



Public-private collaboration in the Tourism Industry in Northwestern Ethiopia

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Abstract

Tourism has become an important socio-economic development tool in many parts of the world, including developing countries such as Ethiopia. To sustainably develop the existing and potential destinations, collaboration among key stakeholders is of high importance. Amongst these key actors, the private and public sectors are the leading ones. This study was conducted at the two World Heritage Sites of Ethiopia: Gondar and Lalibela, and the UNESCO registered Biosphere Reserve of Lake Tana, including the UNESCO Learning city of Bahir Dar. These destinations are strategically located in Northwestern Ethiopia, in the Northern historic route of the country which receives the largest number of international visitors of the country. The study area is famous for unique cultural, historical, religious, religious and natural attractions. The necessary data for this study were mainly collected using a semi-structured in-depth interview methodology. The researchers used a purposive sampling technique and the total samples selected were 35, which was based on theoretical saturation. It was found that the public and private sectors in the tourism industry in the three destinations, were not working together to the level expected. They were working only in limited areas, and hotels were found to be better participants in the collaboration process. The major challenges for the feeble collaboration are associated with the government's limitations in commitment, financial and manpower capacity. For better public-private collaboration, the government should take the leading role and create a conducive environment for collaboration with the private sector, so that tourism can be developed in a way that benefits visitors, businesses and the destinations and remains sustainable.

Keywords: Northwestern Ethiopia, public sector, private sector, collaboration, tourism Industry

Introduction

Tourism is often described as one of the world's largest industries on the basis of its contribution to global gross domestic product (GDP), the number of jobs it generates and the number of people it transports. For many years, the need to improve sustainability and competitiveness in the tourism industry has been widely recognized and discussed. There is an increasing concern among destinations for the sustainable development of tourism. However, such efforts have been hindered by a number of factors, one of which is the lack of collaboration among stakeholders to support sustainability initiatives (Graci, 2013). Graci further stated that collaboration can play a crucial role in moving the tourism industry toward sustainability. As no one organization does or can deliver tourism development and achieve sustainability, a collaborative multi-stakeholder approach is necessary.



A number of scholars have defined collaboration in different ways. Based on an examination of the literature and adapting Gray's (1989) definition, Jamal and Getz (1995) elaborated collaboration as “a process of joint decision making among autonomous, key stakeholders of an inter-organizational..... tourism domain to resolve planning problems of the domain and/or manage issues related to the planning and development of the domain” (pp:188). The two core ideas in this definition are problems of a domain and joint decision making. These implies that collaboration is about working together towards a common agenda.

The WWF (2000) has defined collaboration with its synergistic benefits of working together. It described collaboration as a “process through which groups with similar or different perspectives can exchange viewpoints and search for solutions that go beyond their own vision of what is possible” (2000:20). It further explained that collaboration requires stakeholders to operate towards a common goal and vision by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability that can bring mutually benefiting results. The implication of WWF’s definition is that stakeholders come together to share resources and solve ‘problems’ which each stakeholder can’t individually handle. In addition, Merriam-Webster Online (2009) defined collaboration as “to work together jointly”. These definitions imply that collaboration is about working together towards solving a common issue or achieving a common goal.

The process of collaboration has the potential to allow organizations to bring together their assets: knowledge, expertise, capital and other resources (Plummer et al.,2006) for achieving a common vision. Another definition related to this is the one forwarded by Bramwell and Lane (2000) who stated that collaboration helps to create relationships between stakeholders to deal with a common issue by contributing their resources. Those groups who are working together are beneficiaries of a competitive advantage resulting from their collaboration. In addition, as decisions are made together, implementation and enforcement of plans and regulations resulting from collaboration may be more accepted by individuals and organizations (Araujo & Bramwell, 2002).

Amhara Region, located in Northwestern Ethiopia, is one of the major tourist destinations in the country. The region is home to three UNESCO registered World Heritage Sites (Rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, Gondar Castle and Semien Mountains National Park) and the UNESCO registered Lake Tana Biosphere. In addition, the region is also rich in other tangible and intangible, natural and cultural attractions which attract thousands of tourists each year. As a result of this huge tourism resource, there are different tourism stakeholders participating in tourism development- the major ones being the public and private sectors. Exploiting the tourism resources for growth and development demands the collaboration and partnership of different stakeholders. Maintaining competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism destinations of the region requires continuous upgrading which in turn requires the public and private sectors to entertain continuous relationships rather than engage in ad-hoc cooperation. It is difficult to think about sustainable tourism development in the region without the active participation of stakeholders in the sector. In the three major tourism destinations of Amhara Region (Bahir Dar, Gondar and Lalibela), there has been little/no comprehensive study conducted so far in relation to public-private partnership. How the public and private sectors are working together and whether they are doing well or not, is not scientifically studied.

Consequently, this study was conducted to fill the gap in knowledge about public private collaboration in the areas under study. It assessed the public private collaborations in the tourism industry in the three major tourism destinations of the region. The study specifically focused on three issues: exploring the priority areas of collaboration between the public and private sectors; examining how the tourism public and private sector collaborations are functioning; and identifying



the main challenges faced in public-private collaborations. According to Pansiri (2013), collaboration has varying scope, ranging from the formal public–private partnerships (PPPs) and joint ventures that are formal to very loose arrangements which do not require formal arrangement. This study focused on the very loose arrangements of collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Literature Review

Why Collaboration in the Tourism Industry?

In current times, the public sector are cognizant of the important role tourism plays in contributing to the national economy and destination development, as it creates employment and serves as a source of revenues. Such understanding furthers the need to work together in order to tap the full potential of the tourism sector. Tourism is now seen as a multi-discipline, multi-stakeholder industry that should act in a united manner for the development of sustainable tourism.

The significance of tourism as an instrument for achieving socio-cultural, economic and environmental sustainability has drawn the attention of governments in many parts of the world. In addition, it has also become an appealing area of investment for the private sector. For the public and private sectors to achieve their objectives of developing tourism and enhancing the experience of visitors, collaboration is of furthest importance. Tourists consider destinations as a single product. However, the truth is that there are a number of actors involved in the whole process of satisfying the wants and needs of visitors, starting from point of origin to the final destination. Hence, to satisfy visitor needs and expectations, and provide the ‘single’ product for visitors, it is necessary for stakeholders to work together.

The fragmented nature of suppliers on one hand, and the perception of tourism experience as a single product from the supply side, require the need for stakeholders to work strategically towards meeting visitor needs. Such collaboration efforts result in competitiveness, profit and sustainability for businesses and destinations. Mei, Arcodia and Ruhanen (2013) argue that tourism, more than most other economic sectors, requires formal and informal collaboration efforts, as destinations are often described as articulated groups of independent suppliers who work together to deliver the overall tourism product for visitors. There is also a critique in tourism that the industry is commanded by small and micro enterprises where creativity and innovation will be difficult to foster. Such businesses will in any case, not have the necessary resources to do so. Government support can enhance their business entrepreneurship and competitiveness in a number of ways. A common vision between the private and public sectors for the success of the tourism industry plays an important role for collaboration initiatives (Schumann, 2006).

There is also an argument that tourism development decisions should not be left to a few politicians, government officials or tourism businesses; stakeholders who affect and are affected by tourism development should participate in decision making (Bramwell and Lane, 2000). The private and public sectors are among the key actors expected to work together.

Areas of Public Private Collaboration in Tourism

In literature, four areas in which collaboration comes about have been identified: collaboration within the government offices, public–private collaboration, collaboration among industry operators, and collaboration with other industries (Mei, Arcodia and Ruhanen, 2013). The same



authors further stated that public–private collaboration, and promoting collaboration among the private tourism industries have caught more government attention than the remaining two.

There are a variety of techniques for collaboration between the private and public sectors to work together in order to achieve their common goals (Inter-American Development Bank, 2014). The IADB further stated that private and public sector collaboration for sustainable tourism development may occur in a wide range of activities. The major ones where there is significant experience in government and private participation include “marketing and promotion, product development, infrastructure development and renewal, attraction development/renewal/diversification, enhanced productivity and service, community development/renewal, cultural and heritage protection, and environmental protection/enhancement” (2014:4). Though there are such common areas of collaboration for both sectors, it is apparent that some activities are inherently governmental in nature. These, according to the Inter-American Development Bank, include determining and approving tourism strategy; contracting for major infrastructure projects; granting project approvals, permits and licenses; evaluating and monitoring contracted services; approving payment for contracted services; and in certain occasions acting as a regulator. It should be noted, however, that the private sector can have valuable inputs for the success of these developments in a number of ways.

Advantages of Public Private Collaboration

Public private collaboration in the tourism industry has many advantages for tourists, commercial enterprises and a tourist destination. According to Bramwell and Lane (2000), the significance of calling for varied stakeholders in tourism planning and management is getting more recognition. Mei, Arcodia and Ruhanen (2013) argue that tourism, more than most other economic sectors, needs formal and informal collaboration, as destinations are made up of assorted clusters of independent and fragmented suppliers who work together to provide the overall tourism product and experience for the tourists. Public private collaboration advocates tourism innovation (Mei, Arcodia and Ruhanen, 2013), enhances competitiveness (Pansiri, 2013), and heightens positive tourism impacts, operational efficiency and equity (Bramwell and Lane, 2000).

How the Public Private Collaboration in Tourism works

The level to which actors are engaged in collaboration developments can differ from a confined, consultative role in which they have little say in decisions, to a broader role of shared management and decision (WWF, 2000). According to Jamal and Getz (1995), collaboration preparations evolve in three levels. The first stage involves setting the problem where the common issues that need action and concerned stakeholders are identified. In the second phase, an appropriate direction will be set. Here stakeholders recognize the need to work together for a common aim. The last stage is execution which demands building the suitable working system and dedicate to its accomplishment.

Collaborative developments are most probably likely to succeed under different conditions. According to the WWF (2000), these tough conditions comprise availability of a place for dialogue; concern between stakeholders to attain both individual and common goals; willingness and interest to participate; clear definitions of objectives, processes, and roles, and assisting those involved understand their rights and duties. It also discussed that when the probable outcomes of not collaborating are heightened dispute, resource debasement, threats of litigation, or exacerbated relations among mutually beneficial parties, then collaboration will be reinforced.



Challenges of Public Private Collaboration in Tourism

As discussed above, collaboration between the private and public sectors has a number of advantages. However, such benefits are not without challenges. Stakeholders face various difficulties and obstacles involved in the whole process of collaboration. Studies have identified several challenges that affect public private collaboration. According to Bramwell and Lane (2000), one potential challenge is the perceptions and misperceptions that stakeholders hold about one another, which results in distrust. They stated that in relation to environmental concerns, government and private sectors are different in many ways. There is deficiency of common vision for the natural environment between the two sectors: the private always being damned as being focused on profit multiplication alone and more careless when it comes to the environment. The two sectors vary in their urgencies. Schumann (2006) pointed out that readiness to strive for a 'common good' and shared goal is crucial prerequisite to the development of a collaborative approach. Bramwell and Lane (2000) discussed that a collaboration that is too casually or lightly arranged to provoke the actors to proceed to make advance on the issue can lead to failure in execution.

According to Schumann (2006), one of the most critical roadblocks to an advanced degree of collaboration between the public and private sectors, resulting in political and power disputes, is the absence of long-run or strategic planning. He further stated that with appropriate visioning and a clear guidance of where to be as a destination, the views of misinterpretations and lack of sympathy towards other parties, will most likely not be wiped out, but can be reduced. It was found that stakeholders felt short-run targets mattered in collaboration efforts and that debatable and more problematic issues that should have been solved were headed off.

In addition, the WWF (2000) pointed out that in the course of collaborations, certain potent actors who could have vital roles may refuse to participate; some unwelcome stakeholders may want to take part; and others who begin participating in the collaboration process may choose to opt out. So, generally, though collaboration has several advantages, it also has a myriad of challenges that stakeholders should be aware of and work together to tackle. It is only when these challenges are handled effectively that collaboration can give the desired planned results.

Methodology

The research design applied in this study was qualitative. The study tried to elaborate the collaboration activities of the private and public sectors of the tourism industry in the destinations under study. Both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data was gathered using semi-structured interviews as shown in Table 1 below, and personal observation was also carried out. Secondary data was gathered from reports, memos, journals, books, and other secondary sources. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to select officials and experts for the semi-structured interviews. The sample size was based on theoretical saturation attainment: interviews were thus conducted until adequate data for the study was obtained. The qualitative data gathered using interviews, personal observation and document analysis were coded, thematically grouped, analyzed and narrated. The researchers have tried to show the practices of collaboration between the private and public sectors through their various narrations and descriptions.



Data Analysis and Discussion

Background of Respondents

The researchers have selected respondents for the study from both the private and public sectors. The size of samples was determined based on theoretical saturation, and sample sizes among the three destinations vary depending on the number of population. A total of 35 respondents were selected from the three destinations: Lalibela, Gondar and Bahir Dar. Bahir Dar is the seat of the regional Culture and Tourism Bureau and hence quite higher numbers of respondents were selected from there.

Table 1: Background of Respondents (Authors' own)

S.No.	Subjects	Sample size in each destination			Education	Remark
		Bahir Dar	Gondar	Lalibela		
1	ANRS Culture and Tourism Bureau	2	-	-	1 BA Degree 1 MA degree	-The bureau is located in Bahir Dar
2	City/Zonal Culture and Tourism Office	1	1	1	All BA degree	
3	Hotels	4	4	3	2 MA, 9 BA degree	
4	Tour Operators and Travel Agents	1	1	1	All have BA degree	
5	Boat Association	1	-	-	Diploma	-No boat association in Gondar and Lalibela
6	Tour Guides' Association	1	1	1	1 BA, 2 Diploma	
7	Souvenir shops	3	3	3	All Diploma	
8	Car rentals	1	1	1	1 BA, 2 Diploma	
	Total	14	11	10		
	Grand total	35				

Areas of Collaboration

There are several areas on which the public and private sectors in Amhara region can work together for the development of the tourism industry. However, when we see the reality on the ground, they collaborate only in a few areas, and with very limited private sector involvement, such as hotels and the local tour guides. The main areas on which they work together include standardization and star rating of hotels, consultation for new entrant hotels and organizing of key events.

From 2015-2017, standardization and rating of hotels was carried out in Ethiopia. It was found that government offices in Bahir Dar and Gondar made periodic discussions and follow-ups with hotels to help them obtain star grading so as to elevate their business operation. Continuous awareness creation about the criteria, consultations and trainings were given for hotels. In this process, a higher number of hotels joined the star classification in Bahir Dar than Gondar. In Lalibela, such collaboration efforts did not exist at all, and no hotel earned a star rating. Though it needs further research, there is an argument that hotel owners in Lalibela live elsewhere, and hence working with these hotels, including the upgrading of their quality standards, has become a problematic task.



Organizing events is the other area of collaboration that the public and private sectors in the three destinations are working on. However, the degree and level of participation varies from destination to destination. As the number and level of events also vary among the destinations, so does the efforts they invest in collaboration. More events are carried out in Bahir Dar than other destinations, and hence better collaboration activities are observed here. Bahir Dar hosts several regional and national events. It is also famous for hosting the Tana High Level Forum every year, where African leaders meet to discuss the many peace and security issues of the continent. The stakeholders work together in a cohesive manner to successfully host such events.

In order to provide quality service for visitors, accommodation establishments need to be equipped with the necessary facilities and resources. As an incentive to encourage investment in the sector, the Ethiopian government allows duty free importing of certain equipment and facilities for newly established hotels in the star categories. In this aspect, the tourism offices provide facilitation of duty imports and other necessary support for the accommodation establishments. Though the degree of support and collaboration varies from destination to destination, it has been found that the public sector is helping private hotels to exploit the full benefits of such incentives. In some cases, such incentive schemes are abused by both hotel owners and government officials: unethical use of the incentive from hotels, and corruption and bureaucracy from public officials are the major issues raised in the process of such collaboration efforts. The government invites the private sector in annual and bi-annual meetings to evaluate the performance of the public offices and to discuss the way forward. However, such meetings are invariably unsuccessful, and the private sector is reluctant to participate further, claiming that such meetings are 'fruitless'. Tour operators and travel agencies stated that they have very weak links with the government office in their areas, and rather work better with the national Tour Operators' Association and individual travel agencies and tour operators.

Both sectors agreed on the failure of work in a number of important areas necessary for destination development and management. These include inter alia, tourism planning, destination promotion, product diversification, conservation of attractions, infrastructure development, manpower development, etc. It is difficult to successfully and sustainably develop the tourism industry without the active collaboration and partnership of the two sectors in these important areas. The officials have self-critique and admit that the public sector should have taken the leading role, creating more conducive platforms for collaboration with the needed private sector.

The Practice of Public Private Collaboration

It is obvious that the government and the private sector should work hand in hand in order to bring sustainable tourism development to a destination. Government officials in Gondar and Bahir Dar, and all respondents from the private sector in the three destinations asserted that there is interest from the private sector to work in collaboration with the public sector for the growth of the tourism industry. They said that, though its degree varies, every private actor has interest to work with government for tourism development. An official from City Culture and Tourism Office in Bahir Dar stated:

Hotels are highly cooperative. They are keen to work with our office. Every time we ask them any support, be it in finance or idea, they are always with us. Boat service providers and guides also work with us when we host events and have guests to visit the Lake Tana Monasteries. The problem is that we failed to play the lead role in the collaboration with the private sector.



It has been observed that the private sector expects the government to initiate all collaboration efforts. Although the government is expected to create the conditions for a collaborative environment, it is sometimes necessary to go further and push the public sector to act towards collaboration. If the government is not active in creating needed 'fertile ground', the private sector should lobby and encourage public tourism offices to be supportive. Building a collaborative culture results in personnel working interdependently and taking shared responsibility (Madigan & Schroth-Cavatalo, 2011).

Bringing the two sectors, the private and public, together requires some 'structure' and effective communication channel. The public sector usually uses private sector associations to facilitate the collaboration. Such efforts are better working and thus effective in Gondar and Bahir Dar. Tour guide, boat and hotel associations play important roles, especially when organizing events, to link both the government and private sectors. Lalibela does not still have hotel association, and is hence affecting the collaboration efforts.

The government and hotel associations are usually active when there are events, and at other times, they fail to meet regularly for working together. Such seasonal and ad hoc collaborations are criticized by both sectors. In addition, there is critique from the private sector that the government is not doing what it promises and lacks the motivation, finance and manpower to do so. A hotel manager in Bahir Dar stated that "in every meeting, it is said that we will work together; but you cannot find anything on the ground. It is difficult to say there is motivation from government to work in collaboration with the private sector. For example, there is no collaboration activity conducted to promote the city and its attractions, and no hotel is working with government to support this." This implies that because meetings and discussions are not followed by any action, the private sector has been discouraged to work with the government.

Challenges for Public Private Collaborations

Although the collaboration between public and private sectors cannot be denied, it is restricted to few areas of tourism development. This limitation is attributed to a number of factors. The case studies in the three destinations show that there are several challenges hindering the collaborations of government and private sectors in tourism development.

One of the challenges observed in the destinations under study is the top down approach in planning. Plans of city administrations are cascaded from the Regional Culture and Tourism Bureau. Hence, they are not flexible, and fail to include plans that enable working with the private sector. The regional government does not plan about working together, as do the destinations. In addition, there is failure by the culture and tourism offices in the three destinations to familiarize their plans to the private sector as only a few participate in annual and bi-annual meetings the offices organize for introducing its plans and evaluating performances. As discussed in the literature, collaboration requires common vision and goals, and such agendas should be incorporated into the strategic and annual plans. In the absence of such plans, it is difficult to expect the two sectors to come together and work for the development of the industry.

Another challenge is the lack of confidence in government and its collaborations by the private sector. Hotel managers argue that money collected for some developments will be stolen by few illegals, and this has negatively affected the commitment of the private sector and individuals. Such practices have influenced the trust the private sector has on agendas that are of common interest. Hence, the confidence of the private sector to work together with the private sector has been reduced.



According to most of the respondents from the private sector in the three tourist destinations, lack of government motivation and commitment has also hindered the collaboration process. The private sector is interested in work together with the government but it needs someone at the frontline to coordinate such initiatives, i.e. the government. The government does not fully exploit the private sector as far as collaboration is concerned. The private sector accuses the government for its lack of commitment for collaboration that will help develop the tourism industry. A respondent from the private sector said “Tourism development needs high political support and commitment. There are several meetings and trainings, and none of these bring change for there is lack of political support and willingness. All those that are discussed are only for media consumption.” Another hotel manager from Lalibela stated that “the government talks much about tourism in the media and organizes various bodies to lead the industry such as the Tourism Transformation Council, but there are no such significant changes seen on the ground. They are simply used for media consumption”. An important indicator of government’s lack of commitment for the sector is clearly seen in the budget allocated, manpower assigned and resources distributed. From among all the government offices, culture and tourism at regional, zonal and woreda levels receive very limited resources.

An important issue which is related with the discussion above is the criticism from private sector role-players that government officials have capacity limitations in manpower and finance and are thus unable to lead the tourism industry in the appropriate direction. A hotel manager in Lalibela explained: “They lack capacity for example to come to hotels and provide professional support. The reason is because solving practical problems is not as simple as we assume it. It needs practical exposure and professionalism.” A hotel manager in Bahir Dar strengthened this idea by stating “I believe there are no people with the necessary knowledge, skill and attitude to lead the industry in government offices in the appropriate way and bring sustainable tourism development in the city with the collaboration of stakeholders, including the private sector. They also lack commitment. As a result, they cannot successfully discharge their responsibilities. There should be control mechanisms for letting employees and officials to do what is expected from them”.

Officials from culture and tourism in Gondar and Bahir Dar also stated that there is shortage of employees, and because of this, coordinators are playing the role of experts as well. In addition, in all the three offices, there is shortage of finance to implement their plans and conduct collaboration tasks.

Lack of attention from higher officials is also a challenge for public-private collaboration. Government higher officials do not have direct links with hotels in the sense that they do not personally visit them regularly for better collaboration tasking. A hotel manager in Bahir Dar explained it the following way:

I think the main challenge is because government higher officials do not come to hotels, and know what is being done in hotels. Those who come to us are the lower level employees, experts. These employees can’t create strategic collaborations, and they even will not report or communicate the issues that need collaboration with hotels for their higher officials. In addition, it is difficult to meet higher officials when we approach them individually; they are busy with field tasks and other issues. To work together, it is necessary to come and sit together, and that has become a very difficult task. Ben: If there is something that you need from the office or bureau, you personally approach them, and there is no such formal regular, planned activities we work together.

Government officials also criticize the structural organization of their offices. For example, in Bahir Dar and Gondar, the office coordinates the issues of culture and tourism, and youth and sports. These are two major different tasks which are difficult to lead under one umbrella. Such structure creates manpower, resource and financial constraints, and are thus difficult to manage. So, there



can be focus in one area and forgetting the other because of the pressure exerted and constraints faced. From these two wings of the office, the one aspect of operation is thus usually 'ignored' and shows lower performance and this is the culture and tourism aspect.

The other challenge is from the side of the private sector, mainly hotels. The existing Hotel Owners' Associations in Bahir Dar and Gondar are not strong enough to call members to meetings regularly, discuss issues with the government and play their part for tourism development. Like the Culture and Tourism Offices, they are too busy with ad hoc meetings and events. There is movement to establish an Hotel Owners' Association in Lalibela, but this may take some time yet.

Unethical practices by few hotel owners are still a problem in working together with government, especially when related with duty free import of equipment and facilities management. There are few hotels that import equipment duty free and then sell them back to make a profits. Such practices affect businesses that import hotel equipment and other resources, pay tax to the government and then sell them on the domestic market. There are times the government has blocked the import of certain resources due to the abuse of the incentive by a few, greedy business owners in the tourism industry.

Corruption and maladministration also influence collaboration efforts. Some government officials apparently ask for money in return for permitting land for expansion, facilitating duty free importing of equipment and other support they render to the private sector. Such practices have created disappointment in businesses that follow the formal rules and regulations and conduct their business in an ethical way. In addition, many hotel managers in the three destinations stated that 'real' investors with financial capacity are few in number. Most investors borrow money from banks, and some are not interested to contribute money for different activities. Their focus is on paying back the money they have borrowed, and they are thus will not willing to collaborate with the government.

Conclusion

Stakeholder collaboration is very important for the development of tourist destinations. Of the various key stakeholders for tourism development, the major ones are public and private sectors. The main areas on which these sectors can work together include marketing and promotion, new product development, infrastructure development, heritage conservation, improving productivity and service, visitor management, community development and environmental protection. In the three major tourist destinations of Amhara Region, Bahir Dar, Lalibela and Gondar, the public and private sector are working only on limited areas. Even from the private sectors, only hotels and tour guides have better participation in the collaboration process. Travel agencies and tour operators, restaurants, car rentals, souvenir shops and boat associations have almost little/no such collaboration with the government: they simply run their business, and there is no tangible collaboration activity between the two sectors in the destinations studied.

The main area in which the public and private sectors are working together, especially in the hotel industry, is in the process of star rating relating to grading. The public sector has consulted and supported the hotels before ratings were provided, and on what should be fulfilled before standards were passed for higher grading. In addition, accommodation establishments and tour guides collaborate when the destinations host events of different kind. On the other hand, the private and public, sectors have failed to work together in other aspects namely, marketing and promotion, product development, infrastructure renewal and development, attraction renewal, diversification and development, enhanced productivity and service, community development, heritage conservation and protection.



Several challenges which affect public private collaboration have been identified in this study in the three major tourist destinations of Amhara. The main challenges include the top-down planning approach, lack of formal and regular communication between government and the private sector, lack of government motivation and commitment, financial and manpower capacity limitations, shortages of employees, problems in organizational structure of culture and tourism offices of the city administrations, weak hotel owners' associations, and unfortunate unethical practices of some hotel owners. Either way, the time is ripe for effective cooperation between all stakeholders.

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