

Potentials and Pitfalls of Dirre Sheik Hussein Religious and Cultural Site in Tourism Development, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Assessing the potentials and drawback of tourist destination is the first step in tourism development of a particular site. Dirre Sheik Hussein is one of religious and cultural site of Ethiopia blessed with several cultural and natural tourist attraction resources. But, assessment of sites potentials and pitfalls are not carried out in the site so far. Therefore, this study is conducted to assess the potentials and pitfalls of Dirre Sheik Hussein in tourism development. To realize this objective the researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. In this study both primary and secondary data sources have been used. Significant primary data was collected through interview, focus group discussion and direct observation. Both purposive and simple random sampling method also used to select informants. Finally, in data analyze process both qualitative and quantitative data analysis method has been used. Accordingly, the research result shows that Dirre Sheik Hussein site has both potentials and pitfalls in tourism development.

Keywords: Tourism development; Dirre Sheik Hussein; Potential, Drawback

INTRODUCTION

Religious and cultural heritage-based tourism is one of the fastest growing kinds of travel and tourism industry. Cultural and religious site, museum, historic place and festival of all kinds are attracting tourists in great number. Because tourists looking for experiences and history tend to stay longer and spend more in communities they visit. Cultural and religious Heritage based Tourism is a tool of economic development that realizes economic growth through fascinating visitors to a particular site (Tables 1 and 2) [1,2].

Table 1: The dissemination of household's sample by their feelings toward visitors.

What are your feelings for the coming of tourists to your area?	Number of sampled households	Happy	%	Unhappy	%
	50	50	100%	0	0%

Table 2: The distribution of visitor's sample with regard to local community hospitability.

	Number of sampled visitors	Yes	%	No	%
Do the local people warmly welcome you when you came to this site?	10	10	100%	0	0%

Ethiopia is blessed with abundant natural and cultural tourist attraction heritage including its nine-world heritage site. In addition to its nine sites inscribed on the world heritage list, Ethiopia recorded five sites on its tentative list such as Bale mountain national park, Dirre Sheik Hussein religious, cultural and historical site (my study site), Sof-Umar natural cave, Gedeo mixed cultural and natural landscape and Melka-Kunture archaeological site [3-5].

In order to develop a particular heritage site as a potential's tourist destination assessing and identify the possibilities and drawback of the site is the first and significant steps in tourism development. With this regard, in spite of Ethiopia is the home of numerous tourist attraction resources lack of the deep-rooted assessment of tourist site's potentials and constraints is common in the country.

Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site is one of the national visited shrine centers in Ethiopia. It is inclusive shrine site by its nature to mean that the site is visited by different ethnic group and religion. One can find several impressive built-up heritages in the shrine site of sheik Hussein. Having these countless potentials, the site is not developed as a great tourist destination. Because due to lack of scientific and organized assessment of site's potential's and limitation. As noted by Popichite et al., the motive why tourists select a destination is grounded on the degree of destinations attractiveness and interestedness in persuading tourists satisfaction. Consequently, the assessment of destination potential supports to

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specify and to rate the importance of existing destination resources in each district or area [6].

As noted by Tesfay Girma et al, one means to integrate heritage to development is to develop heritage-based tourism by integrating and aligning tourist route through identified heritage site. Sheik Hussein shrine site is also the home of long aged historical and cultural heritages. In spite of this fact, heritage-based tourism is not developed at sheik Hussein shrine site. Also, the shrine site of sheik Hussein is not studied from tourism point of view. On the other hand, the potentials, drawback and future direction of sheik Hussein religious and cultural site in tourism development is not identified and studied scientifically.

Regarding research and literature on Dirre Sheik Hussein site, there are few studies conducted both by Ethiopian and foreign scholars. For instance, the work of Umer Nure and JW Hussien is among the few studies conducted to document the history and rituals performed at the religious and cultural site of Dirre Sheik Hussein. The studies of these scholars mainly focused on the historical and cultural aspects of the site. Moreover, the work of these scholar is highly credited for providing a large corpus of literature on the site. Terje ostebo is one of the foreign scholars strained to assess the religious purpose of Dirre Sheik Hussein site in his relative analysis of diverse Islamic sects in the Bale area. No doubt, his work shed light on the role of Dirre Sheik Hussein in the expansion of Islam in southeast part of Ethiopia. However, none of these scholars did not mentioned anything about the potentials and pitfalls of Dirre Sheik Hussein in tourism development. Consequently, this paper tried to describe the potentials, pitfalls and future direction of Dire sheik Hussein religious and cultural site in tourism development [7-9].

RESEARCH METHODS AND MATERIALS

The data source for this study was both primary and secondary data. For instance, primary data about the tourism development of the site collected from host community, tourists, tour and travel company of the study area and from different stakeholder, through interview, questionnaires' and focus group discussion. Besides, aforementioned primary data, different secondary data sources also gathered by the researcher after critical analysis of the source from various institutions like institute of Ethiopia studies (IES), Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH) and Cultural and Tourism office of the study area. The secondary sources for this study included books, researcher paper and other published materials.

As a primary data collection tools both structured and semi-structured interview was also conducted. Questioners are prepared and interview was made with domestic and foreign tourists, local communities and concerned government and none government organization. Critical filed observation with the help of GPS position, photo camera and notes has been made by the researcher. The potentials tourism resource of the site and serious challenges were observed and recorded during the time of filed observation.

Focus group discussion was another data gathering instrument utilized in this study. Five focus group discussions with a member of ten participants for each discussion has been made. the Participants for focus group discussion has been selected purposefully based on their willingness, age, knowledge, and duration of their stay in the study area.

Sampling size and techniques

Both purposive and simple random sampling methods has been used. The study site was selected purposively based on the assumption that Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site is not well studied from tourism point of view. The participants for interview and focus group discussions have been selected by using both purposive and random sampling. The candidate Tourists for interview and FGD has been selected by simple random sampling whereas the host communities, tour and travel agencies have been selected purposively. This is because they are key informants to obtain the necessary information. Both open ended and closed ended questioners have been disseminated for 180 respondents that are purposively and randomly selected.

Data analysis methods

Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods have been employed. The qualitative data that are collected through interview, focus group discussion, open-ended questioners and filed observations organized in to different themes based on objective of the research and then analyzed qualitatively. The quantitative data that are gathered through closed ended questioners were analyzed quantitatively. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used to analyze the quantitative data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of the site

Dirre Sheik Hussein is one of the religious, cultural and historical sites of Ethiopia. The site is found in Golocha district of Bale zone of Oromia regional state. The site is also located at a distance of 600 km from Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. Dirre Sheik Hussein site is situated about 1500 metre asl in the semi-arid valley of Wabi Shebele River, mid-way between the peaks and the plains, in the eastern foothills of the remarkable Bale Mountains range.

Potentials of Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site in tourism development

This paper attempted to identify, assessed and documented some possibilities of Dirre Sheik Hussein site in tourism development. According to this finding, the site has tremendous potentials in attracting tourists in great number. The major potentials of the site that are observed by the researchers in time of filed observation and in collaboration with the result of open-ended interviews with tourists are presented as follows.

Richness of the site with tourist attraction resources

The availability of both cultural and natural tourist attraction resources in the compound of Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site is one of the identified potentials of the site in tourism development. Dirre Sheik Hussein site is blessed with several built-up heritages which includes mosques, shrines, stone-walled fences, tombs, water ponds, festive and ceremonial yards natural forests/landscapes and a historically associated human settlement. Tourist attraction resources of the site can be classified in to two group these are cultural and natural resources.

Cultural attraction heritages of Dirre Sheik Hussein site

In the compound of sheik Hussein site there are several built up

heritage which had high potential in attracting tourists. One can find more than ten built heritage in the area of the site. In the time of observation, the researcher takes significant photo of built up heritage found in the whole area of the site. Many built up cultural heritages of the site is surrounded by a compound of high wall layered by stones and lime and mud mortar (Figure 1).

The whole compound of Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site has twelve gates. According to information from local elders each gate represents the twelve months of a year. Among the all gets of the site the main get is well decorated (Figure 2). Generally, aesthetically and architecturally Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site is fairly fascinating. The nature and design of Dirre Sheik Hussein surely offers weight to the inventive talent and insight as well as the local knowledge and skills of those who built the site.

All of the built-up heritages in the site are architecturally and aestically unique. Historically it dates back to 12th century. Another potential built up heritage in the compound of the site is Abdul qadir shrine. According to oral information from local elder Abdul qadir shrine was constructed in the late of 18th century by local people from locally available materials such as sandstone, limestone and wood. All the built-up potential heritage in the site of Dirre Sheik Hussein are painted white with burnt log ash combined with lime which is prepared locally in traditional way (Figures 1-7). According to information from local people through interview the limestones that are used to paint the building are collected from a nearby river named Aynagegn, located about one kilometre from the center. By general speaking, the architecturally wonderfully cultural heritage known as Abdul qadir shrine in the compound of Dirre Sheik Hussein site is one of the potential tourist attraction resource and can be considered as the great opportunities of the site in tourism development.



Figure 1: Partial view of Dirre Sheik Hussein.



Figure 2: Partial view of the site from the west or main gate.



Figure 3: Partial view of Abdul qadir shrine, one built up heritages of Dirre Sheik Hussein.



Figure 4: Partial view of decorative house of local people of the site.

Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site is surrounded by human settlement. The local inhabitant of the site has their own magnificent, well-designed and culturally and artistically executed house which has good attraction. In addition to the natural and built up cultural heritages the settlement pattern of local people with their traditionally decorated house gave more beauty and attraction to Dirre Sheik Hussein site.

Natural attraction heritages of Dirre Sheik Hussein site

Besides cultural heritages Dirre Sheik Hussein site blessed with natural potential attraction heritages. The location of the site is very attractive and site is surround by unique land scape. What particularly added distinct attractiveness and elegance to Dirre Sheikh Hussein is the unique environment in which it is situated. It is situated midway between the peaks and the plains. The mountains and the great gorges of Wabe river highlight the grandeur and magnificent scene to Dirre Sheikh Hussein and enhance the visual experience of the visitor.

The existence of valley of wabi shebelle river with its unique landscape near by the site gave more attraction to sheik Hussein site. Geographically, Dirre Sheik Hussein site is also found in the part of wabi shebelle river valley which can be one potential tourist attraction resources.

Hospitability of host local communities

According to interview with local elders and tourist the local people in and around the site had a deep-rooted tradition of warmly welcoming gust/visitor. Regarding the issues of hospitability of



Figure 5: Wabe river around the site of Dirre Sheik Hussein potential natural attraction resource.



Figure 6: Unique land scape of Dirre Sheik Hussein site potential natural attraction resource.



Figure 7: Partial view of Wabe valley near by the site.

local community both open-ended and closed ended questioners was disseminated to local people and tourists. The questionnaire result show that all in all, local people are interested for the coming of visitor to their site. In connection with these issues, the result of sampled household about hospitability presented below.

According to the questioner result and interview with tourist at the site all respondent was agree as the local people are hospitable, open and friendly people. So, it is possible to concluded that, hospitability of host community of Dire Sheik Hussein site are the great potentials of the site in pulling tourists in huge number.

Pitfalls of Dirre Sheik Hussein in tourism development

In spite of several natural and cultural heritages in and around the site of sheik Hussein the site is not well developed as a potential tourist destination due to many challenges. In connection with the pitfalls of the site the researcher made personal observation and interview with local people and the result presented as follows.

Lack of infrastructural development

Infrastructure is the basic element which determine the flow of tourists in to a particular destination. In spite of Dirre Sheik Hussein site riches in potential tourist attraction resources the site lacked basic infrastructural development. Regarding infrastructure lack of adequate electricity, all-weather road and banking service is major challenges of tourism development of the site. In the compound of Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site we do not have tourist facilities such as accommodation, restaurants, community-based guest houses and local small-scale entrepreneurs in tourist services. To sum up, lack of infrastructural development is one great pitfalls of the site in tourism development.

Lack of media promotion

Media promotion is very significant for the tourism development of a particular tourist destination. According to information from local people promotion activities about the site is not done by the government and nongovernment organization. As the information from office of tourism and culture, Dirre Sheik Hussein site is not promoted to the external world by any means. Therefore, lack of promotion is the great challenges that face tourism development of the site.

DISCUSSION

The effectiveness of IDET in the management of discogenic lumbar pain has a broad theoretical scientific basis, As noted by (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2012) one and most significant component of tourism industry is attraction. Regarding the issues of attraction, Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site has a number of tourist attraction resources which can be both natural and cultural attraction. The main reason why tourists choose a destination is based up on the site attractiveness. No doubt, destination potentials and attractiveness are measured by its attraction resources. With this regard, Dirre Sheik Hussein site is a potential tourist destination because its richness in tourist attraction resources [10,11].

As stated by Temesgen Soressa natural resources like mountain, forest and valley are part of tourist attraction resources. Accordingly, Dirre Sheik Hussein site surrounded by unique landscape like Wabe valley, Abelkasim mountain and Wabe river. Concerning natural tourist attraction resources, Dirre Sheik Hussein site is a potential tourist destination [12].

Religious site, traditions and culture are main attractors for tourism into Ethiopia and Ethiopia is an old civilization that has very distinct cultural and historic products. Like other part of Ethiopia Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site riches in cultural heritages such as shrine and built up heritage [13].

As noted by Ashenafi Tafesse Tourism is a large industry including numerous sectors such as accommodation, food and beverage services, recreation and entertainment, transportation, and travel services. Each of these sectors donates to tourism development in numerous destinations. Accordingly, having several tourist attraction resources is not only enough for the development of tourism of a particular destination. Regarding the issues of accommodation and transportation the result of this study show that Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site has no all-weather road and quality hotel. According to Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MOCT, 2011) Ethiopia has a minor number of

hotels which are, generally, of poor standard. The quality of infrastructure is significant for the convenience tourist sites, for the quality of the stay of tourists, communication and mobility at a destination. In this case, the result of this study indicated that, Dirre Sheik Hussein site lacked basic infrastructural development like electricity, all-weather road, telecommunication and other travel services. By general speaking, Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site blessed with numerous tourist attraction resources, but absences of quality hotel, all-weather road, electricity and media promotion set back the tourism development of the site [14].

CONCLUSIONS

This paper tried to assess the possibilities and drawback of Dirre Sheik Hussein site in tourism development. The study area/Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site has both potentials and drawback in tourism development. The richness of the site with different natural and cultural heritages and hospitality of host local community were some of the identified potentials of the site in tourism development. Potential natural tourist attraction resources like Abelkasim mountain, webe vally and webe river gave special status to Dirre Sheik Hussein site. Beside natural attraction resources Dirre Sheik Hussein site blessed with several historical and cultural built up heritage.

In spite of Dirre Sheik Hussein is riches in tourist attraction resources (both natural and cultural attraction) the site is not developed as a potential tourist destination due to different challenges. The challenges that faced tourism development of Dirre Sheik Hussein site identified by the researcher were lack of infrastructural development like all-weather road, standardized hotel and lack of media promotion. These major challenges have no proper attention from both regional and federal government of Ethiopia. Based on the identified pitfalls, the researcher forwarded a possible solution that will help in developing Dirre Sheik Hussein site as a potential tourist destination. Accordingly, conservation of the site's tourist attraction resources, construction of hotel and road, and promotion of the site by all means are the best and only option to make Dirre Sheik Hussein religious and cultural site as a potential tourist destination.

RECOMMENDATION

The following measures are recommended to develop Dirre Sheik Hussein as potential tourist destination:

1. The potential cultural and natural attraction found in and around the site should be conserved, preserved and promoted by the ARCCH in collaboration with Culture and Tourism Offices of Oromia Regional state and study area.

2. At the site of Dirre Sheik Hussein different basic infrastructure such as electricity, telephone hotel and all-weather roads must be constructed by both regional and federal government.

3. The geographical setting of the sites and potential tourist attraction resources must be promoted to the external world by the public and private Medias.

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