Tourism as a Tool for National Development in South Africa.

Opeoluwa Biao
Department of Politics & Administrative Studies (PAS), University of Botswana
Gaborone-Botswana

Abstract: This article reviews the potentials of the tourism sector in South Africa and shows how this sector can contribute to national development. It however, identifies a potential obstacle to the realization of this dream in the form of the current high rate of crime in South Africa. The paper identifies three major types of crime (petty, grand and violent crime) known to South Africa, but pinpoints violent crime as the most detrimental to the potential growth of tourism. Violent crime has the capability of holding back many tourists and in turn making the tourism industry fail. Crime therefore according to this paper could and has the potential of ruining the South African tourism industry and denying the country a good portion of its development.

The paper ends with the assumption that unemployment is at the base of the growing South African crime rate and recommends support of the informal economy sector as one way of reducing crime in the country.

Introduction

Tourism is an important sector for many countries, especially developing countries.

Tourism is a powerful vehicle for economic growth and job creation all over the world. The tourism sector is directly and indirectly responsible for 8.8 percent of the world’s jobs (employing 258 million); 9.1 percent of the world’s GDP (US$6 trillion); 5.8 percent of the world’s exports (US$1.1 trillion); and 4.5 percent of the world’s investment (US$652 billion) [Christie et al, 2013:1]. This brief elucidation highlights the influence tourism has on development in a country, “Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes”. [Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006: 7].

South Africa is ranked by the World Bank as an upper-middle-income country [World Bank, 2005; Neff, 2006]. South Africa however, has one of the highest inequality levels in the world, in which poverty is much more topical due to the history and depth of inequality in assets, incomes and opportunities [Ngwenya & Magongo, 2014]. The tourism sector if well managed and directed has the potential of unleashing a yield of benefits for South Africa. Tourism could be viewed as ‘an invitation to the rest of the world to experience your country’s uniqueness’. South Africa is unique, its beautiful environment facilitates for the promotion of tourism, its cultural heritage especially that of Black South Africans is seen as distinctive, just as one may view the Chinese culture. Also its historical distinctiveness as a nation, that is the peculiar colonial experience (Apartheid) that the country underwent, makes it a popular tourist destination. Curious tourists wish therefore to come and visit Robben Island where former President Nelson Mandela was kept for almost three decades. The apartheid museum is also a point of attraction for tourists. The suggestion by the latter does not in any way indicate a validation or justification of apartheid in South Africa. Apartheid in South Africa was a crime against humanity, and viewed in many circles as an infamous evil. Civilized men are aware that no race is of more importance than another.

Moving on, South Africa has the potential to be a very powerful Sub-Saharan African State. Tourism is a sector that has the prospective to facilitate development in South Africa greatly, and the government has seemed to have noted that. The South African government has earmarked tourism as a key sector with excellent potential for growth: the government aims to increase tourism’s contribution, both direct and indirectly, to the economy from the 2009 baseline of R189, 4-billion (7.9% of GDP) to R499-billion by 2020 [National Department of Tourism, 2012]. From the subsequent paragraphs, there seems to be a nuance that there exists a factor or a group of factors dissuading South Africa from benefiting fully of the yields of tourism. We shall now explore a major factor in South Africa which potentially seems to be a sturdy impediment, that factor is crime.
Tourism and National Development

Development is a concept which is contested both theoretically and politically. It is inherently complex and ambiguous. Recently it has taken on the limited meaning of the practice of development agencies, especially aimed at reducing poverty and the achievement of Millennium development goals [Thomas, 2004: 1-2]. Whichever the case, the terminology development connotes a desirable state, one that includes progress and prosperity. Developing nations like South Africa stand to benefit and thus contribute to its development through the yields of tourism.

The UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) a specialized agency of the United Nations, has highlighted the importance of tourism especially for developing nations. Tourism is a major activity indicated the UNWTO, with characteristics that make it particularly valuable as an agent for development. Developing countries however face a particular fragility in their natural, economic, social and human environments which could jeopardize the sector’s dynamism and beneficiary qualities [UNWTO, 2015]. This statement from the UNWTO, highlights and supports this article’s argument that indeed tourism can substantiate and advance development.

As previously stated, South Africa is a beautiful tourism destination. Foreign tourist arrivals to South Africa grew by 3.3% (265,802) in 2011 to reach 8,339,354 million tourists while overseas tourist arrivals declined by -1.8% in the same period. This performance is below the global average which saw a 4.4% increase in tourist arrivals. Excluding the 309,554 tourists who travelled to South Africa specifically for the FIFA World Cup, the growth in 2011 was 7.4%, which is above the global growth of 4.4%. South Africa has improved its ranking among global tourism destinations, improving from 34th position to 33rd [SAT, 2011]. These tourism figures despite some decline, indicates that South African development has been contributed to... by tourism. Simply put, tourists when visiting a new environment most often intend to explore. These tourists therefore will seek accommodation, food and tour guides. These three highlighted necessities for a tourists, in turn leads to job creation. The more tourists come into a country the more the government will plan for more infrastructure and more hands will be needed to manage these infrastructure; hotels, parks, museums etc. It is imperative to understand that tourism could be more beneficial especially for developing countries as they need the revenue from tourism as compared to first world states. In this instance, many developing countries as the UNWTO [2011] highlighted have more resources than certain developed states. For instance the natural topography of South Africa could not be found elsewhere. Above we highlighted some of South Africa’s tourism assets and managed properly the World Bank states that it could be a tool for economic development. Managed sustainably, the World Bank stipulates, tourism is an effective development tool. When tourism’s environmental, social, and economic and other constraints are addressed, tourism energizes economies. With the full knowledge that tourism is a complex sector with appendages into a myriad of other economic activities, all of which require careful management, countries with tourism assets are fully justified in deciding to prioritize tourism as a development tool [Lain Christie et al, 2013; World Bank, 2013].

South Africa is a multi-racial nation, this makes it a place where many divergent cultures, perceptions and lifestyles merge hence earning itself the name ‘the rainbow nation’. This beautiful country is one to visit for its uniqueness. As one knows the path to development does not just comprise of one mechanism, but a multiple of them. These mechanisms or tools indeed help spur and foster development in a nation. Uniquely speaking, South Africa stands to gain a lot from the yields of tourism, earlier in this paper we explored the profits tourism could bring to a nation by showing its contribution to the world economy [Christie et al, 2013]. Tourism also indeed helps in job creation and in a third world nation as South Africa, this is vital.

Conclusively, tourism could serve as a vital tool for socio-economic growth, and subsequently development. Tourism therefore is a developmental tool that will be neglected to the peril of that society especially if it possess tourism assets. The issue of crime should be addressed sternly despite the difficulties involved, the South African government needs to construct concrete strategies in combatting crime especially violent crime, so that this enhances the free flow of tourists [Starmer-Smith, 2008]. We realize that once a nation, in this case South Africa notices the concrete beneficial effects of tourism on its economy, it would act in order to create crime prevention and reduction measures and environmental sanitation policies just as was done in 2010 when South Africa hosted the FIFA soccer World Cup which brought millions of tourists to the country. The effects of tourism are therefore not restricted.
Crime and Tourism in South Africa

McCabe [1983: 49] says ‘there is no word in the whole lexicon of legal and criminological terms which is as elusive of definition as the word “crime”’ [McCabe, 1983: 49; Morrison, 2004]. On the other hand, Williams [1955], states that ‘a crime’ is some conduct (an act or omission) which, when it leads to certain state of affairs, is treated in that jurisdiction as being capable of leading to prosecution and punishment. Tourism as we have defined above comprises the activities of persons or individuals traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes. [Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006]. The definition gives us a nuance that majority of people visit another foreign environment because they seek to explore and most often have a pleasurable time. When one hears the word ‘tourism’ it is therefore not inane to associate it with having a good time or enjoyable experience outside one’s usual environment, hence the phrase ‘tourist attraction’. Thus rationally speaking, tourists do not wish to embark on journeys that will bring them displeasure. Consequently we rarely hear tourists wishing to visit war-torn zones or politically unstable areas. Without drifting away….. As it is known, South Africa is not a war torn nation neither is it a politically unstable country. Nevertheless, despite its beautiful topography and unique cultural heritage, which attracts tourists, the country is being deprived of benefitting from the full benefits of tourism considering its many tourist attractions such as World of birds, Cango Caves, Bloukrans Bungee and Addo elephant national park to name a few. These sites are truly spectacular even when looked at via the internet, talk -more of being there actually. What then seems to be the issue? Starmer-Smith, [2008] highlights that South Africa’s escalating crime statistics may have deterred more than a staggering 22 million tourists from visiting the country over the past five years [Starmer-Smith, 2008] Imagine if each of those 22million visited South Africa and spent at least one dollar ($1) there will be 22 million dollars in circulation in the country which would have come from tourism. To be crystal clear, one shouldn’t assume that crime simply deters tourists, but it is the type of crime present and at an abysmal rate that instills doubts in the subconscious of tourists. Indeed it would be frivolous to suggest that places that experience a high tourist influx are devoid of crime. It is however reasonable to state that those places unlike South Africa do not suffer from high rate of violent crime as does South Africa.

Crime could be split into three (3) key types: Petty, Grand and Violent Crime. Petty crime includes; pickpocketing, shoplifting, stealing a cell phone or an I-pad, eyebrows wouldn’t be raised, to consider that these types of petty crimes are universal i.e. they could found in any country one visits. Grand crime on the other hand committed by the middle class for instance siphoning funds etc. this type of crime may barely directly affect a tourist. However, violent crime which includes; rape, murder, drug-trafficking, poaching, killing of police officers are of a higher cadre than the previous two. Violent crime most defiantly influences the decision of tourists when visiting a place. As stated above tourists embark on their journeys for pleasurable experiences.

The above categorization of crime does not in any way attempt to diminish the fact that crime whether petty, grand or violent or otherwise still maintains a negative connotation and it is punishable [Williams, 1955]. Also it need be stated that violent crime produces an effect of fear especially when it is rampant as in the case of South Africa, statistic show that murders increased by 2.4 per cent (to 19,202), bank robberies by 118 per cent, residential robberies by 24 per cent, car hijackings by six per cent, drug-related crimes by 8.2 per cent and commercial crimes by 12.6 per cent [Stamer-Smith, 2008:1]. British concerns for example about the dangers of travel in South Africa resurfaced in June 2004 following the murder of Darryl Kempster, who was part of Michael Flatley’s Lord of the Dance Company, on the steps of his Johannesburg hotel [Stamer-Smith, 2008]. These entire negative statistics contribute to tourist suspicion about visiting South Africa and this puts them off [Stamer-Smith, 2008]. Crucially, violent crime is the type of crime that potentially restricts South Africa from benefitting from the tourist dollar. With the country’s high rate of unemployment and with the fact that tourism promotes development [Christie et al, 2013]. South Africa also has developed a reputation for being an unsafe place to visit and has been labelled the “crime capital of the world” [George, 2003; Perry & Potgieter, 2013] this does not make for good read and thus South Africa stands to gain more from a violent crime free environment.

This more than any other time is the moment for pursuing tourism as a dynamic development option in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and South Africa. Tourism is regarded as a modern-day engine of growth and is one of the largest industries globally. In 2012, G20 heads of state recognized tourism as a driver of growth and development, as well as a sector that has the potential to spur global economic recovery.
However, in the case of South Africa, the obstacle (crime) mentioned earlier needs to be removed before this dream of the G20 heads of state can be realized. Support of the informal economy that has begun to grow can be of some assistance here.

**Informal Economic Sector**

The informal economy is a sector that is in a class of its own. This sector often thrives where the government has failed to keep to its social contract. The informal sector is broadly characterised as consisting of units engaged in the production of goods or services with the primary objective of generating employment and incomes to the persons concerned. These units typically operate at a low level of organisation, with little or no division between labour and capital as factors of production and on a small scale. Labour relations - where they exist - are based mostly on casual employment, kinship or personal and social relations rather than contractual arrangements with formal guarantees (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2016 para. 1).

Due to the abysmal unemployment rate in South Africa, citizens decide to create for themselves jobs; hence some open barbing salons, road side shops, car wash etc. This a way of giving themselves employment where the government could not provide for them. This informal economic sector also contributes to the economy of the country as those who engage in it are lifted economically. For example, they draw daily livelihood from this sector and they receive what may be considered as fairly regular income. This in turn keeps them occupied and reduces the need to engage in crime (especially violent crime). In addition, the informal economy sector has been known to contribute to national development to a great degree [La Porta and Shleifer, 2011].

Wherever government had gone into the informal sector to lend support and inject some orderliness, this sector has been known to contribute more to national development and to individual citizen’s happiness.

**Conclusion**

Tourism needs to be taken as a serious economic growth tool or instrument by developing countries, and thereby by South Africa; especially with the tourism potentials of South Africa. The development aim should be the enhancement of people’s capabilities, or the opportunities open to people of being and doing a variety of things. Development is the freedom from want and freedom from fear. Tourism as highlighted above has the capability of granting employment to many jobless South Africans. As it is known, one does not need to have a very high academic qualification to work at a zoo or park (tourists’ sites).

Tourism in South Africa should be given importance, due to the fact that if the tourism industry is stable and well-managed, South Africa will reap growth (economic and Social), and this can help in crime reduction as more hands will be needed to the employments tourism will bring. Tourism is a useful tool for economic growth in most societies.

This paper considers South African tourism as possessing the potentials of contributing massively to South Africa’s development. South Africa’s many attractions and beautiful land mass make South Africa a beautiful tourist destination. The following recommendations aim to further bring South Africa closer to realizing its dream of increasing the tempo of its development through tourism.

**Recommendations**

Upon independence in 1994, South Africa was charged with the task of overturning the developmental patterns established under apartheid. Skills development and education appear to be a way of empowering the portion of the population (mainly Blacks) that the sour apartheid regime deterred. Former South African President Thabo Mbeki in 2004 highlighted four (4) areas of key delivery in the decade that followed from 2004. These four areas included i) halving unemployment; 2) halving poverty; 3) improving employment equity; and 4) accelerating broad-based black economic empowerment (Mbeki 2004b; Akoojee, 2005).

- For the sake of developing and securing the gains of the contributions of tourism to national development, this more than any other time is the moment for pursuing the promotion of these four key areas. Tourism is regarded as a modern-day engine of growth and is one of the largest industries globally. In 2012, G20 heads of state recognized tourism as a driver of growth and development, as well as a sector that has the potential to spur global economic recovery.
- Another aspect is ‘youth engagement’. Records have showed that many violent
crimes which deter the tourism industry from growing, are created by youths and even teenagers. Thus focus should be placed on tourism in other to keep the youths focused (especially Black South Africans) because apartheid legacy left some of them with no skill or training. These jobs which tourism will create doesn’t have to the need the individual to be highly educated, as certain individuals are illiterate but have technical skills.

- Also programs and training courses should be available to get the less educated South African to acquire a skill that can be useful especially in relations to tourism. Hence courses like ‘gardening, interior decoration’ will do a lot of good to those South Africans who do not possess a formal education.

- Tourism could be viewed as exposing a country to the ‘global eye’ hence South Africans should be encouraged to showcase their local talents as that is what tourism entails; showing your locality to the world.

- Finally the informal sector should be supported in order to help in reducing crime by creating more jobs within the country.

References


