

The Influence of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) on Social Interaction and Tourism Developments of Ethiopia

Tamenut Desalegn*

Department of Wildlife and Ecotourism Management, Wolkite University, Wolkite, Ethiopia

ABSTRACT

The aim of this review article is to see the effect of the novel Coronavirus on the tourism sectors of Ethiopia. Tourism is among one of the fastest growing industries in the world and nowadays its contribution to supporting and accelerating national development. The pandemic disease novel Coronavirus distressed many sectors of the global economy predominantly, the tourism sector including Ethiopia. Ethiopia is rich in a diversity of tangible and intangible heritages, both traditional and modern cultural expressions, ceremonies, festivals, rituals and other living expressions and centuries-old expertise in handicraft production. The Ethiopian socio-economic situation had drastically declined by COVID-19. Many social and cultural events, meetings, games and sporting events, social works and social interactions limit the shutting down of institutions and centers of learning and the closing of internal and international borders. Therefore, tourism sectors must give attention to Coronavirus preservation methods to minimize the distribution and to increase tourist arrival by creating social bonding.

Keywords: COVID-19; Ethiopia; Social interaction; Tourism development

INTRODUCTION

The novel Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), first emerged in Wuhan, which is in the Hubei Province of China and then spread out rapidly to different world countries in a short time [1]. The virus is similar to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (SARS-CoV) called "Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)". By March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledged the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) as a pandemic. As of April 30, 2020, COVID-19 has affected 3,130,800 people and has caused more than 227,000 deaths worldwide. The virus spreads from person to person through making physical contact with an infected person (disrespecting social distance), air when an infected person sneezes, coughs and exhales during a meeting and time of being together. The pandemic has gone down a dilapidating trail in its wake even in so-called developed countries including Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America [2].

One year after it was declared a global pandemic, many countries are still struggling with the devastating effects the pandemic has

wrecked on many sectors of the economy including the agriculture and food sectors, the tourism and hospitality sector and the aviation sector among others. The world seems to be stagnant from all formal activities for several weeks, which adversely affects every sector of life. The negative impacts of COVID-19 are not only limited to the loss of human lives, but they also include short- and long-term social, economic and political effects. Moreover, the virus affects the socioeconomic conditions in the majority of agrarian-based economy-dependent countries including Ethiopia. The organization for economic co-operation and development for instance, estimates that a long-lasting and more intensive COVID-19 outbreak is likely to drop global growth to 1.5% in 2020, which is half the predictable rate of growth prior to the outbreak, with implications for international tourism. In addition, the international monetary fund estimates that the COVID-19 outbreak will cause a global collapse in 2020 that could be worse than the one triggered by the global financial crisis of 2008-2009.

The pandemic situation has affected the tourism industry worldwide. Most of the destinations in the world have embraced coronavirus-related restrictions. The tourism sector has been

Correspondence to: Tamenut Desalegn, Department of Wildlife and Ecotourism Management, Wolkite University, Wolkite, Ethiopia; E-mail: tamenutdesalegn15@gmail.com

Received: 23-Feb-2024, Manuscript No. JTH-24-29749; **Editor assigned:** 28-Feb-2024, PreQC No. JTH-24-29749 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 13-Feb-2024, QC No. JTH-24-29749; **Revised:** 21-Apr-2025, Manuscript No. JTH-24-29749 (R); **Published:** 28-Apr-2025, DOI: 10.35248/2167-0269.25.14.576

Citation: Desalegn T (2025) The Influence of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) on Social Interaction and Tourism Developments of Ethiopia. J Tourism Hospit. 14:576.

Copyright: © 2025 Desalegn T. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

particularly hard hit because of the suspension of air travel, lockdowns and social distancing or social work interaction protocols instituted in many countries all over the world resulting in declining tourism activities. After the emergence of the novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China has affected many sectors of the global economy particularly, the tourism sector. The world tourism organization estimated that the pandemic coronavirus situation declined 290 to 440 million international tourist arrivals, which is 20% to 30% of total arrivals in 2020. It reduced US \$300 to 450 billion in international tourism receipts and it lost five to seven years of tourism worth of growth. According to the world travel and tourism council the pandemic COVID-19 situation has cut about 50 million jobs and about 75 million jobs at risk worldwide. While prior studies have explored how pandemics and crises in the tourism sector could be managed, only a few have tackled how the tourism industry, especially in developing countries could be restructured to withstand shocks and remain resilient in the face of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic in the future [3].

The first Coronavirus (COVID-19) case emerged in Ethiopia on 13 March 2020 and the victim was later identified as a 48-year-old Japanese citizen who came to the country from Burkina Faso a week earlier. Upon this news, the Ethiopian government took several preventive measures to make sure the virus does not spread uncontrollably and overwhelm healthcare facilities that are already working to their capacity. However, according to the report of the Ethiopian ministry of health the virus has been spreading in all regions of Ethiopia and will continue to spread unless strong implementation of control measures are implemented. In the recent time in February 2022, there have been 465,792 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 7,346 deaths and a total of 10,975,026 vaccine doses have been administered. During this period, the Ethiopian socio-economic situation had drastically changed by COVID-19. The Ethiopian economy, after COVID-19 induced mobility and activity restrictions around the globe, has faced significant challenges. COVID-19 impacted by global disruptions has considerably affected tourism and hotel business, exports and imports, lack of social interaction and remittances to the country. Currently, Ethiopia has been passing through remittances declining, household consumption significantly affected, impeded economic growth, increased debt risks, high inflation and high unemployment rate and lowered business and tourism. In particular, international tourism has experienced a sharp decline because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is alarming since the revenue per tourist from international tourism is orders of magnitude higher than the revenue per domestic tourist [4].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism resource in Ethiopia

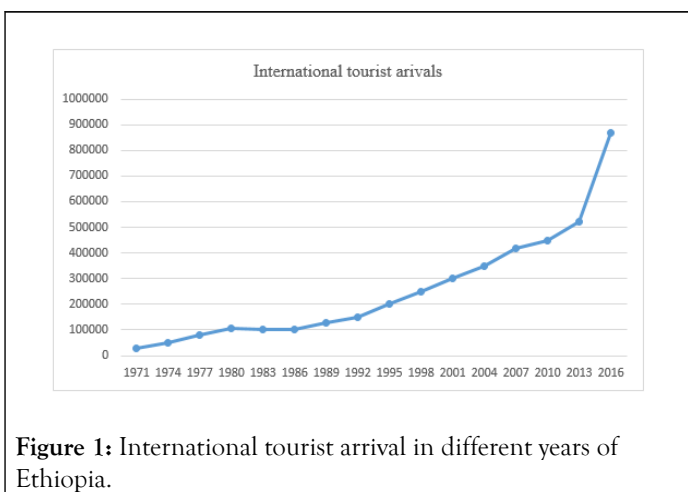
Ethiopia (Abyssinia) is the land of a thousand smiles; home of the ark of the covenant; custodian of one of the world's first great civilizations; the only African country never to lose its independence; a country whose ancient cultures and magnificent landscapes reflect an extraordinary past that has left an indelible mark on the people and their colorful festivals. The

historic route of tourism mainly starts in the northern part of Ethiopia. Because of its advantage of being the center of an ancient civilization, the area is endowed with huge historical and archeological monuments. Ethiopia is rich in a diversity of tangible and intangible heritages, both traditional and modern cultural expressions, ceremonies, festivals, celebrations, rituals and other living expressions and centuries-old expertise in handicraft production. Tangible cultural and natural heritages are that can clearly be seen with our naked eye to exits and resources such as equipment have actual physical existence such as Simien National Park, the monument of Aksum, Fasil Ghebbi, Gondar region, Hara Jugol, the Fortified Historic town, Konso Cultural Landscape, Rock-Hewn Churches and Lalibela. Simien Mountain National Park is a natural heritage but the others are cultural heritages. Intangible heritages exist but that is difficult to describe, understand or measure. Intangible resources such as corporate images, brands and patents and other intellectual property exist in abstraction. It provides communities, groups and individuals with a sense of identity and continuity, helping them to understand their world and giving meaning to their lives and their way of living together. These intangible heritages include Timkat (Epiphany), Meskel, Fichie Chambalaalla, Gada System and Ashenda which are celebrated in different seasons of Ethiopia. Timkat (Epiphany) and Meskel (finding of the true cross) are celebrated by the people who have the religion of Orthodox Tewahdo Church. However, Fichie Chambalaalla, Gada System and Ashenda are celebrated in cultural practices that are transferred from generation to generation. The peaceful coexistence of these religious communities for centuries bears testimony to Ethiopia's social cohesion. Moreover, Ethiopia is a land endowed with immense biodiversity. Ethiopia is also one of the richest and most diversified countries by wildlife species in Africa with several of its protected areas and wetlands. Endowed with great biological diversity of plant, animal and microbial genetic resources. The country has 2970 species of animals and between 6,500-7,000 higher plants consisting of 12% endemics of which the animal species, 320 are mammals of which 55 are endemics 1,249 arthropods with 11 endemics, 200 fish with 40 endemics 240 reptiles with 15 endemics and 71 amphibians with 30 endemics. The country having world heritage sites and a diversity of wildlife species enables the tourism sector to attract more tourists and it plays a great role in building up the image of the country by reflecting the country's ancient history, civilization and unique culture. It also creates social interaction and social bonding between local communities and tourists [5].

Ethiopian tourism trend before the emergence of the pandemic disease COVID-19

Tourism is among the economic and social sectors that are registering rapid growth in the world and nowadays it has been found to be making its contribution to supporting and accelerating national development. Tourism makes a tremendous contribution by serving as a source of foreign exchange, promoting micro and small-scale enterprises, creating employment opportunities and ensuring sustainable development.

The history of tourism is one of the unobserved themes in Ethiopian history, which has received less attention. In Ethiopia, the development of modern tourism as an important economic sector goes back to the imperial regime. Since that period, until the overthrow of the regime in 1974, the development of tourism has shown a remarkable trend in the arrival of tourists, an increase in the number of tourists seen during the imperial regime. Even if the tourism sector has many challenges, it is one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in Ethiopia. The flow of tourists to Ethiopia is increasing from time to time for different purposes (Figure 1).



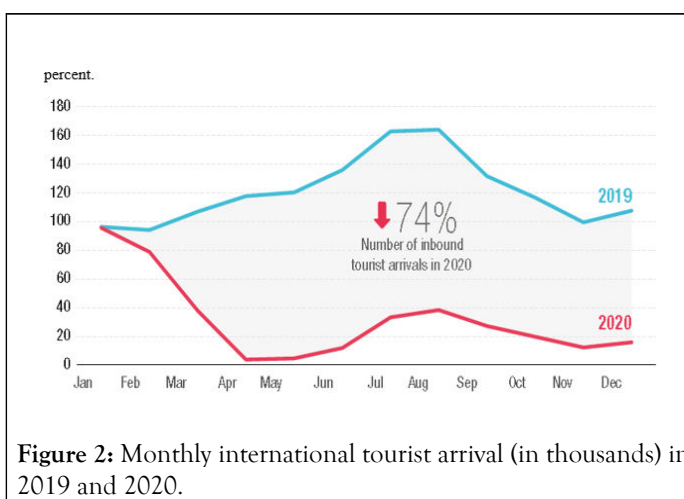
Majorities (59.76%) of guests travel for the purpose of recreation. Most tourists are traveling to Ethiopia to visit the cultural and natural tourist attractions of the country to relax and recreate. Similarly, states that the number one purpose of tourists' travel to Ethiopia is for leisure and holiday. Tourists recognize the country's cultural and historical resources. It is an increasingly important source of industrial development in the world in terms of employment creation and generation of foreign revenue. Ethiopian tourism now accounts for a larger share of foreign exchange receipts and export earnings than any other industry in the world [6].

DISCUSSION

Impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sectors of Ethiopia

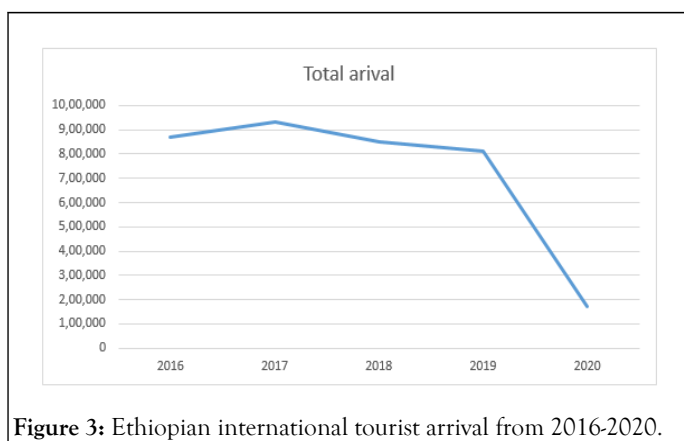
COVID-19 affects every aspect of human life economically and socially across the world. These range from the postponement of many social and cultural events, meetings, games and sporting events, to the shutting down of institutions and centers of learning and the closing of internal and international borders. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions in the global economy. Strong but slowing real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, 10.4% per annum on average in the past 15 years but decelerating from 9% in 2018/19 to 6.2% in 2019. The tourism industry is one of the sectors that are greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of the first quarter of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had brought international travel to an abrupt halt and significantly affected the tourism industry. For many developed and developing

countries, the tourism sector is a major source of employment, government revenue and foreign exchange earnings. However, during the rise of COVID-19, almost all countries have realized travel restrictions of one class or another, such as travel bans, visa controls and isolations. By way of a result, international tourism was almost totally suspended in April and May of 2020. Inbound tourist arrivals declined by 74 percent between January and December 2020, about 1 billion trips. However, if the pre-COVID months of January and February 2020 are excluded (Figure 2), the fall in arrivals amounts to 84 percent.



The most affected regions are North-East Asia, South-East Asia, Oceania, North Africa and South Asia. The least affected regions are North America, Western Europ and the Caribbean. This shows that the greatest impact has fallen on developing countries. The reduction in tourist arrivals across developing nations is relatively consistent, mostly between 60 and 80 percent. The reduction in tourist arrivals in Ethiopia account for 69%.

Ethiopian international tourist arrival 2016-2020: Tourism is among the economic and social sectors that are registering rapid growth in the world and nowadays its contribution to supporting and accelerating national development. The number of international tourist arrivals in Ethiopia increased year to year, the number of arrivals in 2016 was 870,597 and in 2017 933,343. However, the number of arrivals decreased in 2018, which accounts for 849,122 because of the civil war between the Ethiopian federal government and the terrorist TPLF. Moreover, the number of tourist arrivals will decline in 2019 and 2020, which accounts for 811,604 and 173,657 arrivals, respectively [7]. Because COVID-19 has had a significant effect on tourist arrival and revenue in the country. The hotel and tourism sectors and social bonding are among the sectors that are highly susceptible to an external shock such as the COVID-19 pandemic. With government-imposed travel restrictions, social distancing measures and isolation, international tourist travels sharply declined. The effect of these measures is reflected not only in travel but also in other sectors that have a strong linkage with the tourism sector such as the hotel sector (Figure 3).



Tourist arrival based on purpose of visit: Tourism makes a tremendous contribution by serving as a source of foreign exchange, promoting micro and small-scale enterprises, creating employment opportunities and ensuring sustainable development. International tourists are inbound to our country for different purposes such as transit, leisure and holiday, conference, business and others. Depending to the exit survey (Figure 4) below most of the international tourists arrived in our country for the purpose of leisure and holiday. However, after the emergence of covid-19 celebrations of holy days restricted and create social distancing between tourists and local communities. Due to that factor, the number of international tourists based on the purpose of the visit decreased.

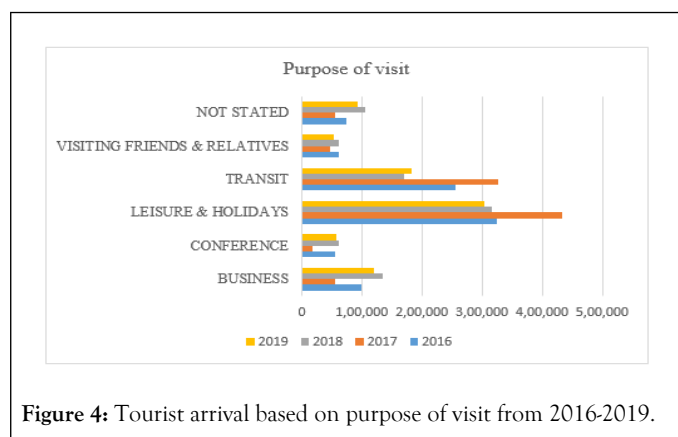


Table 1: Monthly visitor arrivals in Ethiopia from 2016-2019.

Monthly visitors arrival	Year			
	2016	2017	2018	2019
1 st quarter	233251	246864	2070952	184432
January	88286	80582	95622	62773
February	66017	73941	78128	62620
March	78948	92341	97202	59039
2 nd quarter	198017	200674	197794	204973
April	71511	49754	51802	66983

May	61753	51017	66550	68174
June	64753	99903	79442	69816
3 rd quarter	233032	256154	182205	223053
July	89038	97873	72374	78787
August	71543	79083	52608	79713
September	72451	79198	57223	64553
4 th quarter	206297	229652	198171	199145
October	65822	71214	64162	66866
November	72135	78857	65607	66640
December	68340	79581	68402	65639

Tourism growth: Tourism has both direct and indirect impacts on the economy of the hosting country by enhancing the total economic growth of the country. Before COVID-19, travel and tourism had become one of the most important sectors in the world economy [9]. Depending to the 2015 Ethiopian tourism survey data, tourist arrival growth was 0.79% in 2016 and 0.072 in 2017. While after the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic disease tourist arrival growth sharply declined by -0.044% in 2019

(Table 2). On another side, Ethiopian recipients in USD\$ grew by 0.794% in 2016 and declined by -0.0074% USD\$ in 2019 (Table 2). Because COVID-19 proves that pandemic, outbreaks have a much larger destructive impact on the travel, recipient and tourism industries.

Table 2: Tourist arrival and recipient growth in USD\$ from 2016-2019.

Arrival			Recipients	
Year	Count	% growth	In USD\$	% growth
2016	870597	0.7936	3259515168	0.7936
2017	933344	0.0721	3494439936	0.07207
2018	849122	-0.09	3179112768	-0.099
2019	811604	-0.044	3179112768	-0.0074

CONCLUSION

Ethiopia is rich in a diversity of tangible and intangible heritages, both traditional and modern cultural expressions, ceremonies, festivals, celebrations, rituals and other living expressions and centuries-old expertise in handicraft production. Besides that, Ethiopia is a land endowed with immense biodiversity in Africa with several of its protected areas. Owing to that, Ethiopia is one of the tourism destinations in landlocked countries in Africa. Many numbers of tourists were inbound in Ethiopia for leisure and celebration of holy days before the emergence of the novel Coronavirus. It makes a wonderful contribution by serving as a source of foreign exchange, promoting micro and small-scale enterprises, creating employment opportunities and accelerating the country's development. However, the number of tourist arrivals decline in Ethiopia after the novel Coronavirus pandemic

case emerged in Ethiopia. The virus has a significant effect on tourist arrival, revenue and breakout social interaction in the country. The hotel and tourism sectors are among the sectors that are highly vulnerable to the external shock of the COVID-19 pandemic. The reason that government-imposed travel restrictions, social distancing measures and isolation, international tourist travels sharply declined. Hence, the novel coronavirus pandemic has had a great effect on international arrivals and the growth of tourism revenue in Ethiopia.

REFERENCES

1. Gossling S, Scott D, Hall CM. Pandemics, tourism and global change: A rapid assessment of COVID-19. *J Sustain Tour*. 2020;29(1):1-20.
2. Haider N, Yavlinsky A, Simons D, Osman AY, Ntoumi F, Zumla A, et al. Passengers' destinations from China: Low risk of novel

- coronavirus (2019-nCoV) transmission into Africa and South America. *Epidemiol Infect.* 2020;148:e41.
3. Yang Y, Zhang H, Chen X. Coronavirus pandemic and tourism: Dynamic stochastic general equilibrium modeling of infectious disease outbreak. *Ann Tour Res.* 2020;83:102913.
 4. Farzanegan MR, Gholipour HF, Feizi M, Nunkoo R, Andargoli AE. International tourism and outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19): A cross-country analysis. *J Travel Res.* 2021;60(3):687-692.
 5. Addis Y, Abate D. Social work responses and household-level determinants of coronavirus preparedness in rural Ethiopia. *Soc Work Public Health.* 2021;36(2):85-97.
 6. Rogerson CM, Baum T. COVID-19 and African tourism research agendas. *Dev South Afr.* 2020;37(5):727-741.
 7. Omitola A, Alo FS, Olawole OS, Omitola B, Ayeni AA, Akinrinde OO. Tourism mobility and the challenges of coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) in Nigeria. *J ReAtt Ther Dev.* 2023;6(9s): 1273-1278.
 8. Soliku O, Kyiire B, Mahama A, Kubio C. Tourism amid COVID-19 pandemic: Impacts and implications for building resilience in the eco-tourism sector in Ghana's Savannah region. *Heliyon.* 2021;7(9):e07892.
 9. Tafesse A. The historic route in Ethiopian tourism development. *Afr J Hosp Tour Leis.* 2016;5(2):1-3.