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CONTENTS

| Sr. No. | TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S) | Page No. |
|---------|--|----------|
| 1. | CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF BRITISH TELECOM BROADBAND CUSTOMERS HYDER KAMRAN & NITIN RAJ SRIVASTAVA | 1 |
| 2. | INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, SOCIAL INTERACTION AND DEMOGRAPHICAL VARIABLES ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF TWO LEVELS OF EMPLOYEES OF SAUDI ARABIA DR. NASSER S. AL-KAHTANI | 7 |
| 3. | FINANCIAL DEREGULATIONS AND PRODUCTIVITY CHANGE IN PAKISTAN BANKING INDUSTRY RAFAQET ALI & MUHAMMAD AFZAL | 12 |
| 4. | BRILLIANT INTELLIGENCE AND INTERNAL MARKETING EFFECT ON ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR- STUDY OF EMPLOYEE IN HIGH TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY FENG-LI LIN, JUI-YING HUNG & KUO-SONG LU | 17 |
| 5. | AN IDENTIFICATION OF CRITICAL STRATEGIC SUCCESS FACTORS THAT MAKES ETHIOPIA ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE TOURIST DESTINATION DR. GETIE ANDUALEM IMIRU | 25 |
| 6. | BARRIERS TO KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION IN UNIVERSITIES ROYA DARABI & AHMAD GHASEMI | 32 |
| 7. | AN ASSESSMENT OF BANGLADESHI COMMERCIAL BANKS TREND TOWARDS UNIVERSAL BANKING MD. AL MAMUN | 37 |
| 8. | COMPARISON OF IMAGE ENHANCEMENT TECHNIQUES ABDUL RASAK ZUBAIR | 44 |
| 9. | STATIONARY DEMAND CURVE MODEL UNDER JUST IN TIME INVENTORY SYSTEM DR. KAVITA DAVE & DR. NITIN D. SHAH | 53 |
| 10. | A STUDY OF LEADERSHIP STYLES IN PUBLIC-SECTOR ENTERPRISES (A CASE STUDY OF BHARATH EARTH MOVERS LIMITED) K. V. GEETHA DEVI, DR. G. RAMA KRISHNA REDDY & DR. G. HARANATH | 55 |
| 11. | A STUDY ON CONSUMER AWARENESS, USAGE PENETRATION AND ADOPTION OF 3G MOBILE SERVICES IN INDIA SARIKA KHANNA & DR. NISHA AGARWAL | 64 |
| 12. | THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE STRESS ON HEALTH: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE NAGALAKSHMI. P & DR. K. JAWAHAR RANI | 69 |
| 13. | EMPLOYMENT TO WOMEN IN INDIAN BEEDI INDUSTRY AN OPPORTUNITY OR THREAT: A CASE STUDY OF NIZAMABAD DISTRICT GIRISH KUMAR PAINOLI | 72 |
| 14. | CELEBRITY ADVERTISEMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON BUYING BEHAVIOUR DR. S. BANUMATHY & DR. M. SUBASINI | 76 |
| 15. | INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY ON QUALITY OF WORK LIFE OF TEACHERS J. PARAMESWARI & DR. S. KADHIRAVAN | 79 |
| 16. | LEADERSHIP ENHANCEMENT THROUGH ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (LEAD) AT ALPHA PHARMACEUTICALS INDIA PRIVATE LTD. DR. GOWRI JOSHI & DR. BHARATI DESHPANDE | 83 |
| 17. | ANALYSIS OF CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION IN INDIAN BANKING SECTOR DR. ROSY KALRA | 86 |
| 18. | DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPLOYEES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY IN INDIA DR. DEEPAKSHI GUPTA | 93 |
| 19. | IMPACT OF ANIMATION ON CHILDREN J. J. SOUNDARARAJ & DR. D. V. S. JANAKIDAS | 98 |
| 20. | A CASE STUDY ON TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT WITH REFERENCE TO NUTRINE CONFECTIONERY COMPANY LTD., CHITTOOR (A.P) C. RAJANIKANTH | 109 |
| 21. | SHIFTING PARADIGMS IN TEACHING PEDAGOGY OF B-SCHOOLS PRITAM P. KOTHARI, AVINASH A. DHAVAN & SHIVGANGA C. MINDARGI | 116 |
| 22. | IMPERATIVES FOR GLOBAL RETAILERS EYEING INDIAN RETAIL MARKET- A STUDY OF WAL MART DR. SIDDHARATHA S BHARDWAJ & DR. MAMTA RANI | 122 |
| 23. | CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS E-BANKING SERVICES OF THE COMMERCIAL BANKS IN CUDDALORE DISTRICT RAVICHANDRAN & DR. A. MURUGARATHINAM | 125 |
| 24. | CUSTOMER RETENTION CHALLENGES IN THE HYPERCOMPETITIVE INDIAN INDUSTRIES NIDHI KHURANA & AJEET KUMAR PATHAK | 128 |
| 25. | SERVICES INNOVATION INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF THE ORGANIZATION WITH THE HELP OF ICT DR. RAJESH N. PAHURKAR | 133 |
| 26. | CREATING A SYSTEMATIC TRADING PLAN WITH AT THE MONEY CALENDAR CALL SPREAD IN NIFTY PRIYANKA VASHISHT | 137 |
| 27. | GENDER EMPOWERMENT IN PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY OF BHARAT COKING COAL LIMITED, DHANBAD DR. N. C. PAHARIYA & ABHINAV KUMAR SHRIVASTAVA | 143 |
| 28. | RETAIL STORE SELECTION CRITERIA USED BY CUSTOMERS IN DELHI-NCR: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RETAILERS ANOOP KUMAR GUPTA | 147 |
| 29. | CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT IN TELECOM INDUSTRY – WITH REFERENCE TO BHARTI AIRTEL, ANDHRA PRADESH DR. K. RAJI REDDY, DR. D. THIRUVENGALA CHARY & SHATHABOINA. RAJU | 152 |
| 30. | INITIATIVE TAKEN TOWARDS RETAIL MARKETING IN INDIA WITH REFERENCE TO LUCKNOW CITY (U.P.), INDIA SMRITI SRIVASTAVA & RAJEEV GUPTA | 156 |
| | REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK | 161 |

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AN IDENTIFICATION OF CRITICAL STRATEGIC SUCCESS FACTORS THAT MAKES ETHIOPIA ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE TOURIST DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to identify the critical strategic success factors and promotion strategies used by the government and other stakeholders for making the country as one of the most attractive tourist destination in the world. The study analyzed the responses of management members and experts of Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MOCT), management and senior experts working in travel and tour operators, ex-managers and experts of MOCT and authorities in the field. The purpose of the questionnaire was directed to these groups of people to identify the strategic success factor that makes the country as one of the most competitive and attractive tourist destination. The most significant factors related to Economic and Social Factors for sustainable growth of tourism, destination Management Processes Factors and Future Growth and Sustainable Development Factors were identified using factor analysis- Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Tourism marketers and policy makers are provided with the requested information related to the most critical success factors such as sustainable growth of tourism, destination management processes as well as future growth and sustainable development that will make the country as one of the most tourist attractive destination.

KEYWORDS

Destination, growth, development, factors, promotion, success.

INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is one of the largest countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The country covers 1.14 million square kilometer and occupying a large part of the horn of Africa. According to the world fact book (2007), the land boundaries which consists of 5,328km border countries total where Djibouti 349 km, Eritrea 912 km, Kenya 861 km, Somalia 1,600 km and Sudan 1,606 km.



Map of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE)

Ethiopia is beautifully endowed with many kinds of flora and is natural heaven for many kinds of wildlife and avifauna. More than 800 species of birds reside in Ethiopia of which 23 are endemic to the country. There are more than 100 mammal species, of which seven of the big mammals are unique to Ethiopia.

The mountains, the lakes and the rivers of the country have many fascinating features. There are 25 mountains in central and northern Ethiopia, which are over 400 meters high above sea level and 60 of them are over 3000 meters. The 4th – highest pick of Africa's Mountain Ras Dashen is also located in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a country enjoying great geographical features ranging from highest peak at Ras Dashen ...4,550 meters above sea level...the Afar Depression...110m below sea level. More than 50% of the country lies above 1,500 meters.

There are broadly three climatic zones; the 'kola' or hot lowlands (below approximately 1,500 meters), 'weyna Dega' (1,500-2,400 meters) and "Dega "above 2,400 meters with a mean annual temperature that range from 10-16°C, 16-29°C in the 'Weyna Dega' and 29-33°C in the 'Kolla'. It has colorful and unique national festivals, arts and handicrafts, music, folklore, native life and customs but it can not make use of all this inventory of tourist attraction points.

Ethiopia is a country of "thirteen months of sunshine". The principal rainy season is from June –September, while it is relatively dry for the rest of the months except a little interruption of rain in February and March. The average temperature of the country is 18 degree centigrade in the hottest seasons and 14 Degree centigrade in the rainy season. The average annual rainfall of the central highlands is 1,000 mm. The coldest nights in the country are registered in November and December while the wettest Months are July and august. Humidity varies between 50 % and 80 % throughout the year.

Ethiopia is rich in History. Its history extends in the pre-historic period when written history was not available. Among other things, the eight world heritage sites namely the Axsum obelisks, the castles of Gondar, the Semien mountain National Park, the rock-hewan churches of Lalibela, the Stale of Tiya, Hadar (where Lucy was found) the lower Omo valley paleoantropological site and the walled city of Harar registered by UNESCO as world heritages, testify Ethiopia's might of ancient times and the endowment of the country with significant tourist attractions site.

The Ethiopian Airlines (EAL) is one of Africa's space-selling airlines with the fastest growing system of international routes within and outside of the continent and as well as complementing travels within the country.

As cited in <http://www.csa.gov.et> the census carried out at a national level showed that the population of Ethiopia up to December, 2008 has risen to 76.9 million (Nearly 77 Million). According to the world fact book (2007), the GDP - composition by sector consists agriculture: 47%, Industry 13.2% and Services 39.8%; GDP - real growth rate 11.1% and GDP - per capita (PPP) \$700

The country is endowed with unique combination of natural and cultural heritages, impressive scenery, suitable climate, rich flora and fauna and recognized archaeological sites.

Its capital Addis Ababa is the venue and unchallenged political capital of Africa being the seat of many international organizations including the African Union (AU) and the United Nations Economic Commissions for Africa (UNECA).

Ethiopia is truly a land of contrasts and extremes; a land of remote and wild places. Some of the highest and most stunning places on the African continent are found here, such as the jaggedly carved Semien Mountains, one of United Nations Education, Science, Culture Organization's (UNESCO's) World Heritage Sites - and some of the lowest, such as the hot but fascinating Danakil Depression, with its sulphur fumaroles and lunar-like landscape. Ethiopia is old; old beyond all imaginations. As Abyssinia, its culture and traditions date back over 3,000 years. And far earlier than that lived "Lucy" or Dinknesh, meaning 'thou art wonderful', as she is known to the Ethiopians, whose remains were found in a corner of this country of mystery and contrasts.

According to Hancock (1994), Ethiopia is a land of beautiful scenery mountains, canyons, oral creeks, cliffs, rivers, great many lakes, waterfalls, forests grasslands, settlement features like towns, cities, villages, historical remains, archeological remains, open countryside, beaches art galleries caravans, depressions, resort complexes.

Endowed with all the above natural and historical heritages Ethiopia is not able to generate sufficient amount foreign currency from tourism. This is where the paradox comes. Thus, one has to question himself what will make Ethiopia a tourist destination. What are the critical strategic success factors and promotional strategies that need be taken to make the country one of the most attractive destination in the world?

Critical success factors are "events, conditions, circumstances or activities. Specifically, they are limited number of areas in which results, if they are satisfactory, will ensure the successful competitive performance of the organization" (Jenster, 1987). Critical success factors are sub-goals, end -statements, characteristics, conditions or variables that are critical for the attainment of the organization's missions and ultimate success" (Hardaker and Ward, 1987). The critical success factors are resources, skills and attributes of an organization that are essential to deliver success" (Lynch, 2003).

Critical success factors are identified and integrated by using four perspectives, namely, sustainable growth, the customer, destination management processes, and learning and growth.

a) Sustainable growth perspectives measure the sustainable growth that the tourism destination generates for all the stakeholders. According to Hassen (2000), it is critical for destination development plans to be compatible with environment and social integrity for the tourism industry to maintain the economic viability. World Travel and Tourism Council (2001) notes that sustainable travel and tourism development relies upon policies which support harmonious relationships among travelers, local communities, the private sector and governments to balance natural, built and cultural environments with economic growth and stability:

b) Customer perspective: Kaplan and Norton (1996) divide customer value proportions into three parts: customer acquisitions, satisfaction and retentions. The critical success area identified for customer acquisition is destination image. Various works on tourism, particularly those of Fakey and Crompton (1991) and Kim (1998) indicate that the primary goal in promoting a destination and acquiring customers is to project a positive image to potential tourists so that the product becomes desirable.

c) Destination management processes: Various areas and levels of government are involved in the promotion, regulation, presentation, planning, monitoring, maintenance, coordination, enhancement and organization of tourism resources at the macro level (Dwyer, 2001). As Buhalis (2000) noted, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), which include convention and visitor bureaus and national and regional tourism organizations, have overall responsibility for the entire destination product and through incentives and policies facilitate the development of product and create local partnerships for the delivery of seamless experiences.

d) Learning and growth perspective: identifies the infrastructure that the destination must build to create long-term growth and improvement (Kaplan and Norton, 1996). Destinations are unlikely to meet their sustainable growth targets by simply using today's technologies and capabilities. International competitions also require that destinations continually improve their products, infrastructure, systems and capabilities for delivery to customers and stakeholders. Kaplan and Norton (1996) noted that learning and growth comes from three principal sources: people, systems and organizational procedures. Jonker et al (2004) tried to investigate the most important critical factors for making South Africa as a tourism destination using the strategic integration of destination success factors (Kaplan and Norton, 1998).

METHODS

This study analyzed the opinion of management members and experts of Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MOCT), Management and senior experts working in travel and tour operators, ex-managers and experts of MOCT and authorities in the field.

The purpose of the questionnaire was directed to these groups of people to identify the strategic success factor that makes the country as one of the most competitive and attractive tourist destination. The questionnaire tried to solicit answers for various critical strategic success factors grouped in three broader headings: Sustainable growth, destination management process and future growth and sustainable development of tourism in Ethiopia so as to make Ethiopia as one of the most competitive and attractive tourist destination in the world. The marketing experts were used to facilitate the filling of the questionnaires at each level in the respective stakeholder organizations while individual experts and authorities were contacted on informal lines.

The number of questionnaires distributed were 150 and all were distributed both at federal and regional state level. The number of usable questionnaires was 78. The actual response rate was 52 % (78/150). The sample size for this study thus comprises of 78 respondents representing major stakeholders involving Ethiopian Tourism Industry. Regarding sample size determination, Yoon (2002) argues that, in general, there is no correct sample size, although larger sample sizes are always preferable. Once the data's were collected, then the questionnaires were edited, coded, entered and processed using SPSS. During analysis both Factor analysis and stepwise multiple regression analysis methods were applied, wherever they were deemed appropriate.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

STRATEGIC FACTORS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF TOURISM IN ETHIOPIA

Factor Analysis was used to identify the most important and critical strategic economic and socio- environmental factors that will help Ethiopia to be one of the most attractive tourist destination in the world.

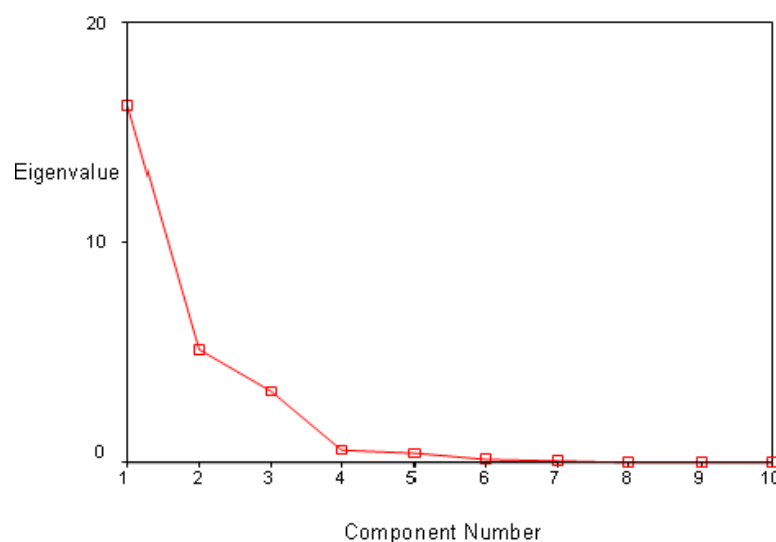
TABLE 1: STRATEGIC FACTORS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF TOURISM

| Economic and Social Factors | Factor Loadings | Eigen Values | Variation (%) |
|---|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Component 1 | | 5.143 | 51.428 |
| Tourism's contribution to Ethiopia's GDP | .952 | | |
| Foreign exchange earned | .950 | | |
| Ethiopia's share of the long haul tourism market | .923 | | |
| Volume of revenue composition of foreign portfolio | .896 | | |
| Number of tourist arrivals to Ethiopia | .499 | | |
| Component 2 | | 2.939 | 29.392 |
| Increased community involvement in tourism | .963 | | |
| Transformation of tourism industry | .902 | | |
| Implementation of responsible environmental practices | .901 | | |
| Increased entrepreneurial opportunities for disadvantaged persons | .885 | | |
| Tourism contribution to employment & job creation | .630 | | |
| Cumulative variance (%) | | | 80.821 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Table 1 represents the factor loadings for each variable on the components after rotations. Each number represents the partial correlation between the item and the rotated factor. The first component deals with economic performance and contains 5 items while the second category deals with socio-environmental factors with the same number of items. All of the above tourism sustainable growth factors are significant and none of them are dropped because all the rotated factor loadings are above 0.4.

Graph 1: Critical Strategic Factors on Sustainable Tourism in Ethiopia



According to the Eigen value and variance (%) all the two components explain 80.821% of the variance, while 19.8 % of the variance is unexplained. From the two components, component 1 is found to be the most important explaining 51.428 % of the variance while component 2 explains only 29.392 % of the variance.

Graph 1 Scree plot explains the change in variation at each factor. The Scree plot suggests in the ten factor solution the two components contribute a larger part of the data, while other component numbers are contributing a little in the variation as we move to the right.

CRITICAL AND STRATEGIC SUCCESS FACTORS OF DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PROCESSES IN ETHIOPIA

National management process factors that ensure the success of tourism in Ethiopia were factor analyzed using Varimax with Kaiser Normalization method as follows. Data's collected using a 5 point rating scale on 22 factors was analyzed below.

Table 2 represents the factor loadings for each variable on the components after rotations. Each number represents the partial correlation between the item and the rotated factor. The components deals with destination organization, and coordination, destination marketing, human resource management, responsible strategic management and consists of related items under each grouping as indicated in the table. All of the destination management process factors are significant and none of them are dropped because all the rotated factor loadings are above 0.4.

TABLE 2: CRITICAL STRATEGIC SUCCESS FACTORS FOR DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PROCESS IN ETHIOPIA

| Destination Management Processes Factors | Factor Loadings | Eigen Values | Variation (%) |
|---|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Component I | | 9.774 | 44.425 |
| Providing strategic directions | .924 | | |
| Formulated & implementing integrated destination strategies | .915 | | |
| Ensuring appropriate funding to sustain destination marketing organization | .858 | | |
| Determining relevant, viable & sustainable target markets | .851 | | |
| Putting mechanisms to preserve cultural integrity & authenticity | .825 | | |
| Packaging theming & routing current tourism attractions & experience & developing those with potential | .822 | | |
| Continuous market analysis | .664 | | |
| Ensuring appropriate destination marketing organizational all levels | .630 | | |
| Ensuring integrated promotion strategies(advertising,exhibitions,internet,workshop) | .605 | | |
| Component II | | 3.001 | 13.642 |
| Promoting the importance of responsible tourism practices on the part of tourists, communities & the tourism industry | .892 | | |
| Incentivising tourism stakeholders who adhere to the principles of sustainable development | .873 | | |
| Putting mechanisms to protect the interest of local communities | .675 | | |
| Effective recruitment training & development of distribution marketing staff | .659 | | |
| Component III | | 2.457 | 11.169 |
| Implementing appropriate benchmarking, monitoring & evaluation mechanisms | .940 | | |
| Continuous coordination & cooperation between tourism stakeholders | .830 | | |
| Ensuring effective distribution & sales | .660 | | |
| Ensuring environmental & social impact assessments as a base for future tourism development | .482 | | |
| Component IV | | 1.976 | 8.983 |
| Implementing appropriate transformation strategies | .905 | | |
| Component V | | 1.711 | 7.777 |
| Developing an effective branding strategy for destination | .690 | | |
| Developing an effective positioning strategy for destination | .654 | | |
| Ensuring appropriate labor relation & negotiations strategies & processes | .237 | | |
| Component VI | | 1.009 | 4.585 |
| Providing appropriate career paths | .851 | | |
| Cumulative variance (%) | | | 90.581 |

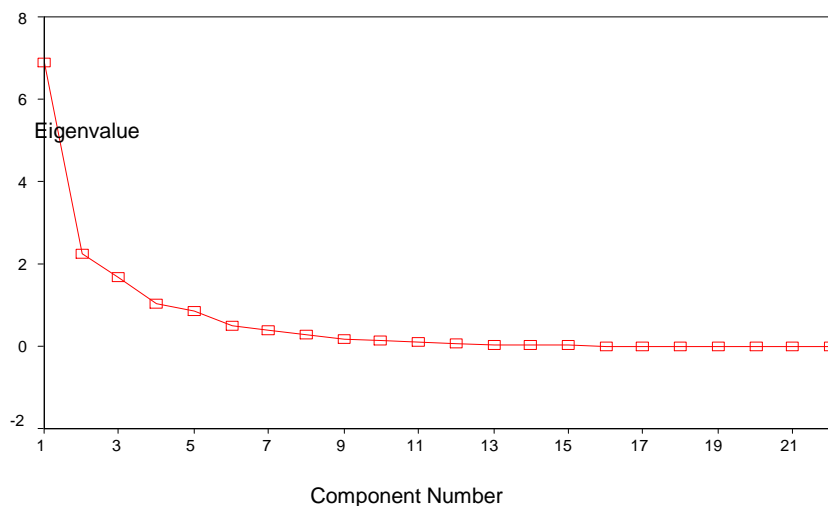
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

According to the Eigen value and variance (%) all the six components explain 90.581% of the variance, while 19.42 % of the variance is unexplained. From the six components, component 1 is found to be the most important explaining 44.425 % of the variance while component six explains only 4.585 % of the variance.

Graph 2: Destination Management Process in Ethiopia



The Scree plot explains the change in variation at each factor. The Scree plot suggests that the six factor solution contributes the larger part of the data and from component number 7 onwards, the eigenvalues are getting smaller and smaller with a little change in the variation contributed.

TABLE 3: CRITICAL AND STRATEGIC FACTORS FOR FUTURE GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

| Future Growth and Sustainable Development Factors | Factor Loadings | Eigen Values | Variation (%) |
|---|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Component I | | 5.449 | 30.270 |
| Exploiting new market opportunities & focusing on new market segments | .904 | | |
| Development of new airline alliances | .870 | | |
| Upgrading and further developing visitor services & facilities | .831 | | |
| Development of new attractions & experiences | .796 | | |
| Development of new tour routes & tour packages | .710 | | |
| Component II | | 4.234 | 23.523 |
| Provision of appropriate public transport systems , roads, airports, rail ports | .934 | | |
| Computerized reservation system | .930 | | |
| Market research & intelligence | .767 | | |
| Safety & security management | .636 | | |
| Customer care programmes | .631 | | |
| Component III | | 2.851 | 15.837 |
| Entrepreneurial support programmes | .884 | | |
| Community tourism awareness programmes | .817 | | |
| Integrated systems of information technology | .791 | | |
| Component III | | 2.208 | 12.265 |
| Responsible destination planning and resource usage | .930 | | |
| Road signage & information networks | .825 | | |
| Optimal utilization of the internet & other technology-based tools(CD-ROMs) | .666 | | |
| Skills training & education | .617 | | |
| Provision of appropriate infrastructure (water, electricity) | .408 | | |
| Cumulative variance (%) | | | 81.896 |

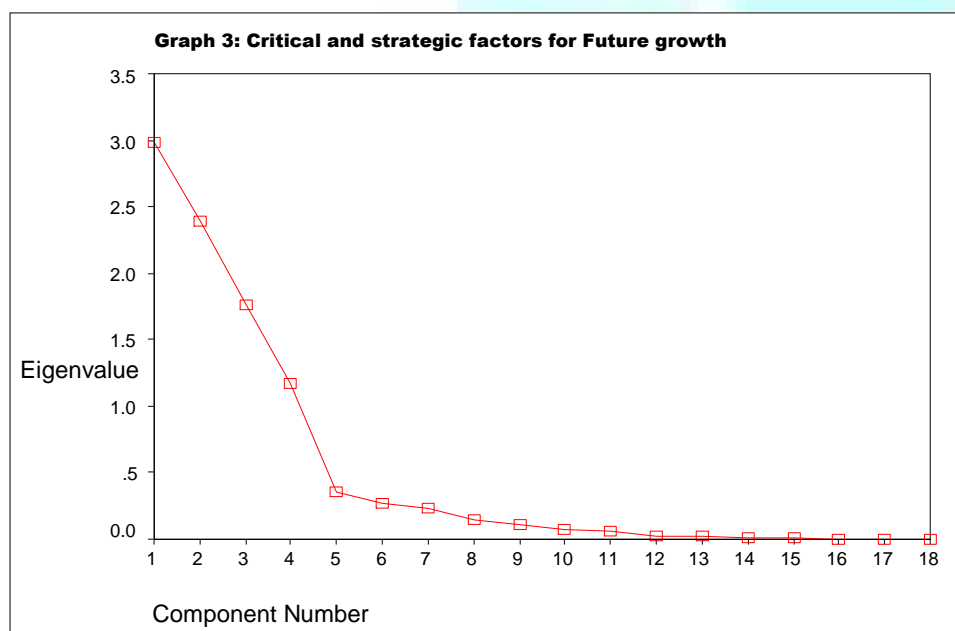
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 3 represents the factor loadings for each variable on the components after rotations. Each number represents the partial correlation between the item and the rotated factor. The components deal with product and market development, infrastructure development and management, people development, system development and usage consists of related items under each grouping as indicated in the table.

All of the above destination management process factors are significant and none of them are dropped because all the rotated factor loadings are above 0.4. According to the Eigen value and variance (%) all the six components explain 81.896% of the variance, while 18.04 % of the variance is unexplained. From the six components, component 1 is found to be the most important explaining 30.270 % of the variance while component three explains only 12.265 % of the variance. If we further analyze the table component wise, Component 1 is highly loaded on exploiting new market opportunities and focusing on new market segments and so followed by development of new airline alliances. Component 2 is highly loaded on provision of appropriate public transport systems, roads, airports, rail ports.



The Scree plot (graph 2) explains the change in variation at each factor. The Scree plot suggests that the three factor solution contributes the larger part of the data and from component number 4 onwards the eigenvalues are getting smaller and smaller with a little change in the variation contributed.

PROMOTION BUDGET AND REVENUE GENERATED BY TOURIST TRAFFIC IN ETHIOPIA

H₀: There is no significant relationship among promotion budget, tourist traffic and revenue generated from tourism marketing in Ethiopia.

CORRELATION AMONG PROMOTION BUDGET, TOURIST TRAFFIC AND REVENUE GENERATED FROM TOURISM**TABLE 4: CORRELATION BETWEEN PROMOTION BUDGET, TOURIST TRAFFIC AND REVENUE GENERATED**

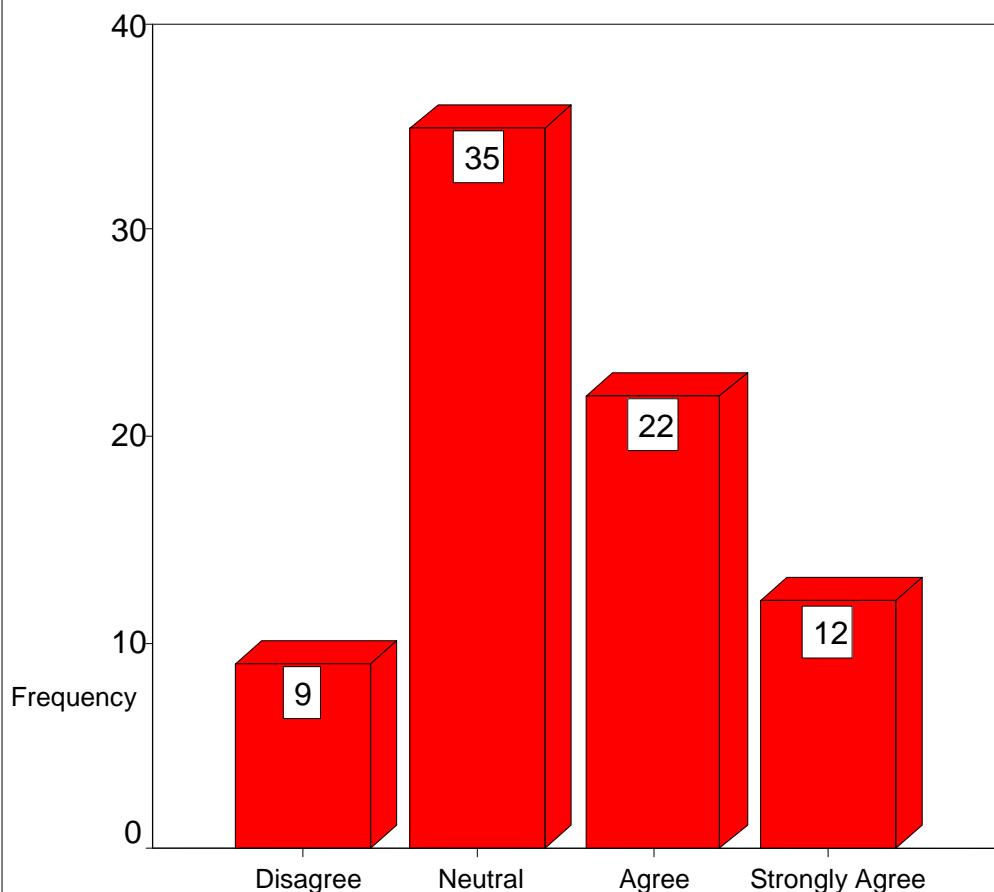
| | | Promotion Budget | Tourist Traffic | Revenue Generated |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Promotion Budget | Pearson Correlation | 1 | 1.000(**) | 1.000(**) |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | . | . |
| | N | 78 | 78 | 78 |
| Tourist Traffic | Pearson Correlation | 1.000(**) | 1 | 1.000(**) |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | . | . |
| | N | 78 | 78 | 78 |
| Revenue Generated | Pearson Correlation | 1.000(**) | 1.000(**) | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | . | . |
| | N | 78 | 78 | 78 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There is a perfect positive correlation among Promotion Budget, Tourist Traffic and Revenue Generated. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected. However, promotion budget figure was confined to exhibition work only; for there is no consolidated data at a national level.

OVERALL AGREEMENTS ON ETHIOPIA AS ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE INTERNATIONAL DESTINATION

The over all attraction of Ethiopia as one of the most attractive international tourism destination; provided that the above critical strategic factors are given priority by the government and other stakeholders, given by the respondents, is consolidated here in under.

Graph 4: Over all attractiveness of Ethiopia as an international destination

Over all attractiveness of Ethiopia as an international destination

The above critical strategic success factors identified will make Ethiopia as one of the most attractive international tourist destination. 45 % of the respondents took a neutral stand, 28% agreed, while 15% strongly agreed and 12 % disagreed that these factors will make Ethiopia as one of the most attractive international destination.

NATIONAL TOURISM PROMOTION STRATEGIES USED BY THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT

The promotion strategies currently used by the Ethiopian government to promote the country are summarized as follows:

1. Tourist brochures and folders are principal tools available to government tourist office at federal and regional and destination levels(locals);
2. Press releases;
3. Display materials which includes posters, cardboard stands, articles of handicrafts;
4. Exhibitions- participating in world tourism travel markets undertaken at international levels;
5. Web sites;
6. Use of Ethiopian missions abroad to promote the country as an integral part of economic diplomacy;

7. Use of Ethiopian airline, one of the best airlines in Africa, to promote the country using magazines, flyers etc.

CONCLUSIONS

The critical strategic success factor to make Ethiopia as one of the most attractive tourist destination in the world was examined. Ideas on critical strategic success factors to make Ethiopia as one of the most attractive destinations were solicited from tourism organizations both private and public. This study examined critical success factors that make the country as one of the most competitive tourist destination from three broad perspectives which consisted of sustainable growth of tourism, destination management processes and future growth and sustainable development. The strategic critical success factors were analyzed using Varimax Kaiser Normalization. /Factor Analysis.

The sustainable growth of tourism in Ethiopia consists of economic and socio-environmental sub-factors. The questionnaires were developed to measure the economic performance of Ethiopia as an international tourism destination and the level of contribution of international tourism in meeting Ethiopia's social and environmental objectives on a 5-point rating scale, where, 1= not at all significant and 5 = absolutely significant. The result of the study showed two major components. The economic dimensions (component 1) explained 51.428 % of the variance while the socio-environmental dimensions (component 2) explained only 29.392 % of the variation with a cumulative effect 80.821%.

The destination management processes consisted of destination organization and co-ordination, destination marketing, human resource management, strategic destination management and lastly responsible management. The data collected was analyzed by using factor analysis (Varimax with Kaiser Normalization). The questionnaires were developed to measure the above destination managements processes on a 5-point rating scale, where, 1= not important and 5= extremely important. The result showed six components. Where component 1 resulted in 44.425% of the variation, component 6 showed in 4.585% of the variation within a cumulative variation of 90.582%.

The items within component 1 consisted of providing strategic directions, formulated and implementing integrated destination strategies, ensuring appropriate funding to sustain destination marketing organization, determining relevant, viable and sustainable target markets, putting mechanisms to preserve cultural integrity and authenticity, packaging theming and routing current tourism attractions and experience and developing those with potential, ensuring appropriate destination marketing organizational all levels, ensuring integrated promotion strategies advertising, exhibitions, internet and workshop.

The future growth and sustainable development consisted of product and market development, infrastructure development and management, people development, systems development and usage. Factor analysis with Varimax Kaiser Normalization was used to analyze the data. The questionnaires were developed to measure the above critical success factors related to future growth and sustainable development on a 5-point rating scale, where, 1= not important and 5= extremely important. The result showed six components. The future growth and sustainable development resulted in three major components. Component 1 is found to be the most important explaining 30.270 % of the variance while component 3 explains only 12.265 % of the variance with a cumulative variation of 81.896. Further analysis of the table discloses Component 1 as highly loaded on exploiting new market opportunities and focusing on new market segments and so followed by development of new airline alliances, while Component 2 is highly loaded on provision of appropriate public transport systems, roads, airports, rail ports. The above critical strategic success factors identified will make Ethiopia as one of the most attractive international tourist destination. 45 % of the respondents took a neutral stand, 28% agreed while 15% strongly agreed and 12 % disagreed that these factors will make Ethiopia as one of the most attractive international destination. The result of the study demonstrated that there is a lot to be done to make the country as one of the most attractive destination for tourists for the major percentage of respondents were taking a neutral stand.

The relationship between promotion budget and tourism traffic and revenue generated from tourism was examined using correlation analysis (Pearson correlation). The result showed a perfect correlation among the three variables (promotion budget, tourist traffic and revenue generated). The main promotional strategies used by the Ethiopian Government to promote tourism in Ethiopia included the following. Tourist brochures and folders are principal tools available in every government tourist office at federal and regional levels as well as at destination levels (locals); press releases; display materials which includes posters, cardboard stands, articles of handicrafts; exhibitions- participating in world tourism travel markets undertaken at international levels; Ethiopian Tourism commission web sites; use of Ethiopian missions abroad to promote the country as an integral part of economic diplomacy and use of Ethiopian airline, one of the best airline in Africa, to promote the country using magazines, flyers, etc.

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