skilled manpower; weak institutional frameworks for tourism planning; and political instability which, in addition to its own inherent inhibiting effect, also adversely reinforces the magnitude of the other four inhibitors.

The negative image of the sub-Saharan region

An image is a picture in the mind. This picture is created from information gathered and stored in memory over time. Potential travellers to sub-Saharan Africa may form their images of the region using information from friends, books, travel brochures, movies (for instance Out of Africa), television documentaries (like that of the British Historian, Professor Basil Davidson which was recently seen on North American screens, and Ali Mazrui's The Africans) and the mass media (TV, newspapers and radio).

Information in travel brochures is likely to stress the positive aspects of the sub-region since the objective of their authors is to sell destinations to potential travellers. An objective documentary, like that offered by Davidson, may serve to inform the western world that the

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22G.W. Calef, op cit, Ref 19, p 21.
23R. Bell, op cit, Ref 20, p 94.
24R. Bell, op cit, Ref 20, p 92.
25R. Bell, op cit, Ref 20, p 93.
27Ibid, p 331.
28C.A. Gunn, op cit, Ref 2, p 87.
region is not as devastated as the often-quoted statistics would seem to suggest. However, except for these relatively few sources which emphasize positive aspects of the sub-region, most sources tend to convey negative information because most news media feature bad news. Sub-Saharan Africa is often depicted as a place of poverty, where millions go to bed hungry and thousands of children are dying of malnutrition. It is a place where tropical diseases are still a major scourge, where facilities, plumbing, and telephone are in short supply. Compounding and reinforcing these depressing narratives are the visual images of starving Africans seen on television screens throughout the world.

The effects of such negative images on tourism development are detrimental. Tourists on vacation desire to get away from the drudgery of the routine, the pressures of the office and the chores of the home: They are out to enjoy a few weeks of unprecedented high living and the last thing they want is to be confronted with Third World poverty and social problems. If they wanted to see poor people, they would have stayed at home and taken a short ride downtown or across the tracks in their own cities. The visitors are not seeking to be made physically uncomfortable by sharing in deprivation or psychologically uncomfortable by observing it.

The mention of sub-Saharan Africa today evokes not beautiful settings but horrendous human tragedy. Promoting the sub-region as a tourism destination is therefore made more difficult. The difficulty is exacerbated by the meagre resources which countries in the sub-region have available to undertake any meaningful dissemination of information to counter their negative images abroad.

**Foreign exchange constraints**

The lack of foreign exchange with which to procure parts, equipment and other resources essential for the industry is another major inhibitor of tourism development. This is the outcome of both declining export production of primary products and agricultural produce, and falling world prices for these products. For instance, 30 years ago, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 70% of the world’s exports of palm oil, but by 1983 only 3% came from the sub-region. Nigeria, once the largest producer exporting 224,000 tonnes of palm oil in 1953 had by 1982 become a net importer, importing 168,000 tonnes of palm oil that year, while in Tanzania the production of export crops declined by 20% in the 1970s alone. The gravity of dwindling export production is made worse by falling prices. Kenya saw its terms of trade (the ratio of the price of exports to the price of a similar quantity of imports) fall from 133% in 1960 to 94% in 1980 (using 1975 as the base year). Liberia, which is dependent on iron ore and rubber for its foreign earnings, had its terms of trade deteriorate from 255% in 1960 to 71% in 1982. As a result of falling export prices, more than 80% of the countries in the sub-region currently experience balance of payments deficits.

Falling revenues from exports means that there is a lack of funds for the import of equipment, spare parts and other resources critical for development of the tourism industry. A recent World Bank survey in Ghana revealed that about 70% of vehicles in the country were out of service because of the unavailability of spares and tyres. In some beach hotels in Tanzania only 30% of the rooms are useable, while in many of the game lodges the water system is corroded and out of service because there is insufficient foreign exchange to bring in essential parts.
Also because oil imports use up to 60% of Tanzania’s foreign earnings, gasoline stations have been restricted to opening on only three days a week. Cars and buses are idle because the country cannot afford fuel. In 1983, Nigeria used about 15% of its foreign earnings that year to service debts. Zaire and the Ivory Coast (often regarded as the economic success story in the sub-region) had to devote 60% and 42%, respectively, of their foreign earnings for debt servicing in 1982.

Under such constraints, it has become very difficult to maintain or improve infrastructure and tourism facilities to a level where they can compete with established destinations. Tourists on vacation expect telephones and air-conditioning to work, western-style food, good wines and beers, televisions in their bedrooms, and an efficient transportation system. In sub-Saharan Africa, most of these items can only be made available through importation since they are not produced domestically. Even where they are locally manufactured, production is based on imported raw materials.

Lack of skilled manpower

There is an acute shortage of people with the management and technical skills necessary to organize and sustain development. This means that most countries in the sub-region have to rely on foreign consultants or expatriates to provide technical and managerial expertise. For instance, it is estimated that only 9% of Rwanda’s workers are skilled and most supervisory personnel in the country are either Europeans or Asians. Similarly, more than three-quarters of technical and managerial positions in Senegal are occupied by Europeans.

The general non-availability of skilled personnel adversely impacts tourism. For example, tour guides in the Moremi Wildlife Reserve in Botswana have minimal formal education, so many of them are unable to read maps, give directions, or provide information about the Reserve’s flora and fauna. In 1978, management contracts embraced 72% of all hotel rooms in Africa, which compared with 2% of all hotel rooms in Europe and 47% in Latin America. Hotel positions in The Gambia requiring management skills are filled by Europeans, while Accor, a French international hotel company, in 1988 was awarded a 15-year renewable contract to manage the Novotel, the only four-star hotel in Ghana.

The lack of indigenous management and technical talent has two major adverse effects on tourism development in the sub-region. First, countries cannot build a viable tourism industry based on foreign skilled labour. Indeed, by relying on external management rather than building domestic capacity, sub-Saharan countries are increasing rather than decreasing their economic dependency on the developed world. It has also been suggested that by relying on foreign experts, countries risk having their tourism resources being used as a laboratory allowing international interests an opportunity for experimentation with new ideas and techniques.

The second adverse impact of the lack of domestic supply of skilled personnel is that the employment of foreigners exacerbates the foreign
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exchange situation. In The Gambia, for example, 55% of an estimated $6.1m earned from tourism in 1977/78 left the country to purchase imports and pay the salaries and allowances of expatriate managers. Similarly, Tanzania retains only 40% of its gross earnings from tourism. The balance leaks out to purchase imports and in repatriation of salary remittances by expatriate workers.

Weak institutional frameworks for tourism planning

Tourism is comprised of an eclectic set of industries. In general terms, its basic components are markets; attractions; accommodation, restaurant and retail services; transportation; and information and promotion. These components are interdependent and the key to success lies in nurturing strong links between them while keeping the tourists' expenditures inside the country. Gunn notes:

Organizations, governments and all sectors involved in tourism are not recognizing how interdependent are all the separate entities and fragments that make up the whole. Tourism markets and supply are more widely scattered across the earth than for any other economic activity. It is at the interface of the many parts that many problems arise, requiring a more complex but a more broad-scale planning horizon than has been practised in the past.

In sub-Saharan Africa the strong institutional framework needed to nurture these linkages is missing in most countries. Because the private sector is relatively weak, tourism development is primarily dependent on a number of diverse public and quasi-public organizations and institutions, which are under the jurisdiction of different government ministries with diverse agendas and objectives. Frequently, these entities prefer autonomy and independence to cooperation.

Operating within such a system, national tourism organizations are often frustrated in performing their mandated duties to coordinate and develop the tourism industry. Insight into their frustration may be gleaned from a comment made by the Director-General of the Nigerian Tourist Board: 'There have been bureaucratic problems - organizations and functionaries at the highest level have the erroneous beliefs that the Nigerian Tourist Board alone will make tourism happen in this country.' The weakness of this institutional support was illustrated in Ghana where a German developer had to withdraw from the building of a beach resort because the Ghana Tourist Board, which had been weakened by its frequent dissolutions and reconstitutions in the fluid Ghanaian political environment, did not have specific guidelines for coordination of the numerous government institutions involved in the project.

Political instability

The fifth major inhibitor to tourism development in sub-Saharan Africa is political instability, resulting from national liberation and civil wars and frequent military coups d'état. Most countries in the sub-region experienced a peaceful transfer of power from colonial administrators to Africans, but some countries had to wage protracted and bloody wars to dislodge foreign domination. For example, Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia) was the scene of a 15-year war of attrition between Africans and white settlers, while in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau (former Portuguese Guinea), the Portuguese engaged in the longest and, in some respects, the most extensive of colonial wars in sub-Saharan Africa.

45J.A.M. Farver, op cit, Ref 16, p 255.
47C.A. Gunn, op cit, Ref 2, p 24.
49V.B. Teye, op cit, Ref 26, p 344.
However, wars in the sub-region are not limited only to those between Africans and former colonial powers, for they also occur between indigenous ethnic groups. These civil wars are a legacy of the artificial national boundaries created during the colonial period. In partitioning the continent, the European colonizers carved out boundaries that failed to take account of geographic and demographic conditions. An unfortunate result is that most countries in the sub-Saharan part of the continent do not constitute rational political, ethnic or economic entities. Balkanization of the sub-region served to fragment homogeneous ethnic groups into different countries and brought groups with longstanding, traditional antipathy as nationals of the same country. This situation set the stage for decades of inter-ethnic squabbles and fratricidal carnage within countries. Moreover, since ethnic groups were now distributed across national borders, conditions were conducive to border clashes as countries laid claims to territories in other countries on the basis of holistic ethnic affiliation.

Examples abound. Nigeria was engulfed in a civil war between 1967 and 1970 in which an estimated two million Ibos were annihilated. The centuries old rivalry between the Hutus and Tutsis in Burundi exploded in 1972 after a failed coup attempt, leading to the slaughter of more than 100,000 Hutus. This ethnic animosity erupted again in August 1988 and the result was over 5000 Hutus executed and several thousands wounded and many rendered homeless. Arabs and blacks have been fighting each other in the Sudan for over two decades. Civil wars have raged in both Angola and Mozambique since their attainment of independence in November 1975 and June 1975, respectively. Mauritania has an emerging ethnic problem between Arabs and blacks. The wars in Chad and Eritrea have been going on for more than two decades. Border clashes between countries resulting from territorial claims have occurred between Ghana and Togo, and between Somalia and its neighbours Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. Libya and Chad continue to fight over the Aozou strip in Chad. Tanzania and Uganda went to war over a territorial dispute which eventually led to the collapse of the Amin government. More than 20 major wars have taken place in the sub-region since the 1960s.

Military coups add to the volatility and uncertainty of the political situation. In most countries, the barrel of the gun has replaced the ballot box as the means of removing a government in power. Within the last two decades, more than 40 successful coups, and in the 1960s alone 130 failed attempts, occurred in the sub-region. Nigeria, since independence in 1960, has experienced five successful coups (two in 1966, and also 1975, 1983, 1985), several failed attempts and a bloody civil war. Burkina Faso, one of the poorest countries in the world, has been the scene of six military interventions in 1966, 1974, 1980, 1982, 1983, and 1987 and several additional military insurrections. It has been suggested that ‘military coups have occurred so frequently in different parts of Africa that they have lost their capacity to shock, though not to disturb Africans’.

The first impact of an unstable political climate is that it attracts unfavourable international press coverage, worsening an already negative image. A major consideration in a potential traveller’s decision to visit any foreign destination is that country’s political stability and general internal security conditions. Any evidence of domestic turmoil is likely to result in a decision not to visit that country. At the Ninth
Annual Convention of the African Travel Association held in Banjul (The Gambia) in 1984, the president of the Association made the following comments on Americans’ perceptions of the sub-region:

I think the average American just doesn’t keep up with what’s going on in Africa. I remember a few years back when there was trouble in Angola and Mozambique, many people didn’t want to go to Kenya, although Kenya is thousands of miles away from either of these two countries. It seems many Americans just don’t have their geography straight. 56

Further aggravating the unstable image is the increasing tendency of civil war factions to target foreigners in some of these attacks. Such situations not only attract condemnation from the foreign press but also lead to an unfavourable international focus on the sub region as foreign governments negotiate with the kidnappers for the release of their abducted nationals under the eye of international television. For example in July 1982, six tourists were abducted – two Americans, two British and two Australians – on the Bulawayo–Victoria road by dissident elements of ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army) and three British tourists were killed in the Inyanga tourist district in the same month. Five foreign missionaries were kidnapped by guerrillas of the MNR (Mozambique National Resistance Movement) on 17 September 1982. Prior to this incident, a British national had been abducted by the same group at Chitengo in the national game park. These series of kidnapings and killings received prominent international coverage. The immediate effect was a curtailment of foreign travel not only to Zimbabwe but to the whole Southern Africa region. At the American Society of Travel Agents convention in Miami in October 1982, the Director of Zimbabwe Tourist Board blamed the decrease in arrival figures in July and August on those incidents. According to him:

The incidents happened in two small areas of the country, but the world press gives the impression that this is a common phenomenon throughout Zimbabwe. This is very disappointing, because if they could only bother to come and see for themselves, they would find it is not the case. Our problem is one of image – the image we would like to see portrayed and the image the popular press is portraying for us. 57

Before the Amin government took power in Uganda, tourism was the third most important source of foreign exchange after coffee and cotton. In 1971, 85 000 visitors went to Uganda, earning the country $27m. However, the general atmosphere of turmoil coupled with the widespread negative international publicity about the regime and the factional strife that emerged when the government was toppled, destroyed the tourism industry. The number of visitors to Uganda in 1983 was 12 786. 58 In Zambia, the immediate effect of neighbouring Zimbabwe’s 15-year war of independence (1965–1980) was to curtail the number of foreign visitors. The number decreased from 197 000 in 1966 to 53 300 in 1978. 59

The second impact of the sub-regions’ political instability is to make roads and airports that provide accessibility to attractions and resort facilities unsafe to use. Movements within some countries and across some national boundaries have been restricted because roads, airports and tourism facilities have become targets for attack. For example, MNR guerrillas have mined roads and often ambushed travellers making some roads in Mozambique unsafe. In October 1984, 27 people were killed when the MNR ambushed and machine-gunned a bus 50 km...
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from the capital Maputo. Another ambush involving three buses and three cars in which 37 people lost their lives occurred in 1985. The Angolan civil war has curtailed road transportation in that country since 1983. Bridges on the Benguela railway linking Angola with Zambia and Zaire have blown up so frequently by the rebel UNITA (National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola) movement fighting the Angolan government that cross-border traffic has ceased since 1975. Tourism attractions in Zambia were prominent targets of attack during the Zimbabwe war of independence.

For security reasons, countries torn by liberation wars and civil strife have to introduce measures that are detrimental to tourism development. These measures not only restrict travel, but also forbid the taking of photographs of things described as sensitive installations. A law passed in Angola in 1983 prohibits driving beyond 50 km from the capital Luanda without a military escort. Zambia imposed a ban on photographing objects in urban areas of the country as a wartime measure during the war in neighbouring Zimbabwe. Curfews and total blackouts were also imposed frequently in urban areas, including the capital city Lusaka which is the exit and entry point for tourists visiting the country.

The third impact of political instability is the unpredictable, but frequently inhospitable, behaviour of governments that assume the political mantle after a successful coup. Most take power on populist platforms and a common theme is to reduce or eliminate foreign dominance of the economy and develop the public sector. These proclamations often deter potential investors from the sub-region, thereby depriving tourism of an infusion of much-needed capital. Potential investors may face the loss of their investments through nationalization in the event of a military takeover. For example, in Benin, the Kerekou government assumed power proclaiming Marxism-Leninism as the national ideology and nationalized several services.

Inconsistency in the policies and pronouncements of governments sends out confusing signals and messages to both foreigners and local tourism officials. In their populist rhetoric, some governments have castigated tourism as the 'people’s public enemy number one'. At the same time, the industry is perceived to be a source for earning foreign exchange for their economies. With such an ambivalent attitude, foreigners and local tourism officials are not sure whether or not countries in the sub-region really want tourism. When asked about the major problem facing Nigerian tourism, the Director of the Nigeria Tourist Board said 'There have been long inconclusive flirtations with tourism by successive governments in Nigeria. There have also been long delays in concretising political statements into realities.'

According to the Director, the grudging acceptance of the tourist industry by various Nigerian governments is often manifested in a lukewarm attitude towards the industry. In many countries, because of official ambivalence about tourism, commitment is half-hearted and funding often inadequate.

The rapidity with which governments are changed in the sub-region prevents development programmes, which include plans for tourism development, from reaching fruition. It is common for military governments taking power to justify their actions by castigating their predecessor’s economic policies. Often projects initiated by the previous government are abandoned with the rationale that those projects

61 V. B. Teye, op cit, Ref 59, p 601.
63 V. B. Teye, op cit, Ref 59, 1986, p 601.
66 C. Adelson, op cit, Ref 4, p 44.
67 B. Olowo, op cit, Ref 48, p 1476.
were not feasible or were not in the best interest of the country. Tourism is often regarded by military governments as serving external rather than domestic needs and thus is not considered a national priority. The result is that most tourism plans become mere paper aspirations. Where they have got off the ground, they have most often never been completed. A typical example of this genre was a beach and resort complex started in Ghana in 1977 which more than 10 years later is still incomplete. Since the project began, the country has experienced five governments – one civilian and four military governments. Each successive government has evaluated the project differently and has either continued it, amended it, or abandoned it depending on their evaluation.  

Political instability siphons off scarce resources. Funds for economic development are diverted to purchase arms to meet security needs. It is estimated that Zimbabwe spends as much as $1m a day to defend the railroad that carries its crucial exports through Mozambique to the coast against South African-backed terrorists. Ethiopia, the scene of mass starvation, allocated $439.61m for defence in its 1981-82 budget. The cost of the bush war in Mozambique was estimated at $333m in 1982-83. Sabotage of railways by rebels cut international traffic by 30%, worth $30m in 1983. These expenditures deprive tourism of the investment funds to develop the industry.

**Strategies for mitigating the impact of inhibitors to tourism development**

For the tourism potential of sub-Saharan Africa to be realized, proactive strategies for mitigating the impact of inhibitors need to be developed. The potential for developing proactive strategies that address the five inhibitors discussed in the previous section is discussed under four headings: cooperative promotion efforts, increasing foreign exchange, addressing the manpower issue, and towards political stability and effective tourism planning.

*Cooperative promotion efforts*

Any strategy for countering the negative dimensions of sub-Saharan Africa projected by the news media is likely to involve cooperation between countries, if it is to be successful. The sub-region is perceived by most non-Africans to be an organic entity. As contrary as this concept is to sovereignty, it is, nevertheless, a marketing reality. For potential travellers to select sub-Saharan Africa over other destinations, the sub-region must appeal to their imagination and create in them the desire to travel there, and independent image building attempts by individual countries are unlikely to be successful.

Promotion is only one area of potential cooperation between countries interested in tourism development, and Teye suggests another twelve areas where such cooperation would contribute to greater realization of the tourism potential of sub-Saharan Africa. However, given the sub-region's current negative image, a comprehensive counter media effort stressing the positive dimensions of the area to selected target markets is clearly a primary task. Such a strategy would be expensive, and given the meagre resources of countries of the sub-region, it could not be undertaken effectively by individual nations. The primary ingredients for a cooperative strategy for sub-Saharan Africa are shown in Figure 3.

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68V. B. Teye, op cit, Ref 26, p 348.
69J. Barnes, op cit, Ref 1, p 31.
70D. Legum, op cit, Ref 60, p B682.
The most efficient approach would be for all countries of the sub-region to pool their resources. There is a need to create a permanent organization, the African Public Relations Office, in the tourist generating countries whose sole responsibility would be to create a favourable image for the sub-region. Such an office could be created by the countries of sub-Saharan Africa directing their respective representatives in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to initiate the process.

Pooling of resources is likely to provide more effective coverage at a lower cost to countries in the sub-region. The number of staff needed to implement the promotional efforts for the whole sub-region is likely to be substantially fewer than the combined staff needed to implement the promotional efforts of the 46 individual countries. In addition, economies of scale from cooperative promotional efforts are likely to create cost savings through increased volume discounts.

To attract foreign tourists to the sub-region, countries of sub-Saharan Africa should adopt a regional approach with West Africa, Eastern Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa joining forces. Instead of individual promotions, countries could come together to offer their region as a vacation package. With large distances separating the sub-region from the tourist-generating countries, especially North America, transportation cost forms a substantial part of travel to sub-Sahara. A potential traveller from North America is unlikely to travel that extensive distance merely to enjoy a pleasant beach resort or sunshine. A short trip to Florida or the Caribbean could provide those benefits equally well. The incentive to incur extra cost to travel to distant destinations is likely to be the wide variety of attractions available. They are mobile tourists, travelling from one country to another, staying only a short time in each country. Each sub-Saharan
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country selling its individual attraction of ‘sunny beaches’ or ‘vibrant cultures’ is likely to be of little appeal to such tourists. Only when countries combine their individual attractions into a package and offer the opportunity of enjoying many attractions on a single visit, are potential travellers likely to be encouraged to make a decision to travel long distances to the sub-region for their vacation.

The most logical approach to implement this regional tourism strategy is to incorporate it within the framework of the existing structures of regional economic integration (see Figure 3). To facilitate general economic development, a majority of sub-Saharan countries have joined into economic unions with others. These existing regional organizations are currently charged with responsibilities which facilitate tourism developments, including responsibility for linking the countries’ communication satellites and international road and rail networks. Objectives of these unions include economic integration, facilitation of travel among citizens of the region, and achievement of a common currency. In West Africa the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) was established in 1975, and comprises the fifteen West African countries. The CEEAC (Communauté Économique des États de l’Afrique Centrale) was established in 1983 by countries of the Central African region. The nine countries of Southern Africa (excluding the Republic of South Africa and Namibia) formed the SADCC (Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference) at the Lusaka summit of April 1980.

A regional tourism promotion unit could be set up in the already existing secretariats of these organizations to coordinate, develop and promote regional vacation packages. These regional offices could have branches located in the sub-Saharan Public Relations Office in the tourist-generation countries to make available information on their respective regional tourism packages to the travel trade and to potential vacationers. The two organizations would complement each other, with the Public Relations Office focusing on promoting a better image for the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, while the regional sub-units sell their regional attractions. Each regional unit could undertake research in the tourist-generating countries to determine trends in travel patterns and tastes, and to provide the respective regional offices with the data and information needed for an effective tourism development plan.

Increasing foreign exchange

Development of tourism infrastructure is inhibited by the lack of foreign exchange needed to establish and maintain it. While the tourism industry is a potential generator of foreign exchange, its potential in most sub-Saharan African countries will remain relatively small until investment is forthcoming to expand the industry’s capacity. The most likely source of this investment is the enhanced exchange earnings that could emerge from improvements in agriculture. A major reason for the foreign exchange crisis with which most countries are confronted is the stagnation of export crops production and the increase in food imports made necessary by insufficient domestic capacity.

Adverse natural conditions, particularly drought, have been key factors in creating this situation, but they have been exacerbated by governmental agricultural policies. Price controls, which specify prices at which farmers may sell their produce, in many cases barely reach the farmers’ costs of production and offer no incentive to increase

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While detailed examination of these issues related to agriculture is beyond the scope of this paper, it is clear that improvements in the agricultural situation would release substantial amounts of foreign exchange which could be invested in tourism infrastructure. Improvements in agriculture which led to alleviation of hunger would also contribute to mitigating the adverse impact of negative images of deprivation conveyed by the media.

A complementary strategy for increasing foreign exchange would be to raise the proportion of tourism services supplied by domestic sources. Efforts in this direction have been successful in Kenya, where domestic supplies have replaced imported foods and domestic manpower has been trained to replace foreign manpower.

Addressing the manpower issue

Four strategies are suggested for addressing the manpower problem in the tourism industry. First, governments should include counterpart training of their nationals in contractual agreements that they negotiate with international hotel chains and other international service organizations in order to develop indigenous capacity. Countries outside the sub-region, such as Brazil, Hong Kong, India, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand have used this strategy.

A second strategy would require governments interested in developing tourism, to identify it as a national priority and encourage students to seek training and subsequent employment in the field. Encouragement could be in the form of awarding scholarships to nationals to train in courses offered by universities on several continents, or by the International Labour Organization in Turin, Italy, or by the World Tourism Organization in Mexico City.

Instead of establishing their own tourism training institutions, which is envisaged by countries such as The Gambia and Nigeria, countries could pool their resources to expand and upgrade the well-established Umtali Hotel and Tourism College in Kenya. This was developed by the Kenyan government with technical assistance from the Swiss government. This third strategy would enable a course of the highest calibre to be offered which could provide training for people who would be employed in tourism throughout the sub-region.

A fourth strategy would be for sub-Saharan African countries to take advantage of the Reintegration of Qualified African Nationals (ROQAN) scheme organized by the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration based in Geneva. The objective of this scheme is to help African countries take advantage of experience gained by their citizens through their employment and study experiences in the industrialized countries. The organization consults with participating African governments to identify their manpower needs. These positions are then advertised in the developed countries to recruit qualified nationals. Those eligible are provided with logistical assistance in the form of airfares, family support and luggage allowance to help with their transition.

The programme was initiated in 1983 with a grant from the European Community and involved the governments of Kenya, Somalia and Zimbabwe. There are plans to expand it to include Ghana, Uganda and Zambia. Currently, the scheme's areas of concentration are planning, education, engineering and agriculture, but tourism could be added to this list. Active participation in the ROQAN scheme with its incentives

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75 Kenya Development Plan, op cit, Ref 13, p 88.
76 Dunning and McQueen, op cit, Ref 41, p 88.
78 O. Olowo, op cit, Ref 48, p 1476.
may be one of the most effective strategies these countries could utilize to tap the services of their qualified nationals now sojourning abroad. This is especially true of those Africans whose decisions not to return home may, in many instances, have been precipitated by the costs of transportation, and by the uncertainties associated with finding a worthwhile job if such an investment is made.

A prerequisite to implementing these strategies is for countries to establish a tourism manpower development plan. This plan would provide a long-term overview of tourism's manpower needs. Such an approach is necessary to prevent the stimulation of excess capacity and the creation of false hopes in those who invest their futures by participating in these manpower programmes.

Towards political stability and effective tourism planning

Effective tourism planning is dependent on political stability. The constant dissolution and reconstitution of national tourism organizations, which in most countries of the sub-region are responsible for tourism planning, frustrates the formulation of coherent tourism policy and acquisition of the resources necessary to implement it. For example, the Ghana Tourist Board was subjected to eight changes of name, status, and mandate in the seven-year period between 1966 and 1973 due to three changes in government during that period of time. In some instances, the Board was so hastily reconstituted that the enabling legislation necessary for it to carry out its duties had not been enacted.

Recent developments in the Southern African Region, which have included South Africa setting a date for Namibia’s independence and Cuba’s decision to withdraw its troops from Angola, are cause for optimism about peace and normalcy returning to that part of the sub-region. This optimism is enhanced by the movement of the USA and Soviet Union towards détente and reconciliation of conflict areas.

An array of strategies has been proposed for resolving the instability created by military intervention, which is most obviously manifested in coups d'état. These vary from moderate views which consider ways of integrating the military into the political fabric, to extreme views advocating a total disarming of the military. Detailed discussion of these strategies is beyond the scope of this paper.

Summary

The natural and cultural diversity of sub-Saharan Africa represents a substantial resource for attracting tourists. Appropriate tourism development could contribute to diversifying and enhancing the economic base of these countries which has been eroded through substantial reductions in income they have received in recent years from exports of their primary products. Tourism also provides the economic rationale for conserving such resources as national parks and wildlife reserves.

Experiences with tourism in the sub-region have led to a realization that there are a number of inhibitors which cause its potential contribution to remain largely unrealized. They include: the prevailing image of poverty and deprivation; the lack of foreign exchange to acquire resources needed for development of the tourism industry; very limited availability of indigenous skilled and managerial personnel; inability to provide the strong institutional framework needed to nurture tourism development; and political instability. The magnitude

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of these inhibitors makes addressing them an intimidating challenge. In each case, they transcend the capability of tourist segments of the economy to address them alone. Indeed, the image and manpower problems probably transcend the capability of individual countries to address them alone. An array of strategies is suggested for alleviating the impact of these problems. Improvements that result from their implementation could provide countries in the sub-region with an additional source of revenue for their struggling economies.

Appendix 1
Illustrations of sub-Saharan Africa's tourism potential

Zambia
A survey by the United Nations Development Programme estimated there are over 191 wild mammalian species. The South Luangwa Park has over 100,000 elephants, 14,000 hippopotami, 21,000 buffaloes, 2,800 rhinos and about 60,000 crocodiles (see V.B. Teye, Ref 59, pp 591-92).

Tanzania and Kenya
The conservation areas of Serengeti and Maasai Mara (in Tanzania and Kenya respectively) together provide refuge for some 1.5 million wildebeest, 250,000 zebras and millions of other game animals.

Zimbabwe
The Wankie National Park has over 1000 species of animals and 400 birds. The Kariba Dam, one of the largest man-made lakes in the world, offers opportunities for fishing and cruises. There are also the great Zimbabwe Ruins, the archaeological remains of a once thriving black civilization (see M. Novicki, Ref 5).

Ethiopia
The historic Cities of Gondar, Lalibela and Axum — the legendary home of the Queen of Sheba.

Ghana
Cultural attractions and numerous colonial castles.

Nigeria
Beautiful wood and bronze carvings.

Liberia
Of historical significance to black Americans. The country was settled by freed blacks from the USA in 1822.

Benin
Blacks from the French and Spanish speaking Caribbean are descendants of the people from Benin.

Rwanda
The Virunga Gorilla Sanctuary. Within the sanctuary is located the Karisoke Research Institute founded by the late American naturalist, Dian Fossey.

Botswana
The Moremi Wildlife Reserve is home to over 36 varieties of mammals and over 200 species of birds (see U. Almagor, Ref 40, p 35).

Appendix 2
Illustrations of efforts to facilitate tourism development in sub-Saharan Africa

Kenya
The Jomo Kenyatta and Moi International airports and several road networks have been improved to increase the speed and comfort of travel between various tourist destinations.

Uganda
Wildlife parks, decimated during the Amin regime, are being redeveloped with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme and the European Economic Community. The US Sheraton group is helping to refurbish long neglected hotels and lodges.

Tanzania
The Kilimanjaro Airport was built to provide direct landing for jumbo jets.
from Europe. Tanzania devotes 4% of its current budget to preserve its natural heritage (the highest in the world).

**Togo**
The government has teamed up with foreign investors to build several hotels (e.g., *The Deux Fevrier* with 400 rooms).

**Nigeria**
Loans have been procured from both the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for manpower development in the tourism industry.

**Central African Republic**
The government has acquired a 7% share in Air Afrique.

**Cameroon**
Existing facilities at Garoua are being expanded at a cost of $40 million so that international air traffic can be accommodated.

**Botswana**
Air Botswana has constructed airfields at all the primary tourist areas of the country.

**Zimbabwe**
A Sheraton Hotel has been constructed, incorporating an auditorium which seats 4500. A German company has been awarded a contract for Z$15 million to install landing equipment, high-frequency telecommunication, and navigation aids at nine airports.