

**THE STATE OF TOURISM IN ERITREA: TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN
THE DAHLAK ISLANDS.**

by

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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
ACRONYMS.....	v
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE STUDY.....	vi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background Reason to the Study	3
1.2. Statement of the Research Problem	6
1.3. Objectives of the Study	6
1.4. Research Methodology	7
1.5. Limitations of the Study	8
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1. Global Impacts of Tourism	9
2.1.1. Positive Economic Impact of Tourism	9
2.1.2. Negative Economic Impacts of Tourism.....	11
2.2. Impacts of Tourism in Small Island States.....	15
CHAPTER 3 BACKGROUND FOR DEVELOPING TOURISM	
 IN ERITREA	22
3.1. The Natural Environment	22
3.1.1. Location	22
3.1.2. Topography	22
3.1.3. Climate	24
3.1.4. Vegetation and Wildlife	25
3.2. Social & Cultural Diversity.....	26
3.3. Economic Patterns and Development Policy of Eritrea.....	27
3.3.1. Economic Patterns an Over View	27
3.3.2. Economic Development Policy	29
3.4. Objectives for Developing Tourism in Eritrea	32
3.5. Opportunities for Developing Tourism in Eritrea	33
3.6. Tourism Development Policy and Strategy of Eritrea	34
3.7. Concepts of Sustainable Tourism Development	40

CHAPTER 4	CURRENT STATE OF TOURISM IN ERITREA	43
4.1.	Present Economic Impact of Tourism in Eritrea.....	46
4.2.	Enhancing Economic Benefits.....	49
4.3.	Developing Tourists Markets.....	51
4.3.1.	Potential International Tourist Markets	52
4.3.2.	Domestic Tourist Market	55
4.3.3.	Marketing Plan	55
4.4.	Tourist Facilities and Services	57
4.4.1.	Infrastructure Facilities	57
4.4.2.	Accommodation	61
4.4.3.	Restaurants, Cafés and Bars	63
4.4.4.	Tour and Travel Operations	64
4.4.5.	Tourist Information Services	65
4.4.6.	Travel Facilitation	65
4.4.7.	Shopping Facilities and Services.....	66
4.4.8.	Tourist Health and Medical Facilities and Services.....	67
4.4.9.	Other Facilities and Services.....	68
CHAPTER 5	DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN THE DAHLAK ISLANDS OF ERITREA.....	70
5.1.	History.....	71
5.2.	Survey of the Islands and their Population	74
5.2.1.	Race & language	75
5.2.2.	Economy	75
5.2.3.	Communication	75
5.2.4.	Health and Local Administration.....	76
5.3.	Survey of Existing Tourist Attractions.....	76
5.4.	The Present Situation	78
5.5.	The Current Study (Data Analysis and Findings)	86

CHAPTER 6	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	94
6.1. General Conclusion		94
6.2. Specific Conclusions		96
6.2.1. Priority Tourist Attractions.....		97
6.2.2. Priority Projects.....		97
6.3. General Recommendations		102
6.4. Specific Recommendations		106
6.4.1 The First Stage (Short Term).....		106
6.4.2 The Second Stage (Medium Term).....		109
6.4.3 The Third Stage (Long Term).....		109
REFERENCES.....		112

List of Tables

Table 1 - International Tourist Arrivals to Eritrea: 1994 –1998.....	44
Table 2 – Survey of Visitors to Eritrea April 1996.....	45
Table 3 - Estimate of Overall Tourist Expenditures1995	47
Table 4 - Estimate of Non foreign Exchange Tourist Expenditures 1995	47
Table 5 - International Visitors Arrivals to Eritrea 1992 – 1999.....	53
Table 6 - International Tourist Arrival Market Targets 2005 -2020.....	54
Table 7 – Target Domestic Tourist Trips 2000 -2020.....	55
Table 8 – Accommodation Supply in the Six Different Regions of Eritrea	63
Table 9 - International Visitors to the Islands by Nationality 1996.....	79
Table 10 - International Visitors to the Islands by Nationality 1997	80
Table 11- International Visitors to the Islands by Nationality 1998.....	81
Table 12 -International Visitors to the Islands by Nationality 1999	83
Table 13 -International Visitors to the Islands by Nationality 2000.....	84
Table 14 -Total Numbers of Visitors to the Islands in 2001.....	85
Table 15 –Summary of Findings on Visitors Arrival to Dahlak Islands	
1996 to 2001	86
Table 16 -Total Dahlak Island Visitors Respondents Profile by Region	88
Table 17 -Total Respondents Profile by Income.....	89
Table 18 -Visitors Motives to Visit Dahlak Islands	90
Table 19 -Visitors Level of Satisfaction on the Tourism Aspect of the	

Dahlak Islands.....	91
Table 20 -Non-Visitors Level of Awareness Towards Dahlak Islands, By Province	92

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 – Location Map of Eritrea and the Associated Dahlak Islands.....	11
Figure 4.1 – Features of wild life	28
Figure 4.2 – Ancient Cemetery	43
Figure 5.1 – Researcher and citizens of Dahlak Islands.....	51
Figure 5.2 – The Marketing Plan Overview of Eritrea.....	62
Figure 5.3 – The Main Road Network in Eritrea.....	66
Figure 5.4 – Girl fetching water.....	67
Figure 6.1 – Map of Dahlak Islands.....	77
Figure 6.2 – A Caged Well.....	78
Figure 6.3 – Iron shoe used for prisoners.....	80

Acronyms

COMESA-	Common Market for East and Southern Africa
IGAD-	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
SATOUR-	South African Tourism Organization
SMEs-	Small and Medium Size Enterprise
UN-	United Nations
UNEP-	United Nations Environment Program
UNDP-	United Nations Development Program
VFR-	Visiting Family and Friends
WB-	World Bank
WTO -	World Tourism Organization
WTTC -	World Travel and Tourism Council

THE STATE OF TOURISM IN ERITREA: TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE DAHLAK ISLANDS.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

Along its Red Sea coast Eritrea possesses not less than 350 Islands. Dahlak Kebir, the largest of all is located approximately 50kms off the coast of Massawa, the busiest port of Eritrea. Topographically, relatively low relief limestone encircled by clean waters, abundant coral reefs and bountiful of fish species are the dominant features of the Islands. Nevertheless, their rich resources are so far not harnessed. They are inhabited by small fishing communities. One could only witness a small hotel and few houses scattered here and there, except for the presence of a military base on both Dahlak Kebir and in the near by Nakura Islands. The archaeological site of the Necropolis, a large early Islamic cemetery, and nearby ancient cisterns and pre Islamic cemetery, lies on the southwestern side of the Island.

The story of Dahlak and its ruins are clear testimony that the archipelago has a mine of very rich history that needs to be explored. In the 7th century, for instance, it was through these Islands that the Islamism has infiltrated and eventually penetrated deep into various parts of Eritrea and Ethiopia. In between the beginning of the 8th and mid-9th century, the archipelago was conquered and occupied by various external powers such as the Byzantine Empire. In the 13th century, during the period of internal uprising in the Arab world, Dahlak established its own autonomous Sultanate. In latter years, Portuguese and Ottoman Kingdoms used to control the Islands and to assert their supremacy in the Red Sea. In 16th century, however, Dahlak was exclusively occupied by the Ottomans and was used as a launching ground to conquer and control the costal part and highland of Eritrea. Finally, in the 1870s Mohammed Ali of Egypt became master of the Islands. Dahlak was also known to have been the centre of trade for slaves on the Horn from the beginning of its occupation by Ottomans until its occupation of the Islands and the Red Sea coast by the Egyptians. (*Eritrean travel and trade manual 2000*)

The prospect of the Dahlak Archipelago for the development of a successful tourist industry in Eritrea could undoubtedly be feasible. The low-lying coral chains where these volcanic Islands are located is amazingly tantalizing, fascinating and picturesque beyond description. Environmentally unpolluted, they are hygienic health-wise and could therefore be the primary attractions for tourists. Clean water and warm climate being their outstanding features, tourists could easily be lured to enjoy themselves without much ado about worrying their welfare, given their graceful natural environment is protected from deteriorations by contamination. White sandy beaches, protective bays and lagoons, provide excellent conditions for diving, snorkeling, sailing wind surfing and other sport activities. (*Travel Trade Manual of Eritrea, 2000*)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Tourism, international or domestic, is one of the most economically dynamic sectors in the world today. It contributes almost 12 per cent to global economy. On a global basis in the 21st century, international tourism is projected to continue growing at 4-5 per cent per annum (*Eritrean National Tourism Development Plan (2000 – 2020), Ministry of Tourism of Eritrea, 1999: p1*).

According to Tourism Vision 2020, published by the World Tourism Organization 1997, it is expected that there will be about one billion international tourists crisscrossing in the year 2010 and approximately 1.6 billion in 2020. Tourism and as such receipts are expected to reach \$2 trillion by the end 2020. By then, one out of every four arrivals will be a long haul tourists travelling among different world regions. Considering these ever-growing numbers one could fairly assume that all the world's regions will experience substantial growth in international tourism (*Tourism Vision 2020, WTO 1997*).

By 2020, total international tourist destinations arrivals in Africa are expected to almost triple to reach 75 million, an average growth rate of 5.4 per cent a year. During the same period, Africa is expected to account for about 4.7 per cent of world arrivals, above its present proportion of global arrivals but still much below the region's potential. Southern and Eastern Africa are considered to obtain the best growth prospects. Nonetheless, tourism will expand in all areas of the region. Domestic tourism is estimated to increase to about ten times the ratio of international tourism in terms of tourist trips. Needless to say it is bound to grow rapidly in all parts of the world including Africa (*Tourism Vision 2020, WTO 1997*).

According to reports of world travel and tourism council (WTTC – 2001) in many countries such as Malta, Cyprus in the Mediterranean, Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, Mauritius and Seychelles in Indian Ocean revenue from tourism can generate direct economic benefits e.g. opportunities of employment, income, foreign exchange earnings and subsidize government budgets.

By virtue of its being "smokeless industry" tourism is by definition labour-intensive devoid of high-tech and heavy machinery. According to Davison (1993:56) the tourism industry is labour intensive, meaning it depends largely on the people working for it, as opposed to machinery & technology. For this reason, it is much cheaper to invest in tourism as compared to investing in other sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture construction etc. Bull (1995: 35) suggests that

"other things being equal, as income and population grows the desire to visit other places will increase. Therefore the demand for tourism is relatively income elastic if measured by expenditure".

Tourism can also serve as a catalyst to stimulate agricultural expansion and possibly the harvesting of other resources e.g. fisheries, indigenous manufacturing, handicrafts and construction. If properly managed and effectively provided therefore, tourism could serve to justify and pay for socio-economic infrastructure development oriented projects. Visits to a country by tourists may also lead to attract more foreign investment to the country. Tourist attractions may pave the way to attract more visitors to come, which in turn could serve to initiate motivation on their part to invest in the country they visit.

Aside from economic benefits, tourism if meticulously planned, effectively organized and skilfully managed and efficiently dispersed off it could detrimentally contribute to maintain, safeguard and sustain the fauna and flora, the surrounding environment and more particularly the eco-system, which in total are the basis for tourist attraction. If improvised properly, tourism could help indigenous people promote their traditional values, cultural beliefs and practices and their indigenous ancestral heritages, which they hold dear. If these fundamental requirements were to be exercised definitely tourism could boost the economy and the exchange of cultures between different peoples.

As described above, tourism can generate many economic and other kinds of benefits to our world economies. It should be noted with utmost care however that, if not carefully planned developed and managed, tourism can also be a cause to environmental degradation, loss of cultural values and social principles. In tourism meticulous planning to ensure sustainable development and enhance the achievement of long-term goals is necessary. According to the world tourism organization publication "sustainable tourism development: guide for local planners, 1993" a systematic and development oriented approach to tourism should among many focus on the following:

- Developing the types of tourism and types of tourist markets that maximize socioeconomic benefits and, at the same time, respect and conserve the country's natural environment, historic heritage and cultural traditions.
- Integrating tourism into the country's overall development policy and planning so that it complements other economic sectors.

- Developing tourist attractions and activities, facilities, services and infrastructure that do not result in environmental and social problems, and help to conserve the country's natural environment, history and cultural heritage.
- Achieving an effective partnership between the public and private sectors in the development and management of the tourism sector.

Experts such as Ashley, C. (2000) who have specialized in the study of the impacts of tourism on rural livelihoods (in Namibia) and Koch, E., Beer, G and Elliffe, S. (1998) who have studied tourism-led growth and the empowerment of local communities in South Africa attach high significance to the contribution tourism could offer to economic development. The development policy of many countries justifies that tourism is specifically referred to as one of the designated sectors for development. Needless to say however, utmost care should be taken to sustainable tourism; the importance of environmental protection must be emphasized. The approach of a well-planned and managed tourism sector is supported internationally. The continuous and effective management of tourism, combining the best efforts of the government and private sector, including the development of well-planned infrastructure are essential to the success of tourism.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PAPER

Eritrea is a tiny nation in East Africa and it became independent on 24 May 1991 after 100 years of successive colonial rule. Eritrea covers 124,330 square km and slightly smaller than England, is located North of the equator and just north of the Horn of Africa and the longest border is on the Red Sea in the East around 1000 km bounded in the Northwest by the Sudan, in the South by Ethiopia and in the South west by the Djibouti (*Eritrea Travel Trade Manual, 2000*).

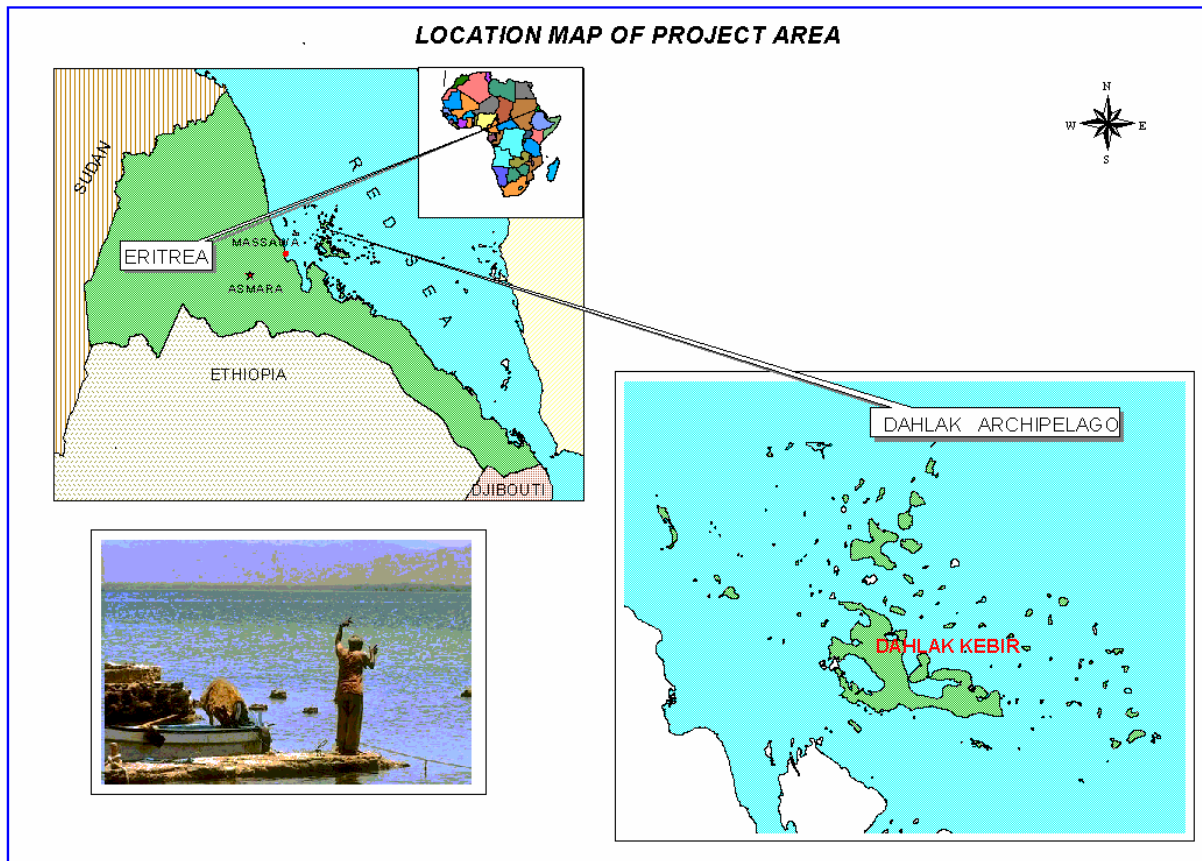


Figure 1: Location Map of Eritrea and the Associated Dahlak Islands

Eritrea had virtually no international tourism industry for nearly 30 yrs, from 1961-91. However during the first few years of independence little was done to make alive the tourism industry and a fair amount of public and private efforts have gone into this endeavour, but there is scope for more.

With its abundant archaeological/historic and cultural attractions and natural endowments its geographical proximity being easily accessible to major tourist markets in Europe and the Middle East, Eritrea has the potential to fully engage in the growth of and gain benefits from tourism being experienced globally and in Africa. The country has already an emerging tourism sector but still at its embryonic stage.

If properly financed, effectively organized and consistently familiarized to the outside world its growth and expansion could be imminent. Generally speaking Eritrea is not well known internationally. Tourism can greatly help introduce its environment, history and culture of the country to the world at large. Through exposure by tourists its distinctive character as a

sovereign state, as a cultural entity, and as a mosaic of conglomerate of colourful nations and nationalities can be better understood and appreciated internationally.

Domestic tourism should also thrive in Eritrea. Citizens could acquaint themselves with the graces and bounties nature had provided them. Apart from recreating themselves in their vast and rich environmental, historic and cultural heritage it could motivate them to safeguard and protect the eco-system including wild life fowl and beasts, which could boost tourism as a source of foreign hard currency.

If internal tourism flourishes, it is natural that it could bring about fair distribution of income among urbanites and the rural people where most of tourist sites are located. Local people residing in or near tourist attractions could benefit from selling their indigenous products, handicrafts, gift articles, ornaments etc.

The first tourism branch office in Eritrea was opened officially in 1966 during the first Ethiopian colonial era. During the period 1966 to 1973 arrivals of international visitors were more or less consistent. There were 16,898 arrivals in 1966 and that number grew to 21,459 in 1972. However, since the downfall of Haileselassie, that is after the Dergue took over power by the muzzle of the gun in 1974, the number of tourists dwindled to 7108. The decrease in the number of tourists continued progressively to the verge of nil in 1990. This was due to the fact that the travel agencies at that time were closed. Individually owned hotels were nationalized and started to be administered by the government and some were made to be converted to hostels and most of the tourist attraction sites were under the control of the liberation movement (*Tourism Statistical Report of Eritrea, 2000*)

But in the aftermath of 1991 when peace and stability prevailed a considerable increase in visitor arrivals was witnessed. For example, the number was 12,567 in 1991 increasing to 416,596 in 1996. In the period 1998, visitor arrivals drastically dropped as a consequence of the border conflict with Ethiopia. In 1999 there were 56,699 international visitors to Eritrea, out of whom 14,066 or approximately 25% were Eritreans residing overseas. One could fairly assume therefore, that tourism industry could negatively be affected by conflicts and wars (*Tourism Statistical Report of Eritrea, 2000*).

1.2. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

State of the tourism industry in the Dahlak Islands and their surroundings countrywide, for that matter is at its brim bottom. Contrary to these boundless riches and their surroundings, the potential wealth is still untapped. In a nut shell out of the coastal regions of the Horn, the Islands posses a highly attractive undisturbed, calm and unpolluted natural and marine (fauna and flora) environment. As briefly noted above they are also known for their famous historical significance. Strangely enough, past tourism records in the area show that development of tourism in the region has not been given due attention, the manifestation of which are the brief notations described above. The issue deserves attention and invites pondering at to that effect and hence this study.

The study attempts at focusing on how to develop and promote tourism in Eritrea in general and Dahlak Islands in particular. The proposed study will target at obtaining and analyzing information that could help substantiate its intents and motives and assert its objectivity.

1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The major objectives of the study are:

- With reference to available and relevant data to conduct scientific and systematic investigation on tourism in Eritrea in general and the Dahlak Islands in particular.
- To use tourism as a vehicle for exposing the international community to the long history, interesting cultures and diverse environments of Eritrea.
- To identify and define major bottlenecks and impeding factors hindering the progress of tourism in both Eritrea and the Dahlak Islands and to propose solutions that could help improve tourism.
- To design and propose workable strategies that could boost revenue from tourism development.
- To propose suggestions pertinent to the up-keep of the environment and particularly the high need of protecting the eco-system surrounding the Islands
- Forwarding fundamental recommendations to both tourism stakeholders and tourism decision makers at government level.
- Simultaneously, the study will also embrace best tourism experiences of some other countries pertaining to the tourism industry in order to impart awareness of the sector on appropriate authorities. The intention is to inculcate the fact that tourism if managed and

expended effectively could serve Eritrea to generate a lot of revenue. Economic development options will be suggested to clarify and justify the contentions of the author.

1.4. COMPOSITION OF THE RESEARCH PAPER

The research paper contains seven main chapters and a bibliography with an appendix.

Chapter one is the introductory part of the research;

Chapter two explores the literature review part of the study with the historical background of tourism including highlights of the world tourism environment and the state of tourism in small Island States;

Chapter three is all about the research methodology utilized in conducting the research;

Chapter four presents detailed discussion within the general framework and background of tourism in Eritrea;

Chapter five is exclusively devoted to explore the current state of tourism in Eritrea.

Chapter six presents the development of tourism in the Dahlak Islands vis-à-vis the analysis of collected data, and;

Chapter seven enumerates conclusions and profound recommendations on the development of tourism in Eritrea in general and the Dahlak Islands in particular.

1.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

As is usual for all research work this study has also its own limitations. Suffice to mention the following:

- Acute shortage and undue delay of finance with unreasonable suspension of the researcher's scholarship by the Government of Eritrea in the process of conducting the study had tremendous negative impact.
- Limitation on access to information and related sources and resources including computer, literature, archives, Internet etc had also contributed their share to the limitations of the study.
- Though reasonably in their vicinity, the majority of the respondents who filled the questionnaires did not visit Dahlak Island. Strangely enough, many of the respondents

even do not know where Dahlak Island is. The responses given by the majority of the respondents to the 42 questions presented in the questionnaire are either "No" or "Not Available", this is irrelevant from the statistical point of view. Due to these and similar incomplete and unreliable information, the study has been in the process confined to descriptive analysis.

- The incompleteness or irrelevant information obtained from respondents assumed to be knowledgeable of tourism in Dahlak Island.
- Last but not least, while the author was in Eritrea in 2002 conducting this research many of the documents that were investigated from the archives of the ministry tourism of Eritrea are old for current use both in terms of data and figures. Some are even draft scripts, which have not been typed for easy reading or systematic documentation. For that matter the author has never been to Asmara for reasons beyond personal control since 2002, these made the data and figures used in this research paper not to be later than 1999.

CHAPTER TWO: LITRATURE REVIEW

2.1. GLOBAL IMPACTS OF TOURISM

The tourism industry generates substantial economic benefits to both host countries and tourists' home countries. Especially in developing countries, one of the primary motivations for a region to promote itself as a tourism destination is the expected economic improvement.

2.1.1 Positive Economic Impacts of Tourism

The main positive economic impacts of tourism relate to foreign exchange earnings, contributions to government revenues, and generation of employment and business opportunities.

Foreign Exchange Earnings: Tourism expenditures and the export and import of related goods and services generate income to the host economy and can stimulate the investment necessary to finance growth in other economic sectors. Some countries seek to accelerate this growth by requiring visitors to bring in a certain amount of foreign currency for each day of their stay and do not allow them to take it out of the country again at the end of the trip.

An important indicator of the role of international tourism is its generation of foreign exchange earnings. Tourism is one of the top five export categories for as many as 83% of countries and is a main source of foreign exchange earnings for at least 38% of countries of the world (*WTO/UNEP International Conference on Sustainable Tourism in the Islands of the Asia-Pacific Region Sanya, Island of Hainan, China, 6-8 December 2000*).

Contribution to Government Revenues:- Government revenues from the tourism sector can be categorized as direct and indirect contributions. Direct contributions are generated by taxes on incomes from tourism employment and tourism businesses, and by direct levies on tourists such as departure taxes. Indirect contributions are those originated from taxes and duties levied on goods and services supplied to tourists.

The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that travel and tourism's direct, indirect, and personal tax contribution worldwide was over US\$ 800 billion in 1998 - a figure it expects to double by 2010 (<http://www.wttc.org/ecres/pdfs/WLD.pdf>).

Employment Generation:- The rapid expansion of international tourism has led to significant employment creation. For example, according to WTO the hotel accommodation sector alone provided around 11.3 million jobs worldwide in 1995. Tourism can generate jobs directly through hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, taxis, and souvenir sales, and indirectly through the supply of goods and services needed by tourism-related businesses. According to the WTO tourism supports some 7% of the world's workers (<http://www.world-tourism.org/geo2000>).

Stimulation of Infrastructure Investment:- Tourism can induce the local government to make infrastructure improvements such as better water and sewage systems, roads, electricity, telephone and public transport networks, all of which can improve the quality of life for residents as well as facilitate tourism.

Contribution to Local Economies:- Tourism can be a significant, even essential, part of the local economy. As the environment is a basic component of the tourism industry's assets, tourism revenues are often used to measure the economic value of protected areas.

There are also other local revenues that are not easily quantified, as not all tourist expenditures are formally registered in the macro-economic statistics. Money is earned from tourism through informal employment such as street vendors, informal guides, rickshaw drivers, etc. The positive side of informal or unreported employment is that the money is returned to the local economy, and has a great multiplier effect as it is spent over and over again. The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that tourism generates an indirect contribution equal to 100% of direct tourism expenditures (<http://www.wttc.org/ecres/pdfs/WLD.pdf>).

According to WTO, globally the Caribbean sub-region is the world's most tourism dependent region with the sector accounting for approximately 25% of all exports and services, and contributing 31% to the region's Gross Domestic Product. Tourism related services in the Caribbean employ over half a million persons. The projected annual 4.6% growth in stay over arrivals leading up to the year 2010 is expected to generate the need for 222,000 hotel rooms, an increase of over 20%. The region's major markets are the United States, Europe and Canada. The United Kingdom is a rapidly growing source of tourists to the Caribbean with over a million visitors to the region in 1998. Other leading European markets are France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Holland. Emphasis is also being placed on the development of intra-Caribbean tourism that currently accounts for about 10% of regional tourism (<http://www.world-tourism.org/geo2000>).

2.1.2 Negative Economic Impacts of Tourism

There are many hidden costs to tourism, which can have unfavourable economic effects on the host community. Often rich countries are better able to profit from tourism than poor ones. Whereas the least developed countries have the most urgent need for income, employment and general rise of the standard of living by means of tourism, they are least able to realize these benefits. Among the reasons for this are large-scale transfer of tourism revenues out of the host country and exclusion of local businesses and products.

Leakage:- The direct income for an area is the amount of tourist expenditure that remains locally after taxes, profits, and wages are paid outside the area and after imports are purchased; these subtracted amounts are called leakages. According to tourism statistical reports in most all-inclusive package tours, about 80% of travellers' expenditures go to the airlines, hotels and other international companies (who often have their headquarters in the travellers' home countries), and not to local businesses or workers. In addition, significant amounts of income actually retained at destination level can leave again through leakage. According to WTTC a study of tourism 'leakage' in Thailand estimated that 70% of all money spent by tourists ended up leaving Thailand (via foreign-owned tour operators, airlines, hotels, imported drinks and food, etc.). Estimates for other Third World countries range from 80% in the Caribbean to 40% in India (<http://www.unep.org/geo2000>).

** There are two main ways for the occurrence of leakage:*

Import leakage - This commonly occurs when tourists demand standards of equipment, food, and other products that the host country cannot supply. Especially in less-developed countries, food and drinks must often be imported, since local products are not up to the hotel's (i.e. tourist's) standards or the country simply doesn't have a supplying industry. Much of the income from tourism expenditures leaves the country again to pay for these imports.

According to Austrian Preparatory Conference for the International Year of Ecotourism, September 2000, even in developed regions, local producers are often unable to supply the tourism industry appropriately even if good will is present. The 64-room hotel "Kaiser im Tirol" in Austria, an award-winning leader in sustainable practices, cannot find organic food suppliers in the local farming networks in the appropriate quantity, quality and reliability, as production cycles and processes are not compatible with its needs.

Export leakage - Multinational corporations and large foreign businesses have a substantial share in the import leakage. Often, especially in poor developing destinations, they are the only ones that possess the necessary capital to invest in the construction of tourism infrastructure and facilities. As a consequence of this, an export leakage arises when overseas investors who finance the resorts and hotels take their profits back to their country of origin.

A 1996 UN report evaluating the contribution of tourism to national income, gross levels of incomes or gross foreign exchange, found that net earnings of tourism, after deductions were made for all necessary foreign exchange expenditures, were much more significant for the industry. This report found significant leakage associated with: (a) imports of materials and equipment for construction; (b) imports of consumer goods, particularly food and drinks; (c) repatriation of profits earned by foreign investors; (d) overseas promotional expenditures and (e) amortization of external debt incurred in the development of hotels and resorts.

The impact of the leakage varied greatly across countries, depending on the structure of the economy and the tourism industry. From the data presented in the above study on the Caribbean, St. Lucia had a foreign exchange leakage rate of 56% from its gross tourism receipts; Aruba had 41%, Antigua and Barbuda 25% and Jamaica 40%.

Enclave Tourism:-Local businesses often see their chances to earn income from tourists severely reduced by the creation of "all-inclusive" vacation packages. When tourists remain for their entire stay at the same cruise ship or resort, which provides everything they need and where they will make all their expenditures, not much opportunity is left for local people to profit from tourism.

Increase in Prices:- Increasing demand for basic services and goods from tourists will often cause price hikes that negatively affect local residents whose income does not increase proportionately.

Tourism development and the related rise in real estate demand may dramatically increase building costs and land values. Not only does this make it more difficult for local people, especially in developing countries, to meet their basic daily needs, it can also result in a dominance by outsiders in land markets and in-migration that erodes economic opportunities for the locals, eventually disempowering residents.

Economic Dependence of the Local Community on Tourism:- Diversification in an economy is a sign of health, however if a country or region becomes dependent for its economic survival upon one industry, it can put major stress upon this industry as well as the people involved to perform well. Many countries, especially developing countries with little ability to explore other resources, have embraced tourism as a way to boost the economy.

According to the WTO, in Gambia, for instance, 30% of the workforce depends directly or indirectly on tourism. In Small Island developing states, percentages can range from 83% in the Maldives to 21% in the Seychelles and 34% in Jamaica. Over-reliance on tourism, especially mass tourism, carries significant risks to tourism-dependent economies. Economic recession and the impacts of natural disasters such as tropical storms and cyclones as well as changing tourism patterns can have a devastating effect on the local tourism sector. Malta has only 380,000 residents, but received 1.2 million tourists in 1999. As 25% of GDP (and indirectly 40%), tourism generated more than \$650 million in foreign exchange earnings. Malta's high dependence on tourism and a limited number of export products makes its trade performance vulnerable to shifts in international demand (<http://www.world-tourism.org/2000>).

Seasonal Character of Jobs:- The seasonal character of the tourism industry creates economic problems for destinations that are heavily dependent on it. Problems that seasonal workers face include job (and therefore income) insecurity, usually with no guarantee of employment from one season to the next, difficulties in getting training, employment-related medical benefits, and recognition of their experience, and unsatisfactory housing and working conditions.

Other Industry Impacts Affecting Tourism:- Political crisis like the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States of America and economic crises, like the Asian crisis that hit Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia a few years ago, can be devastating to inbound tourism flows. The financial turmoil triggered a sharp fall in tourism flows to affected countries during 1997 and 1998. In the Philippines, the crisis and the temporary closure of Philippine Airlines affected inbound arrivals significantly as there was a decline of almost 3.3% in 1998 (<http://www.world-tourism.org/2000>).

2.2. IMPACTS OF TOURISM IN SMALL ISLAND STATES

"Without an early warning system in place, Island decision-makers rush to embrace the varied economic benefits of tourism but fail to anticipate the destructive intrusions of mass tourism practice: in particular, how the interplay of inadequate facility, infra-structure, and amenity

planning and management, with the high-volume propensity of capital-intensive travel interests, tends to cumulatively overrun the delicate insular carrying capacity" (McElroy and de Albuquerque, 1998: 164).

The post-war history of small Islands has been marked by two favourable development factors: the march of decolonization and the global spread of international tourism. In the first case, since 1960 roughly 30 tropical/temperate Islands across the five major oceanic basins have become politically independent (McElroy 2002). Other Island territories have achieved significantly greater internal self-government and have used this newfound autonomy—the so called “resource of jurisdiction”—to create tax havens and diversify into other non-traditional activities like offshore finance and ship registry (Baldacchino and Milne, 2000).

In the second case, the remarkable transformation of tourism into the world’s largest industry - accounting for roughly a tenth of global GDP, employment and capital formation (WTTC, 2001)—has coincided with the restructuring of small Island economies away from traditional exports like sugar and copra toward mass tourism and related construction. The results have transformed insular landscapes across the Caribbean, Mediterranean and North Pacific and created the so-called “Pleasure Periphery” of North America, Europe and Japan respectively.

About three-fourths of small countries are Islands with less than one million inhabitants (Hein, 1990). Small Islands suffer from a constellation of limitations. These include lack of diversification of the economy and of resources, the scarcity of income and volatility. Lack or inability to generate self-sustained growth because of capital shortage and small market size is their Achilles' heel (Crowards & Coulter, 1998). Remote Islanders also suffer reduced real income and basic services because of high transport costs associated with dependence on essential imports and scale diseconomies exacerbated in archipelagic states like Bahamas, Maldives and Kiribati (World Bank, 2000). As a result, Island economies are among the world’s most vulnerable, i.e. susceptible to potential adverse external shocks beyond their control.

As one of only a few development options for Small Island developing states, Tourism has contributed much to their development, and will continue to be very important for their future growth. It could also stimulate the development of other sectors. The special ecological and cultural diversity of Island societies represents a rare fragment of the global commons where residents root and celebrate identity, visitors witness the intricate unfolding of nature with its variety of human responses, and all find physical and spiritual renewal (Singh & Singh, 1999).

However, forecast for the next 20 years shows that the integrity of this patrimony is under threat from a generation of mass tourism and a doubling of visitation, particularly to remote areas (UNEP, 1998). This post-war development legacy suggests that sustainability can only be achieved by controlled and/or lower density use since “freedom in the commons brings ruin to all” (Hardin, 2000). To reverse past market failure will require strong policy intervention, comprehensive integrated planning and improved impact monitoring.

Since tourism’s bio-cultural base is in decline across the Island world, and because of the continued pressures from increased globalization expected for the future (UNEP, 2002), researchers have called for greener, lower-density tourism styles and begun to explore the causes of this policy failure. A variety of structural and institutional factors have been suggested (McElroy, 2002): the disequilibria between a large-scale consumption-based international tourist economy imposed upon a small Island ecology; Island policy makers’ preoccupation with raising visitor numbers instead of net expenditure; tourism’s asymmetrical dynamics whereby linear economic benefits are mismatched with non-linear socio-environmental costs; and the absence of a comprehensive measure of overall tourism impact, i.e. an early warning signal to broadly assess the approach of potentially dangerous socio-environmental thresholds.

Providentially, unique natural and cultural patrimonies constitute the one enduring insular comparative advantage. It is not thus surprising that Island microstates have made mass tourism development their primary post-war modernization of choice. This strategy seems particularly relevant during the present era of globalization when the colonial economy based on preferences is crumbling, and when post-cold war political realignments have resulted in significantly reduced centre-periphery aid flows. However, insular environments are notoriously fragile, characterized by high endemism but weak species diversity (resistance), making them pervious to external impacts from introduced predators, over harvesting, invasive crowding and natural disasters (Bryant & Nielson, 1998). Similarly, closely interlocking insular terrestrial and marine ecosystems are extremely vulnerable to the kinds of large-scale resort and transport infrastructure construction necessary for mass tourism to thrive. Likewise, with the decline of renewable agro forestry and fishing pursuits, traditional cultural roots have been weakened by the presence of affluent visitors and lifestyles and the lure of Western media (McMurray and Smith, 1998).

As a result, after a generation of mass tourism development, Island bio-cultural diversity around the world is under siege posing a major threat to the long-run viability of tropical tourism. For example, the majority of global bird extinctions have occurred on Islands. Although over one of

six plant species grow on Islands, one of three of all known endangered plant species grow on oceanic Islands. Oceanic Islands are underrepresented worldwide in protected areas (UNEP, 1999).

The outlook is similar in the peripheral Island areas. After extensive colonial clearing of virgin forests for sugar culture and later bananas, the Caribbean, the region most dependent on tourism, bears the scars of overrun. Freshwater resources are threatened by hotel and condominium developments on steep slopes, harming watersheds, causing erosion and lagoon pollution. Nearly 30 percent of the reefs—a good barometer of environmental health—are at high risk because of runoff and sedimentation and discharges of untreated municipal and hotel waste (Bryant & Nielson, 1998). The large number of pleasure yachts and cruise ships directly inject waste into these waters because of inadequate port reception facilities. The highest threats appear to be in the smaller Lesser Antilles, precisely those destinations most aggressively promoting and dependent upon mass tourism. Partly as a result of these intrusions, 60 species of endemic birds are endangered plus 30 mammals and 37 reptiles. Since 1985, fish catches are off nearly 50 percent in gross tonnage (UNEP, 1999).

The situation is similar in the Indian Ocean. Heavily populated areas have been plagued by over fishing, reef harvesting for trade in rare species, sand mining for construction, as well as mangrove destruction, erosion, and coastal pollution through unplanned urbanization. Deforestation in Comoros is proceeding at over five percent per annum. The natural vegetation of Mauritius has been virtually eradicated for sugar culture. Mauritius and Seychelles are ranked second and third in the world in terms of endangered native plant species. In some Islands over half of the endemic species are threatened. In Mauritius 62 animal species (mainly birds) are extinct. In Seychelles rapid declines in rare turtle populations continue. In addition, beach-based resort and infrastructure facilities are under threat from sea level rise in Seychelles, Mauritius and Maldives (UNEP, 1999).

The Pacific, in transition from subsistence to a cash economy, is undergoing over- grazing, intense cropping on marginal hillsides, unsustainable logging and land clearing for commercial agriculture. Deforestation rates are among the most rapid in the world. The region also boasts the largest number of documented bird extinctions in the world and seven times more endangered species than the Caribbean (UNEP, 1999). The coral reef system, most extensive and diverse in the world, is under pressure from all sides: over fishing, dynamiting, sand extraction, fertilizer and sewage pollution, and the destruction of fringing reefs and mangroves

for coastal tourist and urban development. With increasing globalization, world affluence, transport access and the demand for authenticity, pressures on Island biodiversity and traditional cultural mores are expected to escalate (Singh and Singh, 1999).

Why has the short-run ‘success’ of mass tourism been allowed to jeopardize Island bio-cultural diversity and the industry’s long-term future? The answer lies in the peculiar nexus between tourist-environment scale disequilibrium and a free-market political economy. First, the imposition of a large-scale, un-trammeled consumption-based international economy with delicate, finite Island ecology almost guarantees over time that insular carrying capacities will be crossed. This scale discrepancy is due to the high-volume profit imperatives of heavily capitalized airline, cruise, and hotel interests plus other secondary effects associated with rapid mass tourism development in small destinations: loss of traditional sustainable resource activities, mounting waste and crowding from on-site visitors, and environmentally altering construction of large-scale resorts and infrastructure (Beller, 1990).

Second, Island policy makers with short electoral time horizons are often preoccupied with increasing visitor volume instead of maximizing net local expenditure. To protect market share in the competitive global marketplace, they favour rapid growth, extending the shoulder season and even price discounting with tour operators (Beller, 1990). Such policies place further pressure on the already stressed socio-environmental fabric and lead to increasing promotion, crowding and decay followed by declines in profit margins, visitor and vacation quality, and the resources needed to refurbish and restore.

A third element in the mix is the complex and dynamic nature of tourism itself. Its impacts are asymmetrical. To illustrate, visible economic benefits are quick to appear and linear while socio-environmental costs are non-linear and usually surface after dangerous thresholds are reached (Beller, 1990). This benefit-cost disjunction is partly why the “Sustainability Diamond” is rarely achieved. Normally, early in the resort cycle the needs of the visitors and the developers/travel interests take precedence, and the priorities of the host population and bio-cultural asset protection are deferred until “tourism as usual” becomes unsustainable (Briguglio & Archer, 1996).

Another problem is that tourism’s impacts are difficult to measure. They are pervasive, involving a series of products/services consumed through time, and they include difficult to quantify cultural and ecological externalities. There are no universally accepted comprehensive

measures of overall tourism impact. As a result, Island decision makers cannot easily assess where their destinations lie along the tourist-environment continuum, and thus they cannot proactively anticipate danger points.

To this end, The United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados, 1994) forwards the following three level constructive and workable policies towards the alleviation of the negative impacts of tourism development in small Island states around the world.

A. National action, policies and measures

- (i). Ensure that tourism development and environmental management are mutually supportive.
- (ii) Adopt integrated planning and policies to ensure sustainable tourism development, with particular attention to land-use planning and coastal zone management, requiring environmental impact assessments for all tourism projects; continuous monitoring of the environmental impact of all tourism activities; and the development of guidelines and standards for design and construction taking into account energy and water consumption, the generation and the disposal of wastes and land degradation, the proper management and protection of eco-tourism attractions, and the carrying capacity of areas for tourism.
- (iii). Identify and develop facilities to meet specific niche markets, particularly in eco-tourism, nature and cultural tourism, and involve local populations in the identification and management of natural protected areas set aside for eco-tourism.
- (iv). Adopt measures to protect the cultural integrity of Small Island developing States.

B. Regional action

- (i). Ensure that tourism and the environment are mutually supportive in cooperation schemes at the regional level including appropriate harmonization of standards and regulations.
- (ii). Encourage the assessment and development of potential complementarities among small Island developing states including the development of packaged options covering several Islands and encouraging joint marketing and training programs.

- (iii). Establish or strengthen regional mechanisms for the exchange of information in the development of a safe and sustainable tourism sector, using, as appropriate, the capacities of regional tourism organizations.

C. International action

- (i). Promote recognition of the value of tourism in small Island developing states to the international community as well as the fragility of the resources on which tourism in small Island developing states depends and of the need therefore for international support to encourage its sustainable development.
- (ii). Facilitate efforts at the national and regional levels to assess the overall impact of the economic, social and ecological aspects of tourism, so as to plan sustainable tourism and to develop eco- and cultural tourism.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research paper is based on primary research and secondary research. In most instances the author has combined both depending on their suitability to the theme. The author made use of primary research to study the subject of interest through first hand observation and investigation. Nevertheless, other than gathering information from first hand observation investigation and through conducting a survey in the Dahlak Islands, the author was not able to obtain adequate literature or historical text that could have otherwise to some degree, contributed to the research.

Other than primary research, the author also attempted at obtaining secondary research that other researchers have made pertaining to the Dahlak Islands in particular and to the state of tourism in Eritrea in general. Though not fully adequate the author was able to gather bits and pieces that would serve the purpose of the research paper.

Conducting survey in the Dahlak Islands and gathering information through open-ended and close-ended questionnaires has to some extent helped to complement the information that could have been missed from primary and secondary research sources. It is these sort of activities that constitutes the research paper-identifying, locating, assessing and assembling with other research findings upon which the author developed and expressed the ideas, views, opinions, comments, suggestions and recommendations as regards tourism development in the Dahlak Islands, which are the centre of the research paper.

The author consulted some general reference works relevant to the subject matter such as encyclopaedia; books and brochures that could help enrich the substance of the research. The author also visited some public and academic libraries in Asmara and Addis Ababa. But literature was too scanty as regards tourism development in Eritrea. The author was surprised to find out that the Eritrean government had done little to public literature or give away brochures, or tourist guide information booklets on tourism. However general information was obtained from administrators of the islands and some authorities of the Ministry of Tourism in Asmara, from which it was some how possible to obtain Atlases

and statistical data. Though not reliable enough, the Atlases and the statistical data have been used curiously to avoid bias.

The methodology of note taking has been summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting. When summarizing, the author recorded only the general idea of a given pertinent material. In case it required detailed notes on specific sentences and pages without any need to their exact wording, the author probed them by paraphrasing and restating the material.

Whenever confident that some sentences or passages in its original working might make an effective contribution to the research, the author has transcribed that material exactly as it has appeared, word for word. Whenever the author quoted verbatim from a work quotation marks have been used appropriately to distinguish the quotation from the portion summarized and paraphrased. Attention has been paid to keep accurate record of the page numbers of all material summarized, paraphrased or quoted.

The outline of the research that has been designed has greatly helped to get an overview of the paper and to figure out how each section of the paper is related to the others as well as to lay down the logical progression of an argument, comment and recommendation... etc. Furthermore, the outline that has been formulated has facilitated to keep track of all-important aspects of the subject matter and to focus attention on relevant topics.

As the author got closer to writing, it was appropriate and necessary to shape the information gathered into a unified, coherent whole by framing the thesis statement “AN EXPOSÉ OF THE STATE OF TOURISM IN ERITREA WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE DAHLAK ISLANDS” of the research paper that has formulated both the topic and the point of view. Two important factors have been considered in the shaping of the thesis statement, the purpose and the audience i.e.:-

- a. What is it that the author is trying to achieve in the research paper? Is it to describe or explain something, argue for a certain point of view, or persuade the reader to consider or do something?

- b. Who or what is the audience the author is writing for? Is the reader or audience interested or concerned about the subject? Is he/she familiar with or a specialist on the subject? Will he/she agree with the outcomes?

After settling down with the thesis statement, the author streamlined the working outline into a final one upon which organized the ideas and the accumulated research into a logical, precise and descriptive paper; keeping the thesis statement and the audience in mind. To that end the approach was to bring related material together under general headings, and arrange these sections so as to make certain that one logically connects with another.

The methodology used in organizing the plan of the research paper includes defining of relevant words and terms; classification and categorization, qualification and quantification and computation and analysis of findings, paying much attention to the quotations and references which were selected to make use of.

In the process, the author dwelt on for many days on end clarifying, justifying, and substantiating inconsistent, vague, controversial and contradictory statements or assumptions. New paragraphs have been compelled to elucidate and complement facts and figures that are crucial to the research paper. Simultaneously, much has been done to improve the fluency and coherence of each sub-section and section of the paper, which obviously required linkages between sentences or paragraphs. Deleting was at times needed of any material that is irrelevant, unimportant, repetitive, or vague and dispensable.

3.1. SOURCES OF INFORMATION USED IN COMPILING THE RESEARCH PAPER

Books:- Title of Book, Author, Date of Publication, Publishers and Page No of Quotation are clearly described.

Other publications used:-

- Periodicals and Various Bulletins, Newspapers etc.
- Broachers, Information Booklets, Give Away Materials etc
- Manuals, Directives, Instructional Guides etc.

- Research and Baseline Survey Paper
- Proceedings of Conferences and Meeting
- Various Relevant Reports.

3.2. THE QUESTIONNAIRE

This research paper has been written and compiled for purposes of identifying, examining and evaluating the level of public awareness on the realm of tourism in Eritrea in general, and more specifically, to test impact assessment and analyze the degree and extent of visitors' and non-visitors' attitude towards tourism development in the Dahlak Islands. As initially and repeatedly narrated before, the author was motivated to conduct this research because of the irresistible and compelling setting and nature beauty and the untapped potential of the Islands as regards the development of tourism industry in Eritrea. Needless to say, this paper is the first of its kind undertaken with intention of measuring outlooks or attitudes of visitors' and non-visitors' pertaining to the Dahlak Islands.

Although no recent census has been made, the population of Eritrea is estimated to be 3.5 to 4 million from which around 1.5 million live in Diaspora. From the total population living inside the country roughly 400,000 are adults. Due to the extremely limited availability of finance and other useful resource materials for that matter, to pursue its objective one of the methodological approaches used in this research has been the distribution of 450 questionnaires in the six provinces (locally known as "zobas") out of which 100 have been distributed in Asmara. The rationale is that people with orientation on tourism are residents in the capital. Similarly, another 100 questionnaires have been distributed in Massawa. The reason and motivation for this has been the resident's spatial proximity to the Dahlak Islands. Other 200 questionnaires have been distributed to the remaining four provinces each securing 50 questionnaires. The remaining 50 questionnaires have been made to be completed by foreign visitors. The questionnaires have closed and open-ended questions. Close-ended questions served to collect short and precise answers given by respondents. Open-ended questions served as means to collect descriptive answers from respondents, which were at a later stage summarized.

3.2.1. Objectives of the Questionnaire:- The Questionnaire is specifically

designed to know:

- Role of government in general, about tourism development in Eritrea
- Role of government in the Dahlak islands in specific
- Government's policies on Economic development in general, and tourism in particular within the context of Dahlak islands
- Present state of tourism in Eritrea and future plans and strategies to develop the industry in general and in the Dahlak islands in particular.
- Flow of tourists, periodical, seasonal and annual and assess its impact on tourism currency earnings and future development in the country in general, with major focus on the Dahlak islands and other tourist attraction spots in the country.

3.2.2. Questionnaire Design

Each questionnaire is composed of 42 questions and embraces quite a number of variables aimed at examining respondents' level of awareness about tourism and to check and counter check their knowledge related to identifying best tourist attractions and facilities. The questionnaires include detailed queries in order for the respondents to express extensively their knowledge and attitude towards the core issue of the research paper, e.g. concerning tourism marketing and promotion and priority areas of tourism development in Dahlak Islands. The questionnaire is presented as an appendix in appendix 1 inside the body of the paper.

The responses to each questionnaire by all respondents are clearly described, underscoring the major highlights taken from respondents. Both figurative and narrative presentations are used. Comparisons and contrasts are narrated briefly to articulate respondent's knowledge, attitude...etc about the subject or the islands in question. Also brief explanation of some problems that encountered during the interview process is discussed.

3.2.3. Analysis and Reporting

In analyzing and reporting the existing gathered data from the questionnaire the author have discussed:-

- a) Response to questions (variables) by respondents in descriptive and figurative manner (% and numerical)
- b) Acknowledging of “NO RESPONSE” or “I don’t know”, or “reluctance to respond” by respondents; by remarking some reasons why?
- c) General mood of respondents during interviewing process e.g. “passiveness” suspicion “fear” or because of language barriers in communication.

3.2.4. Questionnaire Return Rate

Out of the 450 questionnaires disseminated to the respondents, 381 (85%) have been successfully returned. The rest 68 (15%) have been lost or unreturned.

3.2.5. Compiling of Information from Questionnaire

On compiling information from the questionnaire after tallying and entering data gathered; the compiling of facts and figures (numeric and percentage wise) was followed. Then determining female to male; education, occupation, belief, awareness or attitudinal ratio was taken.

3.3. SITE VISIT

As it is fully described in chapter six inside the body of this paper, while observing the Dahlak Islands physically the following features of the Islands were studied.

- Physical features, landscape and topography
- Climate, rainfall and vegetation
- Flora and fauna
- Socio –economic infrastructures (schools, clinics, telephone, roads ...etc)
- Means of livelihood of the indigenous people/exploitation of resources)
- Religion (belief), culture, ethnography, language, norms
- Socio-economic integration/ stratification

- Affiliation with the zonal administration and central government
- Knowledge of the subject matter of tourism and potential of the islands
- Condition of tourism on the islands

3.4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF REFERENCES

- All literature used as a source of primary or secondary information. Title, date of publication, publishers. Authors, date of publication. Page(s) are clearly described.
- The Name, age, sex, occupation, role or responsibility of every person's or authorities consulted or interviewed in site or elsewhere is recorded.
- Maps, sketches, artwork or any sculpture or icon material, date, proprietor, location, and significance attributed to it are recorded.

CHAPTER FOUR: BACKGROUND FOR DEVELOPING TOURISM IN ERITREA

Developing tourism in Eritrea ought to be placed within the context of the country's environmental characteristics, cultural and economic patterns, and development policies. These all influence the approach to planning tourism development. Therefore, the major opportunities for developing tourism need to be identified as a basis for focusing on important issues.

4.1 THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

4.1.1 Location

Eritrea lies between 12 and 18 degrees north latitude, 36 and 44 degrees east longitude. The country occupies about 125,000 square kilometres of land area, and is approximately the same size as England. Eritrea has an important position northwest of the Horn of Africa. The country possesses a coastline on the Red Sea of more than 1,000 kilometres and about 350 offshore Islands, mostly in the Dahlak chain located off the central coastal area. Eritrea is bounded on the north and west by Sudan, on the south by Ethiopia and Djibouti. Saudi Arabia and Yemen are located across the Red Sea from Eritrea (*Eritrean Travel Trade Manual, 2000*).

4.1.2 Topography

The topography of the country is very diverse and forms much scenic beauty, which is one of the important attractions of the country. The country's topography also greatly influences the climatic patterns. Eritrea's landforms were created in part by the two almost parallel fault lines extending from Syria in the north to Mozambique in the south that have formed the Great Rift Valley of Africa. The principal topographic zones of the country are:



Figure 4.1: Dahlak Islands, Features of wild life on the seashores.

- The Red Sea coastal plain including the Danakil Depression (100 meters below sea level) and the southern desert, and the Dahlalak Island group.
- The highlands area stretching from Sudan in the north to Ethiopia in the south with elevations of up to or more than 2,000 meters (Asmara is at about 2,300 meters and Keren is at 1,400 meters). The highest mountain in the country is Amba Soira at 3,010 meters.
- The western lowlands that extend from the highlands to Sudan.

One of the outstanding features of the country is the escarpment between the capital city Asmara and the main seaport Massawa, which goes from more than 2,000 meters to sea level in less than 100 kilometres. The road and railway between these two cities offers dramatic scenic views and is known as the journey of “Three Seasons in Two Hours”. Elsewhere the highlands are also very scenic.

4.1.3 Climate

The climate ranges from hot and arid conditions along the coastal plain and Dahlak Islands, cool temperate moist conditions with little seasonal variation in the highlands region, to more variable seasons in the western lowlands. On the coast and Islands, the months from

June to September are extremely hot with daily temperatures ranging from 40-50 degrees C. The Danakil Depression is one of the hottest places on earth reaching more than 50 degrees C during the summer months. In winter, daily temperatures in the coastal area range from 21 to 35 degree C.

In the highlands, the hottest month is usually May with highs around 30 degrees C. Winter is between December and February with low temperatures at night that can be near freezing. Asmara enjoys an equable pleasant climate all year round, although it can be cold at night in the winter. In the western lowlands, the high temperatures are comparable to those on the coast. December is the coldest month with temperatures falling as low as 15 degrees C.

Being within the Sahelian rainfall zone, precipitation is on average relatively low and inconsistent, and there are frequent periods of drought. Annual rainfall ranges from between 400 and 650 millimetres in the highlands, 200 and 400 millimetres in the western lowlands and less than 200 millimetres along the coastal plane. In the highlands and western lowlands, there are two rainy seasons; the short rains in March and April and the main rains from late June to the beginning of September. The rainy season on the coast north of the Dankil Depression takes place in the winter months. In the Danakil Depression itself rain is extremely rare. All rivers are seasonal, being dry for most of the year but frequently experiencing flooding after the rains (*Government of Eritrea, National Environment and Management Plan, 1995*).

The equable climate of highlands is suitable for tourism throughout the year, while the coastal and western lowlands are the most comfortable during the months of September through May. The June to September heat of the coastal and western lowlands and Islands is not highly conducive to tourism during that season.

4.1.4. Vegetation and Wildlife

A century ago, 30 per cent of Eritrea was covered by forest. By 1960, that amount had declined to 5 per cent and in 1995, less than 1 per cent of the country was estimated to be

occupied by forest. In addition, there are extensive areas of shrub land and some wooded grassland. Deforestation has resulted from several factors:

- *Expansion of agriculture, which involved removal of forest.*
- *Cutting of trees for fuel wood.*
- *The long war of liberation during which Ethiopian forces cut trees for construction of fortifications.*
- *Construction of traditional houses utilizing wood and the traditional attitude that trees are abundant and can be used at will.*

Because of deforestation, soil erosion has been serious in some areas. About 100,000 hectares of forest area have been closed to use, most of which is mixed evergreen tropical woodland located in Semenawi Bahri National Park, a highly scenic area on the escarpment north of Asmara (*Jan Bojo, Land Degradation in Eritrea (1996), World Bank*).

Wildlife, in association with its natural habitat, is important for development of nature or eco-tourism. Historically, Eritrea accommodated a broad range of animal species including elephant, hippopotamus, buffalo, giraffe, greater kudu, wild ass, Nubian ibex, waterbuck, lion, leopard, cheetah and colobus monkey as well as numerous smaller species.

At present, populations of these species persist in parts of the country, for example, a small elephant population is known to exist in Gash-Setit (Western low lands of Eritrea), but the populations of many species are low and some are considered threatened or endangered. The single most important factor adversely affecting wild life is loss of habitat resulting from expansion of agricultural activities. With application of conservation measures, animal populations can be expected to recover in some areas.

Many species of birds live in Eritrea including resident and migratory coastal birds. In the Dahlak Island alone, 109 bird species have been recorded. Bird life offers the opportunity for organizing special interest bird watching tours. The Red Sea contains a diversity of sea life including a high proportion of endemic species. The coral reefs of the Red Sea have become world famous, both with scientists and recreational divers. Although coral reefs and associated fishes in the Southern Red Sea, including the Eritrean area are less well-

developed than the reefs further north, those in Eritrean waters are still considered to offer much potential for recreation diving and tourism. For example, recent surveys indicate 40 coral reef fish species in stressed areas near Massawa, but more than 250 species on the outer reefs of the Dahlak Bank. The Dahlak Islands are also important habitats for sea turtles and dugongs (*Department of Environment, Ministry of Land, Water & Environment of Eritrea, Country Assessment Report on Sustainable Development 1991*).

4.2. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Although conducting population census is currently underway, so far the precise number of inhabitants is not known. Estimates vary between 3.5 and 4 million living in the country. A further one million live abroad, most of them in the Sudan and the Arab states in the Middle East, while the rest remain scattered in Italy, Germany, Canada, the USA and elsewhere in the world. There are nine ethnic groups indigenous to the country: Tigrina, Tigre, Bilen, Saho, Hedareb, Kunama, Nara, Rashaida and Afar. Each group lives in a different area of the country such as the nomadic Rashaida who roam the coastal area and the Afar who inhabit the harsh Danakil Depression. Their diversified cultures manifesting in their distinctive customs, styles of dress, unique arts and crafts, household designs, music and dance are highly attractive features for tourists if they have the wish and the opportunity to visit Eritrea. One would highly appreciate the open simplicity and the friendly nature of Eritreans, by chatting with a common citizen in the streets of Asmara and other cities. Tigrina and Arabic languages are the national languages. English is the third language the government uses extensively.

Population growth rate is estimated at a high 3.3 percent during 1991-1994. Average life expectancy is about 46 years, which is low by African standards. Average per capita income is about US\$ 150 per year, and poverty is widespread especially in rural areas (*National Statistics Office Demographic & Health Statistics: 1995*).

Although there is no freedom of religion at present, the two major religions are Christianity and Islam. The main Christian denomination is Coptic, but there are also considerable numbers of Catholics and some Protestants. There is a small Jewish community in Asmara.

Certain Ethnic groups are animists, which comprise about 5 per cent of the population. Some Coptic, Catholic and Protestant churches, mosques, a synagogue and shrines are physically impressive, both to the host country and to the tourist, apart from their attraction for tourists they are also valueless and life-time attractions for tourists on their own right. The working languages of Eritrea are Tigrinya, Arabic and English.

4.3. ECONOMIC PATTERNS AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY OF ERITREA

4.3.1 Economic Patterns: An over-view

The economy of Eritrea is based primarily on agriculture, small-scale industry, undeveloped fisheries and a services sector including tourism. Agriculture is the provider of livelihood to the peasantry, which accounts 85% of the population. Productivity is low and in this sector as a result of traditional farming implements and total dependence on rain fed farming habits with limited use of modern agricultural inputs.

During the colonial rule Eritrea had some large agro-industrial complexes but were destroyed as a result of the wars waged against colonizers. Agriculture suffered greatly in the 1970s and 1980s from the protracted war and socialist economic policies of the government. A resolute commitment is highly required on the part of the government to rehabilitate the large farms that had been specializing in dairy, fruit and vegetable production for the consumption of the urban population, which would also pave the way for the development of agro tourism.

Until the early 1970s and particularly prior to the early 1960s, Eritrea had a thriving industrial sector. However, the economy was greatly affected both by the war for liberation and the socialist policies of the Dergue Regime, which took power in the mid-1970s. Nonetheless, even after independence, the ruling regime in Eritrea has confiscated in all major industrial establishments and has put them under exclusive state ownership. Their planning and marketing activities are subjected to centralized direction and control. Concurrently, during this period there has been acute shortage of finance for investment in new ventures, i.e. Industrial plants, machinery, farming and infrastructure. Neglect of basic

maintenance activities has further the already debilitating economy. Much industrial activity is still at its lowest ebb and suffers from lack of investment. Limited marketing and poor management have compounded the fate of the sector.

Fisheries and salt panning were an important component of the economy in the 1950s and early 1960s when some 20,000 fishermen attained a peak production of 25,000 tones of fish in 1954, most of which were destined for export. Fishing was adversely affected by the war for independence, and the current Marxist lead political economy that dispersed fishing communities, destroyed onshore facilities and disrupted the whole trade networks (*Department of Environment, Ministry of Land, Water & Environment of Eritrea, Country Assessment Report on Sustainable Development 1991*).

The services sector of the financial institution is poor. They too, are exclusively owned by the government. Banking, finance and transport are centrally controlled and are as a consequence, unreliable and ineffective. Since the border conflict with Ethiopia, its potential growth has seriously been affected.

Once relatively well developed, the infrastructure of the country was greatly damaged and neglected during the struggle for independence. Little has been made to rehabilitate and expand the infrastructure which all the way move worsened the national economy.

4.3.2 Economic Development Policy

As presented in its initial publication of 1994, the government in its Macro-Policy, and also according to its 1998 publication, National Economic Policy Framework substantial progress has been made since independence and that the economy has achieved an average annual growth rate of about 6 per cent, and that the annual average rate of inflation has been maintained at less than 5 per cent.

In actual terms however, the economy of the country has since then been weakening more than any time ever. And it has been far a very long time before that real inflation rate has been increasing at an unprecedented rate. For instance during the first few years of independence 1992-1995 the price of a kilo of sugar and a kilo of coffee was 4 and 15 Nakfa (name of the Eritrean Currency) respectively. At present a kilo of sugar worth 20-25

Nakfa and a kilo of coffee is 130-150 Nakfa. Worth mentioning, sugar and coffee were the very widely used and easily accessible commodities in Eritrea. Once more, in the early 1990s the exchange value of a dollar against Nakfa was one to seven, whereas presently the rate of exchange is one to twenty five.

According to the 1998 policy framework the most important features of the Eritrean economy that can be exploited to achieve a reasonably fast and sustainable growth are:

Motivated workforce:- In general Eritreans are industrious, resourceful, creative, and possess good work ethic. Due to the forced exile during the struggle for Independence, some Eritreans have developed entrepreneurial talents and have acquired the skill and the knowledge as a result of their exposure to international business and modern managerial practices.

Mineral/petroleum reserves:- There are credible geological indications that Eritrea is endowed with abundant mineral deposits, and that the prospects for commercially recoverable hydrocarbon (petroleum and natural gas) deposits are also promising.

Agriculture and fisheries:- Agriculture accounts for about 20 per cent of Eritrea's GDP and about 50 per cent of its current merchandise exports. Providing that Eritrea's more than 3.2 million hectares of arable land and substantial water resources are effectively developed, this sector has considerable potential for growth for both domestic consumption and export. Similarly, exploitation of Eritrea's considerable potential of coastal and deep-sea fishing in the Red Sea, and value-adding processing of fish and other marine resources can generate significant foreign exchange.

Manufacturing sector:- Eritrea's strategic location provides an easy access to African, European and Middle Eastern markets. The motivated workforce combined with improvements to infrastructure, such as transport and communications network, enhances the country's comparative advantage in export-oriented manufacturing industries.

Services sector:- Eritrea is well placed to offer competitive services in the region. When its infrastructure is improved substantially, it will be positioned to become a successful export

of tourism, transport and financial services. Its pleasant and diverse climatic conditions, its Red sea gateway and its proximity to major tourist markets in Europe, the middle East and Africa offer substantial potential for the development of tourism and transport services, as well as offshore banking and other financial services.

However, in order to gear the above-indicated important features and to use them as a engine for the dreamed economic development of the nation, there is a need to build a strong and responsible government that values peace, democracy, good governance, and transparency in the country which is missing at present. Unity of purpose, strong commitment to development of a private sector-led market economy, an efficient civil service system capable of providing effective assistance to the private sector, and adoption of a zero-tolerance policy toward corruption are also the other prerequisites to be considered. More over, other practical constraints to growth may also include:

Human resources deficiency:- There is a severe shortage of appropriate human capital. The long-term solution lies in a concerted national effort aimed at increasing educational and skill development opportunities for all Eritreans consistent with absorptive capacity of the economy.

Financial and foreign exchange gap:- With a low per capita income and widespread poverty, Eritrea's ability to mobilize sufficient domestic savings to finance required investments is limited. Export earnings are also inadequate to provide the foreign exchange necessary to import the machinery, equipment and essential production inputs that are critical for achieving rapid economic recovery and growth. These gaps need to be tackled through well-planned mobilization of internal and external financial resources and a more aggressive export development program.

Physical infrastructure:- The supply and quality of Eritrea's infrastructure are still inadequate to encourage foreign investment.

Institutional capacity:- Eritrea's administrative, legal, commercial, judiciary and regulatory institutions are still poor. The capacity of the private sector is extremely blocked to conduct business competitively.

Inadequacy of information:- There is still a great lack of relevant, timely and reliable economic and social information. Freedom of press and private media channels have to be permitted to work. Further, a complete household income and expenditure survey and population census has to be done. A national accounts statistics also need to be organized.

Technological challenges:- Decades of occupation and war related with the existing command economic system resulted in destruction and neglect of the limited technological base that existed. During the short-term, these technological and managerial gaps may be mitigated by importation of both physical and human capital. Over the medium and long-term, the solution lies in accelerated national human resources development. Including: reconstruction and expansion of the strategic productive base and infrastructure of the economy, accumulation of human capital, adoption and enforcement of sound standards and regulations:

Also, the 1998 policy states “Eritrea’s overall development strategy aims at facilitating the establishment of a dynamic private sector-led market economy”. Inconsistent with this, the government is still monopolizing and militarizing the whole economy and this in turn is the primary factor for de-motivating the expected private investment that could have been achieved in tourism or other sectors of the economy. The same document presents a macroeconomic policy framework and sets forth sectoral objectives and strategies. Under the tourism sector, the document states:

Eritrea has significant potential for the development of tourism. It has pleasant and varied climatic zones that provide comfortable weather year-round. Furthermore, Eritrea’s extended Red Sea coastline, numerous offshore Islands, and the mainland along the coast offer exquisite and unspoiled beaches. Marine life under the waters off the Eritrean coast opens up a treasure chest of colorful corals, and a fascinating spectacle of life that offers a tremendous bounty for scuba divers. Inland Eritrea also boasts spectacular mountain scenery dotted with picturesque traditional villages. In combination, these factors augur well for the development of a dynamic and self-sustaining tourism industry (National Tourism Development Plan, Ministry of Tourism of Eritrea, 1997:12).

However, to exploit the above-mentioned potential, there is a need to build a comprehensive development strategy for the tourism industry, and actions must be taken to introduce Eritrea as a tourist destination. To single out some, there is a need in improving accommodation for visitors, encouraging the establishment of new hospitality facilities, and privatizing or offering for private management all the hotels and related facilities under the government's control. Also efforts have to be given to expand tourism services with full appreciation of the need to preserve and enhance Eritrea's environmental resources.

4.4. OBJECTIVES FOR DEVELOPING TOURISM IN ERITREA

According to the 2020 Eritrea Tourism Development Plan the overall objectives for developing tourism in Eritrea are:

- To use tourism as one of the means to improve the living standards of Eritrea's in both urban and rural areas.
- To use tourism as a vehicle for exposing the international community to the history, interesting cultures and diverse environments of Eritrea.
- To use tourism as an important stimulus to conserve and enhance the natural environment and cultural heritage of the country.
- To provide opportunities for Eritreans to utilize their leisure time productively.

4.5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING TOURISM IN ERITREA

The Eritrea 2020 Tourism Development Plan states that Eritrea possesses significant opportunities for developing tourism, which should be taken advantage of. According to the plan major opportunities include.

- Important tourism resources related to the natural environment including good marine areas offering water recreation and diving potential, very scenic areas especially in the highlands, several proposed national parks and other types of protected areas which include some wildlife and forests, unusual features such as the Escarpment and Dankil Depression, and some hot springs suitable for spa development.

- Important tourism resources related to the long varied history and cultural diversity of the county including archaeological and historic sites; Struggle for Independence military sites; interesting building architecture especially in Asmara and Massawa; unusual features such as the Massawa- Asmara scenic railway; and cultural patterns of various ethnic groups.
- Relative proximity to major tourist markets in Europe and the Middle East and a potentially important type of market of the overseas Eritreans who are living in various places.
- Equable climate suitable for year-round tourism in the highlands.
- Some existing development of tourist facilities and services, and generally clean urban environments and adequate infrastructure development in some places that are suitable for commencing tourism development, especially for more adventurous tourists.
- A safe environment with little crime taking place in urban or rural areas, and generally clean urban environments compared to many other places in Africa.

But, to show up the above-mentioned opportunities more meaningfully, unlike the one in power, there is a need to build a strong and suitable government that strives to achieve a fruitful economic recovery of the country and provides a suitable environment for both domestic and international tourism to flourish.

4.6. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY OF ERITREA

Tourism development policy and strategy provide the basis for developing tourism in a given country and its various regions. Tourism development policy establishes the framework for guiding decision- making in planning, developing and managing tourism so that the sector achieves its intended objectives. It also reflects overall national development policy so that tourism is integrated into the country's overall development patterns.

Although, the timing of the actual implementation will depend on many influencing factors, the tourism policy and strategy of Eritrea is formulated generally for the year 2020. The policy defines the functions of the Ministry of Tourism as developing and implementing National Policy in the following ways:

- To co-ordinate all public and private sector agencies, organizations and interested individuals, involved with tourism.
- To establish and maintain the legislative and regulatory framework for the tourism sector.
- To encourage the provision and improvement of tourist amenities and facilities in Eritrea.
- To help conserve and protect the physical environment, enhancing the use of sites and attractions.
- To encourage investment in hotels, restaurants, and tourism enterprises.
- To promote and undertake research and to provide technical assistance to those engaged in the tourism industry and /or to potential investors.
- To encourage the development of tourism in small business and local entrepreneurship, with linkages to stimulate the growth of other sectors.
- To co-ordinate and implement, as appropriate, a tourism human resources development strategy.
- To co-ordinate the development of tourism in a manner which is socially and culturally harmonious.
- To keep the general public informed about the growth of tourism, explaining its development and its contribution to the country's social and economic well-being.
- To carry out any other tasks relating to tourism as may be determined by the Government.

Based on this policy and the potentially important role of tourism in national development, as well as considering contemporary international concepts of developing tourism, the tourism development policy for Eritrea is set forth as follows:

- Develop tourism in a sustainable manner. This means conserving the natural, archaeological/historic and cultural resources of tourism, avoiding socio-cultural problems and maintaining and improving the environmental quality of tourism areas. And to spread the benefits of tourism as widely as possible throughout the society. Also to develop tourism towards maintaining a high level of tourist satisfaction and the marketability of Eritrea as a desirable tourist destination.

- Develop international tourism as a major economic sector of the country so that it generates substantial employment, income, foreign exchange earnings and government revenue. Tourism will also be developed to serve as a catalyst for the expansion of other economic sectors including agriculture, fisheries, crafts and manufacturing.
- Develop international tourism also to introduce the unique environmental, historic and cultural heritage of Eritrea to the world, so that the international community becomes more aware of Eritrea as an independent country and its long struggle for independence. Attraction of overseas Eritreans to visit their home country is considered as an important component of international tourism.
- Develop domestic tourism so that Eritrean people have the opportunity to engage in recreation activities and to learn about their environmental, historic and cultural heritage leading to a greater sense of national unity. Tourist attractions, facilities and services will be made available to Eritreans including youth groups. Domestic tourism will also serve the purpose of distributing economic benefits throughout the country, especially from urban to rural areas.
- Develop a good quality level of tourism that is based on the natural, historic and cultural features of the country and attracts tourists who will respect the natural environment and historic and cultural heritage of the country. General sightseeing, beach and marine, cultural, eco-village, special interest and adventure types of tourism are appropriate. Forms of tourism that generate social or environmental problems or give poor images of the country will be discouraged.
- Develop tourism in a manner that encourages conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, especially protection of scenic areas, watersheds, places of architectural interest and cultural traditions and identities of the country's different ethnic groups. Encourage the involvement of local communities in archaeological/historic, architectural and cultural conservation programs.
- Create opportunities for spreading the benefits of tourism widely throughout society and the country and especially to local communities, developing small and medium scale tourism enterprises (SMEs) and establishing strong linkages between tourism and other economic sectors. In line with national policy, encourage both foreign and domestic investment in tourism development.

- Plan and co-ordinate tourism development so that it proceeds in a logical manner and is integrated into overall national, regional and local development programs. At any particular time, the various components of the tourism product – transport, attractions, facilities, services and infrastructure – should be in balance with the types and number of tourist markets.
- Provide suitably designed (based on historic and vernacular styles) and environmentally appropriate, good quality tourist facilities, services and infrastructure that serve the needs of quality tourism and do not result in environmental problems. Commercial types of tourist facilities and services will be developed by the private sector, with development incentives offered where necessary.
- Continue developing tourism-training facilities and programmes to provide the qualified personnel to work in tourism offer good quality services in tourism and maximize local employment benefits.
- Ensure the effective management of tourism based on co-operation between the public and private sectors, and co-ordination among central, regional, municipal and local governments. Develop effective organizational structures, legal and other institutional arrangements, controlling socio-economic and environmental impacts and monitoring all aspects of the progress of tourism.

4.7. STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the 2020 Eritrea's national tourism development plan, tourism will be based on a wide range of attractions and activities—the natural features of beach and marine areas of the coast and Islands, national parks and scenic beauty combined with some wildlife of the inland areas, archaeological and historic sites including sites associated with the Struggle for Independence, architectural features and urban ambience, cultural expressions of the various ethnic groups living in the country, and some specialized features. Based on these attractions, the basic types of tourism to be developed include:

- ✓ ***Beach and marine resort tourism:*** including swimming, wind surfing, diving (snorkelling and scuba diving to observe both sea life and sunken ships), game fishing and other water sports.

- ✓ **Cultural tourism:** based on visits to archaeological and historic sites and ethnic villages and encampments and learning about the history and traditional cultural patterns of the country.
- ✓ **Ecotourism:** based on hiking and camping in the national parks and other natural areas and learning about the local wildlife, ecology and ethnic patterns.
- ✓ **Urban tourism:** based on places of architectural interest, and offering specialized shopping, museums, cultural facilities and urban activities, especially in Asmara, Massawa and Keren.
- ✓ **Adventure tourism:** based on safaris to the Danakil Depression and other areas, mountain climbing, river boating and other personally challenging activities
- ✓ **Health tourism:** based on development of hot spring spas.
- ✓ **Agro tourism and rural tourism:** based on visits to agricultural enterprises and villages, and combining recreation with learning about agricultural activities and the rural way of life.
- ✓ **Business and conference tourism:** based on visits by persons on business and official mission and attending meetings and conferences (also commonly termed MICE –Meetings, Incentive, conference and Exhibition -- tourism). Business travellers also often visit tourist attractions sites and conference tours often include visits to local attractions.
- ✓ **Cruise tourism:** in which tourists travel on yachts and small cruise boats that provide accommodation on board and visit coastal ports and Islands in the Red Sea in and near Eritrea, as well as larger cruise ships stopping over in Massawa.

Though there are overlaps among these types of tourism, it depends on the interests of the tourist markets involved. Many of the features can attract both general sightseeing and special interest tourists.

4.8. CONCEPTS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The concept of sustainable development, including tourism, is now regarded as a fundamental basis for development planning. With its beach and marine environments, protected wildlife areas, many scenic natural features, numerous distinctive ethnic groups, and irresistible archaeological, historic and religious sites, all of which are attractions for tourists, Eritrea must particularly be concerned about achieving long-lasting tourism development.



Figure 4.2: Dahlak Islands, Ancient Islamic Cemetery.

The 1987 report, “Our Common Future,” prepared by the World Commission on Environment and Development for the United Nations, defined a sustainable development policy as one that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, popularly known as the Earth Summit and held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the sustainable development approach was further elaborated on and expressed in Agenda 21 that was adopted by the conference. Since then, many national governments have accepted sustainability as their fundamental development policy. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) has endorsed the sustainable development principles in its tourism planning and developments studies. The WTO has defined sustainable tourism as:

Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological

processes, biological diversity, and life support systems (National Tourism Development Plan, Ministry of Tourism of Eritrea, 1997:4).

Within the framework of this basic statement, the principles of sustainable tourism development can further be elaborated as follows:

- The natural, historical, cultural and other resources for tourism are conserved for continuous use in the future, while still bringing benefits to the present society.
- Tourism development is planned and managed so that it does not generate serious environmental or socio-cultural problems in the tourism area.
- The overall environmental quality of the tourism area is maintained and improved where needed.
- A high level of tourist satisfaction is maintained so that tourist destinations will retain their marketability and popularity.
- The benefits of tourism are widely spread throughout the society.

Sustainable tourism can best be achieved through careful planning, development and management of the tourism sector.

CHAPTER FIVE: CURRENT STATE OF TOURISM IN ERITREA

Eritrea has no image as a tourist destination. However, it can be promoted to tour operators who offer ‘off-beaten-track’ tours, adventure programs such as white-water rafting and overland camel safaris, and special interest themes such as bird watching and archaeological sites. At present Eritrea’s main appeal is to specialist scuba-dive operators who are generally well acquainted with the fact that Eritrea possesses considerable potential for diving.

Although tourism in Eritrea is still in its infancy, considerable recovery of the tourism sector has taken place. Foreign tourist arrivals grew from 168.6 thousand in 1992 to 221.6 thousand in 1994 and 409.5 thousand in 1997. As can be seen in Table 5.1, which shows tourist arrival figures from 1994 to 1998, the number of arrivals sharply decreased from 1997 to 1998, which recorded 187.7 thousand arrivals, because of the border conflict with Ethiopia. As a result of the conflict, the arrivals for 1999 have also decreased from 1997 but the extent of decrease will depend on when the conflict is resolved. Therefore, 1997 represents the last ‘normal’ year of arrivals. Interviews with the international travel operators during the research indicated a general absence of awareness about Eritrea in the tourist market places and the undeveloped nature of the country’s tourism product.

As indicated in the Table 5.1, the majority of arrivals are from other African countries, mostly Ethiopia. Most of the other African tourists come for the purpose of visiting friends and relatives with some coming for business activities. Of the non-African arrivals in 1997, almost 12,000 were from Europe, mostly Western and Southern Europe, and almost 3,000 from the Americas, mostly the USA. Smaller numbers were from the East Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East. There is a large category of tourists whose origin is not specified; these would likely be other Africans (*Tourism Statistics Annual Report, Ministry of Tourism, State of Eritrea March, 2000*).

Table: 5.1: International Tourist Arrivals to Eritrea: 1994 –1998

NATIONALITY	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
AFRICA	100,328	287,359	363,566	391,486	243,374
Eritrea (o/seas)	-	105,404	108,570	111,820	115,180
Ethiopia	84,914	170,783	248,814	257,534	126,298
Sudan	8,953	3,893	2,791	1,177	544
Somalia	5,193	6,004	2,486	1,770	807
Kenya	318	199	120	72	38
Madagascar	-	-	199	286	131
South Africa	-	-	429	566	265
Other Africa	950	1,076	317	405	188
AMERICAS	1,452	2,065	2,564	2,960	1,352
Canada	227	301	434	384	1,164
USA	1,191	1,708	2,070	2,519	
Other America	34	56	60	57	19
ASIA/PACIFIC	1,421	2,560	1,688	2,089	957
China	219	204	203	271	131
Japan	201	525	274	323	150
Korea Rep.	-	-	363	315	132
India	253	193	167	475	225
Australia	214	278	240	349	150
New Zealand	-		53	108	56
Other Asia	534	1,360	244	124	57
EUROPE	7,239	8,959	11,611	11,948	5,482
Italy	2,769	3,168	3,806	4,042	1,858
Germany	987	1,423	2,040	1,906	882
UK	1,132	1,326	1,592	1,669	770
Scandinavia	870	989	1,094	1,121	507
France	495	636	1,034	995	451
Netherlands	311	458	-	-	-
Switzerland	175	242	445	478	225
Benelux	-	-	812	879	394
Other Europe	414	560	613	659	301
Israel	86	157	175	199	94
MIDDLE EAST	4,950	3,259	1,302	1,403	638
Saudi Arabia	828	903	724	625	282
Egypt	-	-	200	163	75
Yemen	3,979	2,183	215	404	188
Other Middle East	143	173	163	211	93
NOT SPECIFIED	106,192	116,619	144,435	111,478	51,097
TOTAL	221,582	420,821	525,166	521,364	302,900

Ministry of Tourism, State of Eritrea

Note: in Table 5.1, regarding international inbound tourism by Country of Nationality, the total figures are actual whereas the breakdowns for various countries are estimates.

Interviews with the international travel operators by the researcher indicated that mainstream beach resort operators have little knowledge or interest in Eritrea and would only respond once resort developments of mid-scale or larger are developed. However, there is a growing sub-market segment seeking new beach resort destinations for which Eritrea is well-placed to benefit from, if facilities are at least of 3-star level. Spa resort operators are constantly on the lookout for new destinations and the hot springs in Eritrea present a viable resource. A survey was conducted of tourists in 1996, and the results of the survey are indicated in Table 5.2. This is the only survey made by the ministry of tourism towards the measurement of visitor's attitudes in Eritrea and accessed by the researcher during the process of the research work.

Table 5.2: Survey of Visitors to Eritrea, April 1996

Best Experience	Percent	Worst Experience	Percent
Friendly people	42.2	Poor/rude service	17.1
Red sea Islands	8.0	Poor toilets	12.7
Landscape/scenery	6.2	Inadequate hotels	11.4
Asmara Massawa road	4.7	Water shortages at hotels	3.8
Asmara	6.5	Slow/ poor financial services	3.8
Keren	4.0	Food poisoning	3.2
Massawa	3.3	Poor food	3.2
		Being robbed	2.5
		Lack of sign posts	2.5
		Exorbitant tax fares	2.5

Eritrean Ministry of Tourism, 1996, Report.

Although the above survey of the visitors' attitudes to Eritrea as a tourist destination lacks some valuable information such as the exact period of the survey and the total number of visitors (population/sample size), the number of the adverse comments to some an extent can be taken as a benchmark in reflecting the broad tourism atmosphere of the country. But it can be readily correctable with aggressive investment in the tourism sector and through dedicated educational and awareness programs. However, of concern is the apparent emergence of small criminal elements- some two percent of visitors who answered being

robbed of their money during their stay. Since, increasingly, safety is becoming an important determinant factor in the decision making of tourists when selecting destinations, Eritrea must strive to possess a firm base upon which to build its tourism sector.

5.1 PRESENT ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM IN ERITREA

Little data are available in Eritrea on the economic aspects of tourism and, in order to obtain some basic data, two survey programs in collaboration with the ministry of tourism officials were undertaken by the researcher. One survey was on tourist characteristics, expenditure, motivation and attitudes. The other survey was on tourism sector employment and contribution to government revenues. In addition, the researcher conducted personal interviews with principals in the tourism sector, suppliers to the sector and government agencies to collect such further data as were available.

Based on the surveys and available information, estimates of the economic impact of tourism were calculated as described in the following sections. These estimates are made for 1995 before the border conflict commenced with Ethiopia. Because of the decrease in tourist arrivals in 1998 and likely decrease in 1999, calculations for the current period would not present a realistic view of the normal current economic impact of tourism.

Tourist Expenditures and foreign Exchange Earnings:- The estimate of overall tourist expenditures of gross foreign exchange earnings (from direct tourist expenditures) was made as indicated in Table 5.3, from this calculation it is estimated that, in 1995, gross foreign exchange earnings were in the range of US\$58.1 million to US\$ 70.5 million. In addition, there were tourist expenditures (not involving foreign exchange transactions) of Ethiopians or Eritreans living in Ethiopia and already carrying Nakfa and exhibiting lower expenditure patterns than international tourists. As shown in Table 5.4, there was an estimated total expenditure of 162.5 million Nakfa by this group in 1995.

Table 5.3: Estimate of Overall Tourist Expenditures 1995

Purpose Of Visit	Arrival Number (in thousands)	Average Length Of Stay (Nights)	Total Nights (in thousands)	Spend (Nakfa)	Average Daily Spend (Us\$)	Total Expenditure (Us\$ Million)
Business	13.7	11	150.8	533	72.29/87.77	10.9/13.2
VFR	28.8	22	633.3	391	51.11/62.06	32.4/39.3
Holiday	7.5	13	98.0	248	32.42/39.37	3.2/3.9
Other	12.3	11	134.9	659	86.14/104.6	11.6/14.1
TOTAL/Av	62.3	16	1,017.0	457	57.13/69.32	58.1/70.5

Visitor Expenditure Survey, Ministry of Tourism State of Eritrea

Note: The average daily spends in Nakfa has been changed into Dollars using two different Exchange rates thus during (1995): the official rate of \$1= 6.30 Nakfa and a local market rate of \$1=7.65 Nakfa is used. Also during this period 1 Birr (Ethiopian Currency) was equivalent to 1 Nakfa (Eritrean Currency).

Table 5.4: Estimate of Non-Foreign Exchange Related Tourist Expenditures, 1995

Purpose Of Visit	Arrival Numbers	Average Length of Stay (Nights)	Total Nights	Average Daily Expenditure (Nakfa)	Total Expenditure (Million Nakfa)
Business	64,889	5	324.5	50	16.2
VFR	135,636	25	3,391.0	40	135.6
Holiday	22,712	10	227.1	30	6.8
Other	18,664	7	130.6	30	3.9
TOTAL	241,901	17	4,073.2	40	162.5

Consultants' estimate, Ministry of Tourism State of Eritrea

The foreign exchange earnings were also estimated for Eritrean Airlines of US\$ 375,000 and revenues from the Asmara and Assab International Airports of US\$ 942,000. A very small amount of foreign exchange was generated by tourism at Massawa Port. Thus, total gross foreign exchange earnings were estimated at from US\$ 718 million in 1995.

Employment in the Tourism Sector:- Based on the employment survey conducted in 1999, the total number of direct employees in tourism, based on type of employment is as follows:

Hotels	2,294
Travel operations	130
Car rental	150
Restaurants	2,500
Air transport	350
Retailers	150
Tour guides	10
Diving	20
Ministry of tourism	54
Total	5,658

The total figure of 5,658 includes a large proportion of restaurant employees. It should be noted that most restaurants serve a local clientele and not tourists (*The Human Resources Development Plan for Tourism 2000-2020 State of Eritrea, June 1999*).

Foreign Exchange Leakages:- Factors to be considered in the determination of foreign exchange leakages in Eritrea include the direct and indirect (through Eritrea based importers) importation by the tourism sector of goods (foodstuffs, beverages, supplies, equipment and building materials) needed for operation of the sector. Also important are payments of interest and dividends on the overseas investment in the sector, payments to overseas personnel working in the sector and the costs associated with overseas marketing of Eritrea as a tourist destination.

At the present stage of development of the tourism sector, it has been possible only to establish indicative figures for the importation of certain items. The estimate of foreign exchange leakages in 1995 was US\$ 4.5 million. Estimated foreign exchange leakages expressed as a percentage of total estimated foreign exchange earnings are calculated to be in the range of 6.3 to 7.6 per cent. This figure is considered to be very low but is as expected in the present situation of limited tourism development in Eritrea. As tourism

development expands, foreign exchange leakages will grow to reflect importation of equipment, furnishings and certain types of building materials. Also, the importation of foodstuffs will grow as tourism expands and efforts will need to be made to provide more locally produced food items. However, average daily tourist expenditures can be expected to increase. Although difficult to quantify, importation of handicrafts and souvenirs, especially from Ethiopia and Kenya, is of concern. This leakage of foreign exchange will be reduced when more development of the local handicraft sector is encouraged (*National Tourism Development Plan, Ministry of Tourism of Eritrea, 1997*).

5.2. ENHANCING ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Several approaches can be taken to enhance the economic benefits of tourism in Eritrea. The following could be mentioned as some among many:

Establish Stronger Linkages between Tourism and Other Economic Sectors:- Improving the supplying sectors of tourism in Eritrea will reduce the import content of tourism and generate more direct benefits to the country. The most immediate opportunities in this area are probably in agriculture and fisheries through increased production of all kinds of food items as tourism expands. Also, the variety and quality level of food items need to be improved, for example, only a limited variety of vegetables are grown in Eritrea. Investment should begin to take place in agriculture with the re-establishment of fruit, vegetable, beef and dairy farming. Fisheries should receive assistance to expand and wine production should also be improved. Expansion of the construction industry is essential to build the new tourist facilities required. There may be opportunities to expand supporting industries such as furniture, textiles, electrical equipment, plumbing and sanitary fixtures. Local crafts production should be improved in terms of variety and quality, and specialty clothing can be expanded.

Employ Eritreans in Tourist Facilities and Services:- Most employees in tourism are Eritreans. The government should pursue a policy of encouraging tourism enterprises to train Eritreans to work more effectively at all levels. However, quality levels of management and service must be maintained and improved where needed and the employment of only Eritrean staff will require some time to accomplish. At present foreign

staff can make a contribution in management and technical knowledge in new higher quality level tourist facilities and services.

Increase Tourist Spending and Length of Stay:- The level of tourist spending in Eritrea can be increased by providing more attractions and activities for tourists, thus extending their length of stay and expenditures in the country. Offering shopping opportunities such as craft and specialty items can also increase spending.

Encourage More Locally Owned and Managed Small Tourism Enterprises: Development of locally owned and managed small and medium size tourism enterprises (SMEs) will generate more direct benefits for Eritreans. A special report on the SMEs has to be prepared to motivate small and medium credit for tourism SMEs. Financial incentives are recommended especially aimed at promoting joint ventures with overseas Eritreans.



Figure 5.1: Dahlak Islands: To the Right is the Researcher with Two Local Islanders

Spread Tourism Development more widely Throughout the Country and Society:-

Economic benefits are measured not only in terms of total benefits but also in the number of communities and people receiving the benefits. This tourism development strategy proposes that tourism be developed in all the regions, although some regions with more attractions will have more tourism development than other regions. With community involvement approaches, resorts, eco, village, agro-and rural tourism projects will generate direct benefits to some local communities.

5.3 DEVELOPING TOURIST MARKETS

Developing the tourist markets involves analyzing the present situation, identifying potential markets based on the tourism resources available in the county, evaluating the competition from similar tourist destinations, establishing market targets and formulating a marketing strategy and promotion programme. Both international and regional tourist markets must be considered, as well as developing domestic tourist markets. An important special market consideration is that of the large number of Eritreans living overseas.

5.3.1 Potential International Tourist Markets

Potential tourist markets are assessed based on their place of origin and product interests in the following sections.

European and North American Markets:- The industrialized countries of Western Europe and North America are mature tourist generating source markets, but they still produce growth in outbound tourist flows. Importantly for Eritrea, a significant proportion of the increasing numbers of experienced tourists from these markets are seeking thus far unvisited and unknown destinations, interesting products and good value-for-money. These are attributes, which Eritrea has to offer.

The three largest outbound European travel markets to Eritrea are Germany, United Kingdom and France, all of which generate large numbers of outbound tourists with considerable growth potential. Italy is one of the fastest growing and, because of its historical association with Eritrea, can be an important source market.

Both the USA and Canada generate significant numbers of overseas tourists and they are steadily expanding market sources. The North American tourists to long-haul destinations tend to be older, have more income, are educated and have a great tendency to grow into a higher standard and are more likely to have professional and managerial occupations than the average overseas holiday tourist. Table 5.5 illustrates number of international visitors' arrivals (by purpose of visit) to Eritrea 1992-1999. As illustrated in Table 5.5, most tourists come for purposes of business and visiting friends and relatives (VFR), with smaller number for vacation and other purposes.

Table 5.5: International Visitors Arrivals to Eritrea 1992-1999

(By Purpose Of Visit)

Purpose of visit	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Business	34478	38003	39302	30382	57428	47574	28765	14588
	28%	30%	29%	23%	34%	35%	41%	26%
VFR	76372	70531	70080	70979	86219	75296	35437	37979
	61%	56%	51%	53%	51%	51%	50%	67%
Vacation	5462	8553	12048	8609	8366	8769	5589	3019
	4%	7%	9%	6%	5%	5%	8%	5%
Others	7978	8877	15238	23449	15838	2371	817	1113
	6%	7%	11%	18%	9%	9%	1%	2%
Total	124290	125964	136668	133419	167851	134010	70608	56699

State of Eritrea Ministry of Tourism, Tourism Statistics Annual Report, 1999.

N.B: In the above table (Table 5.5) the percentage rates are written to the nearest integer.

Regional and Asian Markets:- The regional or short-haul tourist markets have two major components: neighbouring African countries, and the Middle East region. Ethiopia, Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia generate significant flows of tourists to Eritrea already (except during the border conflict period of 1998-99). Much of this traffic is normally VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) refugee or business related.

The Middle East region is increasing as a tourist market source. The primary market potential in this region for Eritrea is Saudi Arabia. The Saudi market has expanded rapidly over the past several years (with periods of stagnation depending on fluctuations in oil prices) as local incomes have risen and the many expatriates working in the country travelled regularly out of the country. Both the Saudi and expatriate groups tend to be high spenders. Although this market source is still largely based on oil wealth, its structure has changed with the emergence of a middle class outbound travel market resulting in fewer differentials from other markets in terms of tourist product requirements. Eritrea's potential for the Saudi market exists with respect to high 'quality beach resorts' the cooler climates of Asmara and the highlands, health spa resorts and special interest activities such as scuba diving and game fishing. The other Gulf States also offer some market potential for the same types of tourism products.

Asian markets include the countries of South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia, predominantly for business purposes with some demand for beach resorts, scuba diving, spas and special interest tourism. Because of their distance from Eritrea, these markets for holiday trips will not develop much until the longer-term period. Table 5.6, shows the international tourist arrival targets, with the targets established for five-year periods from 2005 to 2020. Because of the current border conflict, it is not realistic to establish a figure for the year 2000. As shown in the Table 5.6, the range of target arrivals is from as low as 600,000 to as high as 1,000,000 for 2020.

Table 5 6: International Tourist Arrival Market Targets 2005-2020

Estimates	2005	2010	2015	2020
Minimum Level Estimate	300,000	400,000	500,000	600,000
Medium Level Estimate	400,000	500,000	650,000	800,000
High Level Estimate	500,000	650,000	800,000	1,000,000

Ministry of Tourism State of Eritrea

Eritreans Living Abroad:- The duration and intensity of the war with Ethiopia resulted in many Eritreans leaving the country and reside in other countries. The 'Diaspora', as it is

called locally, of the Eritrean community worldwide, is estimated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at close to one million. Large numbers of Eritreans live in Ethiopia although many of these were deported back to Eritrea during the border conflict in 1998-99. Many Eritreans have migrated to and live in Saudi Arabia and Germany. Also considerable numbers live in the USA, Italy, UK, Nordic countries and many other countries. Most of these overseas Eritreans have maintained close contact with their relatives and friends in Eritrea. Many of them send remittances to Eritrea, which is an important source of income and foreign exchange for the country.

Overseas Eritreans represent an important type of tourist market, which can be further encouraged. In the overseas Eritrean communities, Eritrean associations can play a significant role in organizing and arranging travel back to the homeland. Also, cooperation should be done with some airlines to promote this Eritrean market.

5.3.2 Domestic Tourist Market

In order to realize meaningful tourism development objectives, national tourism development policies, plans and programs should encompass and make notice of domestic tourism as the basic priority area for tourism development. Broadly, domestic trips are defined as inter-territorial travels involving at least one overnight stay. Domestic trips include travels for purposes of festivals, marriage and burial ceremonies, holidays and leisure, visiting friends and relatives, and itineraries to attend business and government obligations. Domestic travel may develop more rapidly depending on certain economic conditions. Table 5.7 shows the targeted domestic tourism travel, which is expected to reach about 1.5 million trips annually by 2020, based on a gradual increase of the growth rate of travel as Eritreans become economically better-off and well-versed in the benefits of tourism.

Table 5.7: Domestic Tourist Trips 2000 to 2020

Year	Average annual Growth Rate Per 5-Year Period in Percentage	Domestic Trips (in thousands)
2000	Estimate	500
2005	5.0	638
2010	5.5	833
2015	6.0	1,115
2020	6.5	1,526

Ministry of tourism, Eritrea

5.3.3 Marketing Plan

Eritrea is relatively unknown as a country and tourist destination, and the marketing of tourism will need to emphasise establishing an image of the country as a desirable tourist destination with interesting attractions. More specifically, the tourism product and tourist markets must be matched and because of the diverse product that Eritrea has to offer, there also must be some diversity of types of tourist markets.

Any tourism marketing-plan objective should target itself at achieving the economic benefits of tourism while at the same time, giving full attention to environmental and socio economic considerations. The fundamental marketing objective is to facilitate and help bring to fruition the type of development and scale and pace of expansion of the country's tourism sector described in the plan.

As the marketing plan overview of Eritrea (Figure 5.2) taken from the ministry of tourism of Eritrea (1997) indicates the specific marketing objectives are the following:

- To attain targets that enables the Government and tourism private sector to plan ahead and operate in a stable and prosperous business climate.
- To disseminate accurate information and project an image of Eritrea as a credible and competitive tourist destination.

- To undertake marketing activities that build on Eritrea's distinctive features (archaeology/history, culture and character of the people, marine and coastal environment, scenic beauty of the highlands, urban architecture, etc.).
- To promote Eritrea as a newly emerging tourist destination offering a unique range of natural and cultural attractions.
- To attract a high proportion of high 'value adding' tourists; for example, have high daily expenditures, long length of stay, respect the local environment and social customs, and have moderate demands on infrastructure.
- To penetrate the regional and European markets during the short to medium-term periods, with development of North American and Asian markets during the medium and long-term periods.
- To conduct all other promotional activities identified in this plan and refined through ongoing research.

According to the ministry of Eritrea, Eritrea's marketing strategy needs to take full account of external and local influences, as well as assessment of market demand factors. In its marketing strategy, Eritrea should address

- The perception of Eritrea as a destination that offers a diverse range of natural and cultural resources.
- The differentiation of Eritrea in terms of its tourist attractions, facilities and services from its neighbours, especially Ethiopia.
- The country's commitment to the improvement and expansion of its tourism infrastructure and facilities.
- Reorganization and upgrading of the technical capabilities of the staff of the Ministry's marketing department.
- Creating a slide/photo/video library of the main resources and attractions for tourism in Eritrea.
- Developing a range of collateral promotional materials.
- Designing informative signs for sites of tourist interest.

As it is shown in the ministry of tourism of Eritrea's marketing plan (Figure 5.2) during the short to medium-term period (1996-2005) it is expected that the tourism product will be greatly improved. The marketing strategy includes:

- Assistance in the development of the Eritrean ground handling, tour operator and tour guiding operations.
- Active promotion to the primary and secondary target market groups:
 - Europe (Germany, Italy, UK, France, Austria, Switzerland, Benelux, Scandinavia)
 - North America (USA, Canada)
 - Regional (Ethiopia and other African countries)
 - Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Gulf States)
 - Asia (Japan)

With respect to the following types of tourism:

- scuba diving
- game fishing

trekking (including camel, horse and donkey trekking)

- bird watching
- archaeological tours
- tours of Struggle for Independence sites
- hot springs resorts
- general interest sightseeing tours

A focus on promotional activities of the following types:

- contacts with specialist tour operators
- articles and advertisements in specialist magazines
- contacting specialist clubs and associations
- public relations geared to editorial coverage in general and special media (both printing and audio visual)

The strategic approach during this period should be to:

- Develop contacts with tour operators offering the various types of tour programmes noted above.
- Develop contacts with consumer clubs and associations focused on the themes listed above for Eritrea.
- Facilitate familiarization visits to Eritrea for personnel of selected tour operators and travel.
- Host visits to Eritrea by travel writers, photographers and film crews.
- Attend major world trade fairs.

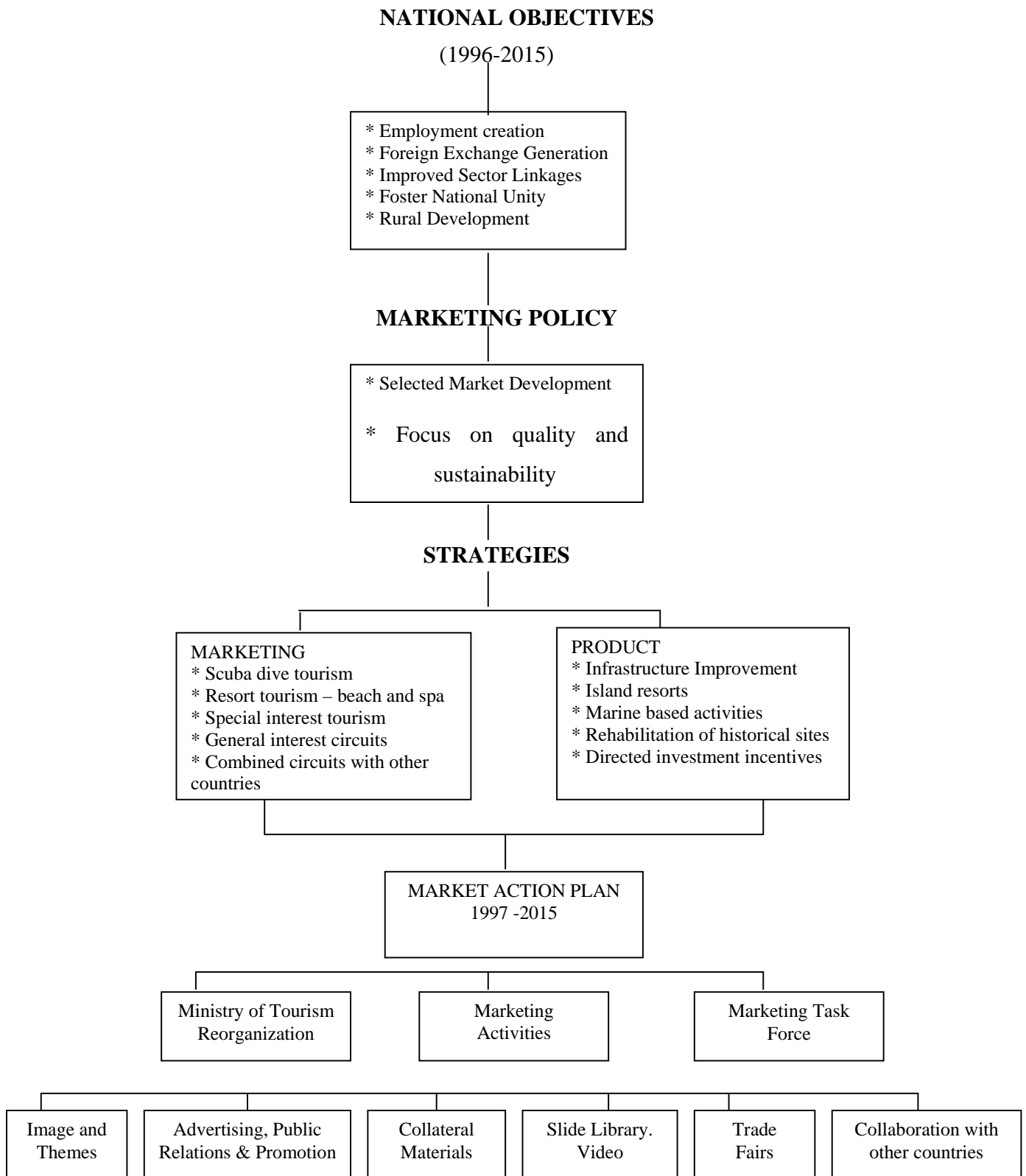


Figure 5.2: The Marketing Plan Overview of Eritrea

Based on the ministry of Eritrean marketing plan (Figure 5.2) in the long term the marketing strategy will gradually change. The strategy for this period includes:

- Complete review of collateral material and production of new material.
- Extended geographic coverage of promotional activities incorporating other European countries to those listed under the short-term strategy.
- Expansion of representation in overseas markets through appointment of representatives in France, Switzerland, Benelux and Scandinavia, each reporting to the central European office, and establishing a representative office in Japan.
- Increased promotional activities targeted at the travel trade including participation at a wide range of trade fairs.
- Collaboration on marketing with the neighbouring countries.

The major elements of the promotion programme in the ministry of Eritrea's overview of the marketing plan (Figure 5.2) are the following:

- Establishing target markets based on primary, secondary and opportunity markets and determining the suitability of promotion techniques for different market segments.
- Establishing, on a phased basis, overseas representation in different target markets.
- Preparing and distributing collateral materials including:
 - travel agents' manual
 - destination information booklet (a general all-purpose brochure of about 16 pages)
 - special interest brochures such as the coast and islands including scuba diving, the highlands region, eco-tours and adventure tours, archaeological sites, urban architecture
 - tourist maps, circuit routes and information briefs
 - hotel rate sheet
 - shell folder (to hold brochures, etc, to be used as a press pack
 - postcards of key attraction sites
 - posters of important sites, activities, events and representative people

Collateral material should be produced in the main languages: English, German, Italian and Arabic. A detailed project report, Collateral Materials, specifies the content of some collateral materials.

- Organizing attendance at tourism trade fairs and exhibitions and international expositions.
- Organizing tour operator/travel agent presentations (seminars and workshops).
- Organizing familiarization trips for tour operators/travel agents in Eritrea.
- Carrying out travel trade advertising.
- Carrying out consumer advertising (limited to special interest publications).
- Providing tour operator support for advertising
- Conducting joint promotions with neighbouring countries.
- Hosting of journalists, photographers and film crews.
- Production of videos, photographs and sliders for use in promotion.

5.4. TOURIST FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Tourist facilities and services include all types of infrastructure: the basics include: accommodation, tour and travel operations, information customs and immigration medical and health, shopping, and marketing, banking and money exchange, and postal facilities and services. This section of the study will ponder on the present situation in Eritrea as regards tourist facilities and attempts at making some pertinent recommendations for improvements.

5.4.1 Infrastructure Facilities

The infrastructure of Eritrea was greatly affected during the Struggle for Independence, which entailed damage and destruction, and in the aftermath there was inadequate or non-existent maintenance. Undertaking major infrastructure rehabilitation and development programs is highly needed in Eritrea. Inadequate infrastructure and especially the serious absence of access to some areas where there could be more potential for tourism, remain one of the major challenges in developing tourism.

Air Access:- Eritrea is served by international flights operated by Egypt Air (twice weekly from Cairo), Lufthansa (thrice weekly from Frankfurt via Jeddah) and Saudi (twice weekly from Jeddah). Yemeni Airlines has a once-weekly service from Sana'a. Ethiopian Airlines that previously offered daily services has suspended operations since the on set of border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia .The national carrier is Eritrean Airlines, which currently provides ground handling services only.

The fact that international flights are not too frequent and involve at least one and often two transfers from most of the tourist market countries is undoubtedly a deterrent to attracting more tourists engaged in discretionary travel. As tourist traffic increases, it is deemed that more direct flights from more places and perhaps more airlines need to increase.

At least one airport must be constructed to international standards to link the two main ports of Massawa and Assab. If constructed the new airport could essentially serve the anticipated tourist resorts on the coast and offshore Islands. They could also both handle domestic flights because of the deteriorated condition on the present airport at Massawa. Of particular importance to tourism in Eritrea could be the establishment of an airport at the Dahlak Islands, which is justified if tourist resorts are desired to develop.

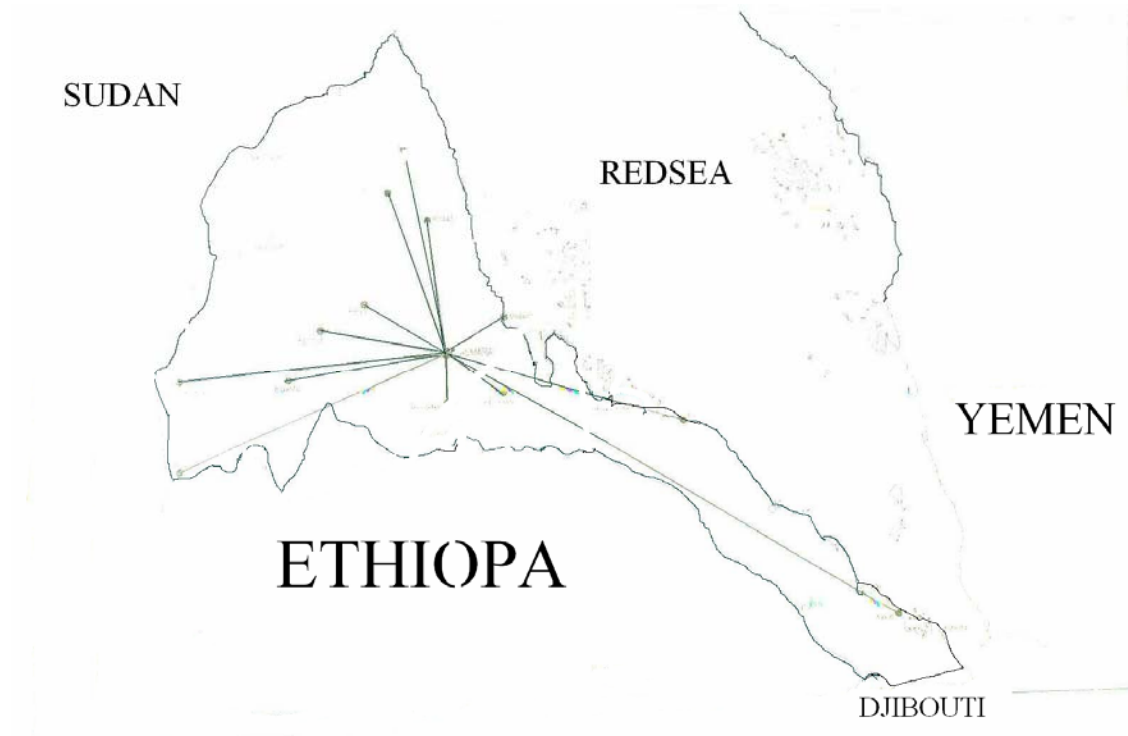


Figure 5.3: The Main Road Network in Eritrea

Roads:- The existing road network in Eritrea was built about 60 years ago (mostly in between 1934-39) by the Italians. It consists of four main classes of roads: primary, secondary, rural and feeder roads. Figure 5.3, illustrates the main road network. After the outbreak of the liberation war, no new roads were constructed while the condition of existing roads deteriorated seriously due to damage and lack of maintenance. Currently, the total road network in the country comprised of the different types of roads is only 6,000 kilometres.

A plan has to be prepared and implemented earmarked at improving the conditions of roads. More attention should be give to the rehabilitation of the existing trunk roads, bridges and culverts and the upgrading of some rough roads and construction of new ones. The main highway between Asmara and Massawa, an important road for tourism, has already been rehabilitated and improved. The road consumes too much time to drive because of mountainous terrain and travelling on foot requires climbing steep hills. They need to be redesigned and reconstructed. The road between Asmara and Keren, also important for tourism, is currently under rehabilitation. In addition to the road network

serving tourism areas and sites, provision of adequate local access roads to specific attraction sites and resorts is also essential.

Seaports and Marinas:- Eritrea's two seaports are Massawa and Assab. They are important commercial ports, but do not significantly contribute to growth of the tourism industry except for occasional cruise ship stopovers at Massawa. Assab has become a ghost port since the Eritrea-Ethiopia border conflict. However, the port at Massawa will become more important for tourism in the future. Cruise tourism can also be developed for both the larger Red Sea and Indian Ocean cruise ships making stopovers in Massawa and smaller ship cruises in the Dahlak Islands and other Eritrean coastal areas.

Water Supply:- Developed water supply systems are mostly limited to serving populations living within the immediate catchments areas of urban centres. For more remote areas, water supplies are mostly provided by tube wells with associated problems of water shortages during the dry season. However, small reservoirs have to be developed near some villages, and these provide water for both the villagers and cattle grazing in the area.



Figure 5.4: Dahlak Islands. Little Girl Fetching Water.

For the Asmara area, based on improvements underway, there will be sufficient water supply to serve the anticipated tourism development in and near the city. Because of the deficient distribution network however, tap water in the city is not considered sufficient and hotels should provide their own water treatment or provide bottled water for guests. If the new water supply at Wi'a (place near Massawa) is developed, there will be no problem with providing adequate water supply for tourism development in the Massawa area. The new water system developed in western lowland city of Keren has not generated enough water as expected and a new source has to be found.

Electric Power:- A power grid is being extended to large areas of the country including Asmara and Keren. Therefore, it is possible that there could be no power problem in the main tourism areas. In remote towns, local generating plants supply electric power. These are generally adequate for tourism. For Island resorts and resorts in remote coastal areas, it is recommended that power generation shall need to be provided on site by public and private sector partnerships.

Because of intensive and extensive sunshine, Eritrea should take advantage of solar power to expand basic infrastructures in remote areas. For example, generation of solar power could help facilitate develop water-heating capabilities and other purposes in hotels.

Telecommunications:- A major rehabilitation program has recently been carried out in the telecommunication system of the country, with new microwave links installed from Asmara to Keren and Massawa. The present ages-old and inefficient international satellite system has to be replaced by a modern purpose-built standard earth station for the benefit of information technology, instrumental for developing tourism. Digital local and international direct dialling should be available in most areas.

Waste Management:- Waste management refers to sewage and solid waste and solid waste collection, treatment and disposal. Waste management, which includes maintenance and cleaning of roads, is probably the least satisfactory of infrastructure in Eritrea, and is of concern particularly because of the environmental and health implications of inadequate waste management. No regulations or standard practices apply to waste management and

no single agency has statutory responsibility for waste management, which is the responsibility of the municipal, or district authorities involved. A policy must be developed to establish standards on waste management, with temporary assistance provided to local authorities to improve their management practices where needed.

5.4.2 Accommodation

Currently there are (1999) 205 hotels with 2611 rooms, and 125 pensions with 1330 rooms. The Central and Northern Red Sea regions (Asmara and Massawa) have some 56 percent of the total accommodation supply. In accordance with the new Tourism Proclamation Pensions will be re-classified as hotels, and Table 5.8, shows a combined total of 330 establishments and 3941 rooms.

The author has never been to Asmara since October 2002 for four reasons previously described in the first chapter. What the author has come to gather from citizens who have crossed to Ethiopia seeking asylum is however, that some of the old and well known hotels like the Amba Soira, Hamasen, Keren, Rino and others have been renovated and newly furnished by the government for the purpose of accommodating tourists.

The above figures are based on the best information currently available at the ministry of Tourism. According to the information from the Ministry of Tourism Officials a survey has been made which confirms that all accommodation establishments are currently in progress in line with the set of established standards.

Rounded up, hotels have an average size of 13 rooms and pensions 11 rooms, which shows little difference. Combined they have an average of 12 rooms. There is no hotel classification system in Eritrea, which establishes the quality level of hotels. However, based on room rates, the existing hotel rooms can be placed within five categories of A to E, with A being the highest room rate on quality category and E being the lowest. Only Asmara and Massawa have hotels in the A category and only 22 percent of the rooms (about 600) fall into the top three categories. These 600 rooms could be convenient to most international tourists.

Many of the D and E category rooms do not meet the new minimum standards required.

While hotel classification criteria have been published as a guideline to product standards, the introduction of a grading system might be inappropriate in the short term. In the meantime, inbound tour operators and commercial guidebooks appear to provide guidance to potential consumers on the choice of hotels.

Table 5.8: Accommodation Supply In The Six Different Regions of the country (Hotels and Pensions Combined)

Region	No. of hotels	%	No. of rooms	%
Anseba	26	7.9	257	6.5
Southern	96	29.1	919	23.3
Southern Red Sea	19	5.7	357	9.1
Gash Barka	38	11.5	175	4.5
Northern Red Sea	26	7.9	403	10.2
Central	125	37.9	1830	46.4
TOTAL	330	100.0	3941	100.0

Ministry of Tourism State of Eritrea, 1998

The government owns a number of hotels and these hotels have tended to deteriorate through lack of maintenance. These hotels need to be sold to the private sector and they also need full or partial renovation.

5.4.3 Restaurants, Cafes and Bars

There are approximately 380 restaurants in the country of which 180 are located in Asmara, 70 in Massawa, 30 in Keren, 50 in Assab and the balance in other cities. Previously, most of these establishments were designed for and patronized by local clientele. At present part

of them are under the government's control. The larger hotels have restaurants and there are many independent restaurants available in the cities and towns. Many of these have basic facilities and limited menus. Some restaurants are suitable for international tourists specialize in national (Eritrean) or European cuisine or both. The Italians have left a lasting influence on the Eritrean Kitchen, with pasta dishes especially popular. With a plentiful supply of fresh fish, Massawa restaurants often specialize in seafood.

Restaurants are required to observe acceptable standards of sanitation and hygiene. However, improvements are still needed in some restaurants. They are developed by local entrepreneurs in response to market demand. The number of restaurants is expected to increase and quality levels should improve.

There are many cafes available in Asmara and other cities and towns including some sidewalk cafes. These cafes are popular with both residents and tourists. The larger hotels have bars and lounges and there are many independent bars.

Although the draft regulations of 1999 include the rights and duties of restaurateurs and barkeepers and the conduct of businesses, which sell alcoholic beverages, are specified, they are not properly applied at present.

5.4.4 Tour and Travel Operations

There are 26 licensed travel agencies located in Asmara and 3 in Massawa. Many handle mostly airline ticketing and reservations while some offer tour operation services. It is generally acknowledged that the agency staff requires more training, especially in tour programming and pricing as well as office, financial and personnel management principles and techniques. Though, the draft regulations of 1998 include a section on the requirements for travel agents and tour operators as well as local tourist transportation operators its application is at stake at the moment. Local tourist transportation operator refers to all types of transportation used by tourists: tourist vehicle, rental car, railway, marine vessel, donkey, horse, camel, elephant or other animals.

At present tour guides are not licensed. Some persons function as tour guides, either on a freelance basis or as staff members of tour and travel agencies. The draft regulations of 1998 include a section on the licensing of 'tourist guides'. Obtaining a permit would require taking and passing the tour guide examination set and administered by the Ministry of tourism. The examination includes a foreign language component. Any person working as a tour guide without an operating permit would be committing an offence.

5.4.5 Tourist Information Services

If given detailed and accurate information, tourists are more likely to enjoy their visit. They may even stay longer if they are aware of all the things to do and see. At present, information facilities and materials in Eritrea are limited. As the information taken from the Ministry of tourism officials the main tourist information centre is to be established on Independence Avenue in Asmara. This new centre should clearly identify and have to be equipped with an information service counter, a variety of information material including maps, list of hotels, the tourist facilities and services and transportations schedules, including exhibits of the major attractions of the country. Toilet facilities and drinking water must be provided. The centre shall also offer information material for sale such as guidebooks and other books and videos and slides on Eritrea or have a list of books stores, which handle these items. Information service staff should be multi-lingual and information material shall be available in the main tourist languages including English, French, German, Italian and Arabic. As resources are available, the range and quality of information material will be expanded.

There is a branch tourist information counter in the international airport terminal at Asmara. This office has an excellent location but needs to be improved with better layout, signing and information material.

The regional tourism offices provide information services in Keren and Massawa although printed material is very limited. Well-located and properly equipped regional tourist information centres should be established, especially in Massawa and eventually in Keren.

These centres will provide detailed information about the region in addition to the regular information material produced by the central office.

5.4.6 Travel Facilitation

Travel facilitation refers to immigration and customs requirements and services at the points of entry and departure to the county. At present, visas are required before arrival for most nationalities. Although efforts shall be made to expedite issuance of visas, this requirement is still a deterrent to tourism. It is a nuisance for many prospective tourists to have to obtain a visa before arrival and, in some cases, may necessitate their stopping over in another country. Therefore, it is recommended that visas be issued on arrival for persons especially from the major tourist market countries including Western Europe, most Middle Eastern countries, the USA, Canada and some Asian countries. It will be also advisable if tour operators can still obtain visas in advance for their group tourists.

5.4.7 Shopping Facilities and Services

Given the opportunity, many tourists enjoy shopping. Tourist shopping can provide an important source of income for Eritrea and help support its local industry. There are four types of shopping facilities and services for tourists to be considered in Eritrea:

- ***Crafts and souvenirs:*** There is a considerable variety of crafts and souvenirs including traditional utilitarian items available for tourists, and there are several craft shops in Asmara, particularly along Independence Avenue. Crafts and traditional items are also available in the main market in Asmara. Gold and silver work (jeweller) shops should be found in Asmawa, Keren and elsewhere as tourism expands. The variety and quality of some locally produced craft items could be improved. Newly drafted handicraft also must be introduced.
- ***Specialty items:*** Especially during the periods of Italian colonialism and the first years of independence Eritrea was known for good quality sweaters, shoes and other clothing, both ready-made and tailor-made. There were numerous sweater, shoe and clothing shops in Asmara, which offer relatively attractive, merchandise

- displays. By international standards, prices are inexpensive and offer good bargains for tourists. These specialty-shopping goods should be promoted more as an attraction. Some high fashion clothing styles appealing to fashion-conscious, higher spending tourists could eventually be developed, as well as maintaining the good-quality, standard-fashion, lower-cost range of items. The gold and silver jewellers produced in Eritrea and available for sale in many shops also comprises an important specialty item for tourists. Jeweller designs can be improved to be more appealing to tourists with respect to quality, workmanship and design, and better marketed.
- ***Convenience items:*** Virtually all tourists need to have shopping access to convenience items such as toothpaste, and film. Most of these items are readily available in the cities and towns of Eritrea. There are many photo shops that sell and process print film. However, slide film and processing are not available. Some international magazines are available in Asmara but the selection is limited mostly to Time and Newsweek. International newspapers do not seem to be readily available. The selection of internationally published books including popular paperback novels that appeal to some tourists is very limited. As tourism expands, the private sector should respond by providing greater selection of film, international magazines, newspapers and books.
 - ***Duty free shopping:*** Duty free shopping can be an amenity and attraction feature for many tourists and a source of employment and income. At present in Eritrea, duty free shops are located in the arrival and departure areas of the international airport terminal and a diplomatic shop is located in the Expo show grounds in Asmara. The airport shops have good locations but can be improved by better variety (to include electronic items and watches, for example) and merchandise display techniques. The diplomatic shop at Expo is being phased out, and a new diplomatic shop has to be established in the downtown district.

5.4.8. Tourist Health and Medical Facilities and Services

There are no extraordinary health threats to tourists in Eritrea. However, malaria and some other tropical diseases exist, especially in the lowlands, and tourists should be informed to take precautions and particularly to take preventive malaria medication. Also gastroenteritis is a typical problem and tourists should take precautionary measures. AIDS is not as prevalent as is in some African countries but remains a problem. Environmentally related diseases such as cholera are not common in the tourism areas. Sanitation standards of eating enterprises should also be improved.

In remote areas of the country, emergency medical care is presently difficult. On the tourist circuits, consideration should be given to provision of radiotelephone links with emergency services and for the possible use of military helicopters to convey emergency medical patients to the major hospitals. Tourists visiting remote areas should be advised to carry medical kits with them.

Many pharmacies are available in the cities and towns and routine, but not all types of, medicines can be obtained. Tourists who require special medications should be advised to bring these with them.

Larger hotels should provide an on-site small clinic and doctor for use by guests, at least on a part-time basis. Resorts, which have more than one hotel, may have a clinic and doctor to serve all the hotels. Persons using these services would pay standard fees. Smaller hotels should have a list of qualified doctors and dentists located in the vicinity.

5.4.9 Other Facilities and Services

Other facilities and services important for tourists include the following:

- **Car hire:** there are approximately 20 companies in Asmara offering car rental services and 6 in other parts of the country.
- **Diving centres:** a specialized type of facility is needed in Eritrea in diving centres. These centres should provide qualified staff and proper equipment to carry out

tourist diving operations. There is a diving centre located in Massawa, but its service is perceived as highly unsatisfactory and more diving centres are needed.

- ***Banking and money exchange:*** Banking and money exchange facilities and services are poor in cities and towns. In addition to banks, there is a need to establish money exchange offices in Asmara and other cities where tourists can receive fast service.
- ***Use of credit cards:*** Except for the larger hotels and airlines, credit cards are not accepted by tourism enterprises. This presents inconvenience for many tourists and may reduce spending.
- ***Postal facilities and services:*** Post offices exist in most of the cities and towns. International postal services are considered to be reliable. International express mail service is also available at additional cost. Courier service such as DHL and Federal Express are also available in the cities.
- ***Personal services:*** Personal facilities and services of barber and beauty (hair dressing) shops are readily available in the cities and towns.
- ***Public safety and security:*** Crime is not a serious problem in Eritrea and tourists are safe from criminal acts as long as they exercise reasonable precautions.

For efficient use of limited resources, tourism development in the country will need to proceed on a staged basis, with development focused on certain areas at particular time periods. Development of tourist attractions, facilities and services will need to be closely co-ordinated with development of major infrastructure, particularly road improvements. There is great need for improved tourist facilities and services in all areas of the country. There are numerous opportunities for upgrading existing hotels, restaurants and other facilities. However, some new higher quality facilities will also need to be developed in some places. Training of persons working in all aspects of tourism will need to focus on both upgrading skills of existing personnel and training of new personnel.

CHAPTER SIX: DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN THE DAHLAK ISLANDS OF ERITREA

The Scientific Exploration Society (1970: 52) reports:

"In addition to the immense variety of life to be found in the sea itself, there are also many different land and sea birds to be seen, including such interesting and attractive species as the osprey, brown booby, red-billed tropic bird, crab plover and sooty falcon. During our brief stay we identified 56 different species of birds, of which many nest on the Islands. The unique bird-life of Dahlak would undoubtedly be a major attraction for visitors and is certainly in added reason for introducing conservation measures. Yet another important reason for protecting certain of the smaller Islands, including Shuymma, is that they are breeding place for the green turtle; a now rare marine reptile which is still relatively abundant in the Dahlak area, and which we were fortunate enough to find nesting at the time of our visit.

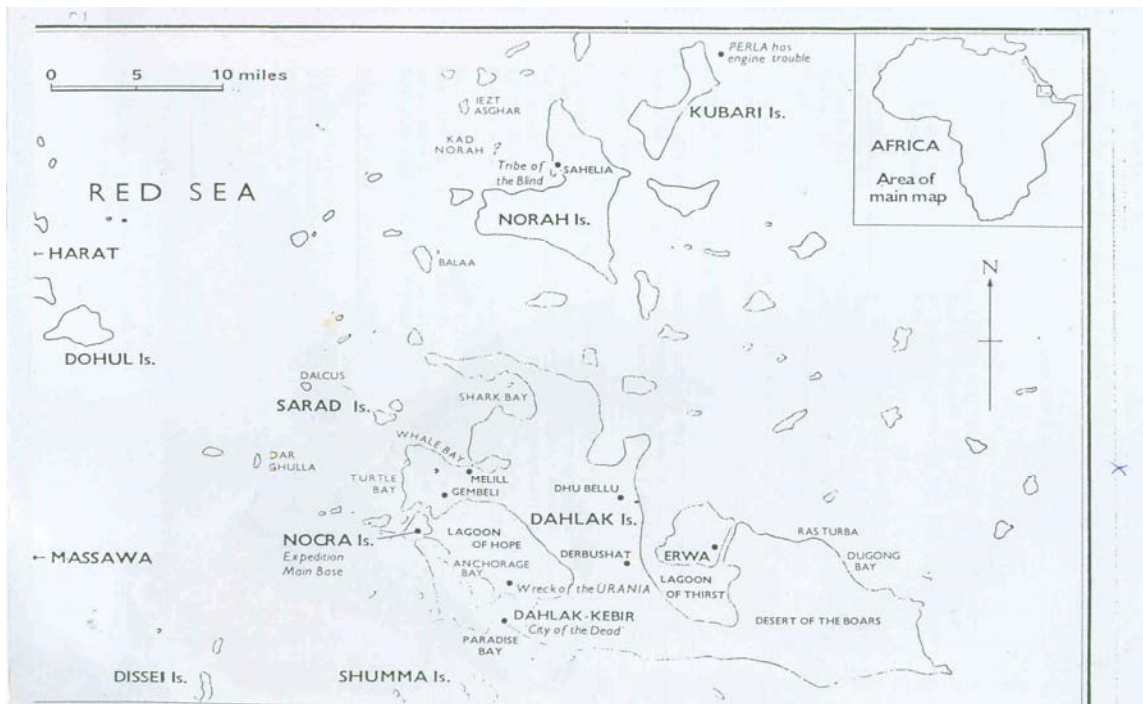


Figure 6.1: Map of Dahlak Islands

6.1 HISTORY

The Islands have been inhabited since at least the 7th Century A.D. and the first recorded invaders were the Arabs of Jeddah who arrived about 700 A.D. Arabic inscriptions discovered on the Islands go back to the middle of the 9th Century. By that time the Muslim Islanders had become tributaries of the Kingdom of the “Najashi” (Negus) or Christian ruler of Abyssinia, the African mainland and Saudi Arabia whose dynasties reigned over for many centuries. According to existing documents a Muslim viceroy who had his own navy, had an extra insurance, paid tribute to the King of the Yemen also ruled them.



Figure 6.2: Dahlak Islands. A Caged Well (In Dahlak Kebir Island) With The Idea Of Preventing Evaporation

Great wells for the storage of water are found carved out of the rock at Dahlak Kebir, which must once have been a considerable port. Numerous grave slabs with carved kufic characters, mostly reminiscent of 16th – 19th Century bear witness to the continuity of Arab rule there, but as the commercial importance of the archipelago began to decline, the Arabs

in the Red Sea fell under Turkish control, and in the 19th century the Egyptian separatist movement led by Mohamed Ali provided what effective rule there was. It is recorded that James Bruce in 1769 had come by boat from Luhaiya in the Yemen to the harbour of Dhu Bellu.

The Italian colonizers came in the 1880s and soon after built the prison at Nocra for intractable Eritreans. Some time between 1936 and 1941 the Islands were fortified by an Italian Governor of Eritrea in 1934. Medium calibre guns placed on Harat and Shumma, and powerful batteries on Dohul commanded the Massawa Channels and others on Harmil looked north. Nevertheless, Dahlak fell to the Allies with the rest of Eritrea in 1941 and the British Military Administration began. In 1952 Eritrea became federated with Ethiopia and 39 years later became an independent state (*Eritrean Travel Trade Manual, 2000*).

Sites of Historical Interest:- Visible reminders of this long history are many. The most ancient sites were said to be Adal, in the far east of Dahlak Island, Dahlak Kebir and Dhu Bellu, though only the latter two were visited by the researcher. The ruined town of Dahlak Kebir has a vast necropolis of Muslim graves, lying amongst which are a few small carved tombstones of earlier Arab notables. There are around 360 wells around Dahlak Kebir. Due to the existence of an abject water shortage in the Islands these wells were built with the intention of using one well for one day. The wells depend on the rainy seasons to fill and provide water long enough into the dry months of summer.

Signs of formerly settled areas can be found near Soghuri, north of Dahlak Kebir and in Nocra. Here, amongst a scattering of obsidian chips, are seen standing stones and the remains of hut shaped circles and storehouses.

The central villages of Dahlak itself characterize manifestations of the inhabitants house, for examples Dhu Bnellu, which has the only imposing two-storied structure in the Islands; and Derbushat, with its 8 or 10 wells supplying clean water and a mosque with a handsome interior could mentioned.

In Nocra the Italian prison buildings constructed to detain numerous Eritrean opponents of fascism between 1936 and 1941, are of interest. Near the southern end of the Ghubbet Mus

Ncfit is the impressive wreck of the Italian liner “Urania”, believed to have caught fire in 1951 and to have been towed away of the main shipping docks to kill over and die in this almost land-locked lagoon.



Figure 6.3: Dahlak Islands. An Iron Shoe that was used as a shackle for Prisoners of Nocra

In the centre of Dohul are 5 Italian artillery pieces intact in their original emplacements. Though their instruments have been stripped off, they still point menacingly westwards. Behind them are the remains of the small jetty and the Via Mussolini, now a bad road, which leads to the central camp of this once important Italian weapons store.

Skeletons of ships destroyed during the war for independence are also found scattered around Nocra Island.

6.2 SURVEY OF THE ISLANDS AND THEIR POPULATION

According to existing reports there are probably between 150 and 200 Islands and islets in the Dahlak Archipelago. Although accurate population figures are difficult to establish, it is estimated that a total of about 3,200 people inhabit the Archipelago, out of whom some 1,950 live in Dahlak Island itself and the rest about 1,250 in the 10 outlying Islands. Close observation suggests that there could have been far less people than the above indicated figures, but during the visit by the researcher a great many of working age were at sea engaged in seasonal sardine fishing.

Dahlak Villages seemed to be of two types – groups of stone structures, mostly in a state of severe ruin, or groups of huts supported by wooden poles, planks and matting. Despite the facts that among the ruins many serviceable stone houses lie abandoned by migrants to the mainland or by the indigenous people. The trend was said to be for people to move from the stone settlements to the fragile stick villages. Inhabitants of Dahlak Island are spread over eleven locations:

Table:6.1 Inhabitants of Dahlak Islands

Dahlak Kebir	Cembeli	Derbus hat	Melill	Salat	Dhu Bellu	Dasuco	Memla	Kubban i	Kumbe iba	Soguri	Total
300	300	250	200	200	180	170	125	100	90	40	1,950

Note: The above figures are taken from the documents of Eritrean Ministry of Tourism, but not verified by the researcher.

6.2.1 Race and Language

The Islanders are Moslems of mixed stock – Arab, Dankali, Tigrean and Afar, with few of African stock, possibly descendants either of former slaves or of West African Moslems who had never fully returned from their pilgrimage to Mecca. The main language widely spoken is Dahlaki, a form of Tigre. Arabic is a second language conveniently spoken. Tigrina and Italian trail as rarely spoken.

6.2.2 Economy

The economy of the Islands is based on the sea, though there is also a little pastoral farming. Apart from their herds of goats, camels and donkeys the only resource for livelihood for the inhabitants is fishing of sardines, and collecting pearl. Sardines are extensively fished, especially around the northern Islands. Soon after the catch is dried, it is shipped to Massawa and sold there. The Islanders then restock with all the necessities of life – sugar, tea, coffee, textiles, grain for making the dura-bread, etc- and return to Dahlak. The trade of pearl and mother of pearl as of recent years are declining. Some men and particularly those in Dohul work in boat construction. Small general stores run mainly by Yemenis, exist here and there.

6.2.3 Transport

There is no regular boat service between the Islands and Massawa, the nearest port on the Eritrean mainland. Some Islanders own small traditional wooden boats of various sizes and make frequent voyages within the Islands but their services do not contribute beyond transporting few passengers. There are occasional trade links with the Yemen.

Primitive and dirt roads are found only on Dahlak Kebir, Dohul and Nocra. They date from the Italian colonial era. All the roads are in poor condition at present, but the Islands to the south can be reached by a 4 Wheel vehicle either by existing tracks or directly over the flat stony desert.

6.2.4 Health and Local Administration

The health of the Islanders seemed generally good, though there is prevalence of blindness mainly due to trachoma. There are two clinics at Gembali and Derbushat, each with trained nurses. There is another clinic on Dohul infrequently manned. The Islands have primary school. The Islands school children get their secondary and above education in Massawa or Asmara. There are small mosques that give Quran teaching in most villages and numerous burial grounds and prayer places in the intervening countryside. An Eritrean naval base stationed in Nocura Island maintains a police service and has a radio link with Massawa.

6.3 SURVEY OF EXISTING TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

The Dahlak Islands present a natural and wild fascinating scene to the newcomer. Set like miniature deserts in a miraculous sea they differ utterly from the urban civilization of Massawa and the rugged, mountainous regions of Eritrea. The Dahlak Islands possess a number of exceptional tourist attractions, many of which may be improved and exploited with the right organization and policy. The following section will examine the tourism potential of Dahlak Islands in relation with the existing natural resources.

Topography:- The Islands offer two different topographical attractions. Firstly, the unspoiled appearance and hot nature of the Islands may attract the tourist in search of the more adventurous sort of holiday. Secondly the profusion of good beaches and relatively safe swimming, coupled with water sports facilities may attract those people in search of sun, sea and sand.

Water sports:- The sheltered coves and inlets provide a fine opportunity for water-skiing, sailing, underwater swimming (snorkel and scuba diving) and almost every form of aquatic sport.

During the survey local inhabitants witnessed that there is no record for attacks by sharks, moray eels, manta ray or any other fish, Jelly fish or marine life. According to the local inhabitants some discomfort is felt in certain areas from stinging plankton. However, it is felt that tourists may engage in water sports in relative safety, providing certain simple precautions in place. These should include the wearing of protective footwear (i.e. rubber soled, canvas shoes) and it is recommended that swimmers should use underwater masks when swimming away from areas where a shark look-out is kept. Tourists should be advised of any known currents (especially in narrow channels) and forewarned of impending bad weather. The wreck of the Urania in Ghubbet Mus Nefit is an interesting site.

Fish:- The waters abound in a myriad of different species of marine life and the brightly coloured fish of the reefs are wonderful to behold. Fishing, both by conventional and

underwater methods is highly rewarding and there are many large game fish to tax the skill of the hunter.

Bird life:- The keen bird watcher and ornithologist will be fascinated by the wealth and variety of the bird life to be found on and around the Islands.

Wildlife:- Semi-wild camels and almost tame shoemaking's Gazelle are the only large mammals found on the Islands. The Gazelle were only seen on the main Dahlak Island and are believed to have been shipped over from the nearby Buri Peninsula (Eritrea) many centuries ago. These Gazelle are most attractive and easy to approach. It is important that they are not hunted. The rare Dugong is known to inhabit the Archipelago, and would be of great interest to tourists. It is believed to be found to the east of Dahlak Island.

Vegetation:- A few palm trees, stunted thorn bushes, and mangrove trees make up the arboreal aspect of the Islands. A small number of attractive plants were found and it is thought that these may multiply immediately if proper management is in order.

Local Industry:- Boat building, basketworks and pearl fishing are amongst the local industries, which may be of interest to tourists. The Islands have a fair selection of shells, especially of the curie variety. At present these are collected by Islanders for sale on the mainland. They could be attractive souvenirs for tourists.

Cultural and Historical:- apart from the one mentioned in the previous sections the villages of Gembeli (The Sheik's house), Melill (typical fishing village), Derbushat (a large and important village in the center of Dahlak Island, with interesting buildings) and Dahlak Kebir (the ancient capital of the Dahlak archipelago, with its great necropolis) are places that may interest tourists.

6.4 THE PRESENT SITUATION

The Eritrean Islands were best known as prospective tourism sites during the colonial eras rather than after independence. From 1950 to 1990, the Islands were known as war zones rather than tourism ones. Ever since Eritrea won its independence, one could fairly state

that in general very little has been done in the arena of tourism industry. This unfortunate deterrent is attributed not to the natural endowment of the land but significantly so due to the ill-fated national development policies. To make the situation bleak, the awareness of the Eritrean people towards these historic Islands with great tourism importance is also very poor. As a consequence, the total number of annual nationals and international visitors is remarkably low.

Table: 6.2 International Visitors to the Islands by Nationality
Nationality/Island
1996

	Dessie	Dehul	Durghela	Durghm	Dahlak	Others	Total
Nationality							
Eritrea	126	6	0	17	62	4	215
Ethiopia	18	0	0	0	7	0	25
S. Africa	8	0	0	0	1	0	9
Kenya	5	0	0	1	1	0	7
Other Africa	6	0	0	1	3	0	10
Israel	1	0	3	2	2	0	8
S. Arabia	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other M. East	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Italy	502	21	0	142	384	2	1051
UK	74	0	0	22	44	3	143
Germany	85	1	0	9	45	0	140
France	44	0	0	5	40	0	89
Switzerland	33	0	0	3	96	0	132
Benelux	39	0	0	0	14	0	53
Scandinavian	24	5	0	3	17	19	68
Austria	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
Russia	0	0	0	4	0	0	4
Other Europe	15	0	0	3	6	16	40
Japan	1	0	0	0	10	0	11
USA	74	1	0	6	58	8	147
Canada	4	0	0	4	3	0	11
Australia	2	0	0	1	3	0	6
New Zealand	2	0	0	0	2	0	4
TOTAL	1065	34	3	223	801	52	2178

Ministry of Tourism State Of Eritrea, 1996 Report

As shown in Table 6.2, in the year 1996, the total number of Eritrean visitors to the Islands was 215. The Island of Dessie entertained 126 of the sum total. The Dahlak Island was rated second with 62 Eritrean visitors. The total number of visitors from the African continent was 51, out of whom, 25 were Ethiopians. There were also visitors from Europe,

USA, and Asian countries, who added up to 2127. Not surprising though, the number of Italian visitors was 1051 from the total sum. It would be fair to say, that this is directly associated to the acquaintance of the Italians of the Eritrean Islands during their colonial years.

**Table: 6.3 International Visitors to the Islands By Nationality
Nationality/Island
1997**

Country of Nationality	Islands						Total
	Dessie	Dehul	Durghela	Durghm	Dahlak	Others	
Eritrea	126	37	12	17	436	0	628
Ethiopia	18	0	1	9	16	0	44
Kenya	5	4	0	0	2	0	11
South Africa	8	0	0	3	4	0	15
Other Africa	6	0	0	1	20	0	27
Sub total	163	41	13	30	478	0	725
Italy	502	43	74	137	499	4	1259
Germany	85	22	8	22	19	0	156
U.K	74	15	2	26	28	0	145
Switzerland	37	1	3	10	29	0	80
Netherlands	18	6	1		7	0	32
France	44	4	0	7	48	0	103
Belgium	6	1	0		10	0	17
Scandinavia	39	17	3	8	21	0	88
Spain	5	3	1	2	12	0	23
Ireland	1	0	0	0	2	0	3
Other Europe	1	0	0	0	6	0	7
Sub Total	812	112	92	212	681	4	1913
S. Arabia	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Israel	1	0	3	2	2	0	8
Other M. East	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sub Total	3	0	3	2	2	0	10
Japan	4	1	0	0	3	0	8
Korea		0	0	0	11	0	11
India	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Sub Total	7	1	0	0	14	0	22
USA	121	0	2	127	121	11	382
Canada	20	2		6	3	0	31
Sub Total	141	2	2	133	124	11	413
Australia	8	1	0	1	3	0	13
Total	1134	157	110	378	1302	15	3096

Ministry of Tourism State of Eritrea, 1997 Report

In 1997, the general statistical data depicts a slight increase in the number of both Eritrean and international visitors to the Islands. The total number of Eritrean visitors to the Islands

rose to 628. It was 215 in the year 1996. The difference was 412 (628-215) in 1997. During 1997 the total number of visitors from Africa was 725. It increased by 459 (725-266) in 1997. Similarly, the number of other international visitors also significantly increased in 1997. It amounted to be 3096. The increase was by 918 (3096-2178) visitors. The number of the Italian visitors was still dominant for the obvious reasons. In 1997, there were 2371 international visitors to the Eritrean Islands other than the visitors from the African continent.

Table: 6.4 International Visitors to The Islands By Nationality
Nationality/Island
1998

	Islands						Total
	Dessie	Dehul	Durghela	Durghm	Dahlak	Others	
Country of Nationality							
Eritrea	86	29	6	16	100	20	257
Ethiopia	9	1	2	1	13	2	28
S. Africa	14	0	0	0	2	9	25
Other Africa	2	1	0	0	4	0	7
Israel	4	0	1	0	0	0	5
Other M.East	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Italy	278	90	27	112	224	71	802
UK	56	17	9	6	16	22	126
Germany	15	1	6	4	24	1	51
France	36	2	8	3	16	5	70
Switzerland	21	6	4	2	9	5	47
Benelux	16	1	2	0	5	1	25
Scandinavian	27	2	1	2	32	14	78
Austria	2	0	3	1	3	0	9
Other Europe	8	3	2	5	27	5	50
Japan	1	0	0	1	5	0	7
Other Asia	0	0	0	1	1	2	4
USA	59	11	53	4	25	111	263
Canada	9	1	1	1	6	4	22
Other America	0	0	2	0	3	2	7
Australia	2	1	0	0	5	1	9
New Zealand	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
TOTAL	645	166	127	159	522	277	1896

Ministry of Tourism State of Eritrea, 1998 Report

The year 1998 experienced a steady decline in the number of both Eritrean and international visitors to the Eritrean Islands. The number of Eritrean visitors to the Islands demonstrated a severe decrease in 1998. The total number of the Eritrean visitors was registered 257 in 1998 as compared to 628 in 1997. The net difference was 431(628-257). The number of the Ethiopian visitors was also slightly deteriorated to 28 in 1998 from 44 in the year 1997. The prime reason for the decrease in the number of the Ethiopian visitors in the year 1998 could be the outbreak of the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea (it merits to be noted that the registered Ethiopian visitors to the Eritrean Islands were might be Ethiopians who were residing in Eritrea before the outbreak of the war). The overall statistical data showed that international visitors to the Eritrean Islands also significantly decreased from 3096 in 1997 to 1896 in 1998. The fall to the overall number of visitors to the Islands is positively attributed to the Ethio-Eritrea border conflict that broke out in 1998.

Eritrean visitors to the Islands progressed to 594 in 1999 from 257 in 1998. In 1999 the number increased by 237 (594-257). The year 1999 had no the record of Ethiopian visitors (except for 1 visitor) due to the unfavourable political climate that has been created between Ethiopia and Eritrea. International visitors were also seemed to bounce back to visit the Eritrean Islands in 1999.

The statistical record reveals that the number of international visitors to the Islands steadily increased from 1896 in 1998 to 2729 in 1999. The aggregate difference was 833 (2729-1896). The prospect and most likely reason for the progressive increase of the number of both Eritrean and international visitors to the Islands was the relative peace that prevailed between the two countries.

*Table: 6.5 International Visitors to the Islands By Nationality
Nationality/Island 1999*

	ISLANDS						TOTAL
	Dessie	Dehul	Durghela	Durghm	Dahlak	Others	
Country of nationality							
Eritrea	149	35	55	56	99	200	594
Ethiopia				1			1
South Africa	3	1					4
Kenya	1					3	4
Other Africa	5	2	1	1	4	9	22
Sub Total	158	38	56	58	103	212	625
Israel	1		3	3		9	16
S. Arabia							0
Other M. East						4	4
Sub Total	1	0	3	3	0	13	20
Italy	275	244	209	190	171	470	1559
UK	9	3	3	8	2	10	35
Germany	2	1	7	7	13	4	34
France	11	7	6	6	12	7	49
Switzerland	14		8	8	10	13	53
Benelux	6		1	2	1	5	15
Scandineva	18	5			5	23	51
Austria	1	2			1	9	13
Spain	4	1	3	3	1	2	14
Other Europ	6	2	5	5	9	17	44
Sub Total	346	265	242	229	225	560	1867
Korea					10		10
India	5		1	1	2	5	14
Other Asia	3				14		17
Subtotal	8	0	1	1	26	5	41
USA	35	15	1	13	29	28	121
Canada	4	4	4	5	6	15	38
Other America	1	1	1	1	1		5
Sub total	40	20	6	19	36	43	164
Australia			4	4	4		12
TOTAL	553	323	312	314	394	833	2729

Ministry of tourism State of Eritrea, 1999 Report

**Table: 6.6 International Visitors to the Islands by Nationality
Nationality/Island 2000**

Country of Nationality	NAME OF ISLANDS						Total
	Dessie	Dehul	Durghela	Durghm	Dahlak	Others	
Eritrea	118	25	71	74	176	116	580
Ethiopia	1	2	2	3	3	2	13
Kenya							0
P[;'\-0South Africa							0
Other Africa	2	1	2	2	2	4	13
Sub total	121	28	75	79	181	122	606
Italy	284	113	162	206	218	509	1492
Germany	13	5			5	20	43
U.K	13		1	2	10	16	42
France	6	1	2	2	6	11	28
Switzerland	10	17	6	7	10	23	73
Netherlands	2		4	4	3	4	17
Scandinavian	9			3	4	6	22
Belgium							0
Spain	6		5	6	4	7	28
Austria	7		2		2	8	19
Other Europe	31	11	12	16	25	41	136
Sub Total	381	147	194	246	287	645	1900
Saudi Arabia	1				1	1	3
Israel	1		5	5	13	6	30
Other M. East					2	0	2
Sub Total	2	0	5	5	16	7	35
Japan	1				7	0	8
China	2					5	7
Korea	36	19	17	35	40	27	174
India	1	1			1	0	3
Other Asia	13	1			3	17	34
Sub Total	53	21	17	35	51	49	226
USA	64	7	12	19	49	60	211
Canada	2			5	7	0	14
Other America	1	1	1			4	7
Sub Total	67	8	13	24	56	64	232
Australia	2					2	4
New Zealand	2			1	2	11	16
Total	628	204	304	390	593	900	3019

Ministry of Tourism State of Eritrea, 2000 Report

In the year 2000, the general trend of Eritrean and international visitors to the Islands was observed back to normal as it was before the outbreak of the border war in 1998. The number of Eritrean visitors mounted to 580. The number of Ethiopian visitors was registered 13 in the year 2000. Significantly, the number of international visitors to the Islands has also increased. The gross total of international visitors in 1999 was 2729 and it increased to 3019. That is, it increased by 290 (3019-2729) visitors in 2000. This could also be related to the ceasefire and peace agreement that has been signed between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Table: 6.7 Total Numbers of Visitors to the Islands In 2001

Islands	Dessie	Dehul	Durghela	Durghm	Dahlak	Others	Total
No of visitors	1359	258	539	1658	1760	1743	7317

Ministry of Tourism, state of Eritrea, 2001 Report

In 2001, the number of visitors demonstrated significant variance from the year 2000. As the above table (Table 6.7) for visitor arrivals shows that the total number of visitors to the Dahlak Islands was 1760 (from 593 in 2000). Durghm and Dessie Islands recorded 1658 (from 390 in 2000) and 1359 (from 628 in 2000) in the year 2001 respectively. Similarly, the other Islands also experienced a significant increase in the number of total visitors in the year 2001.

Concluding Remarks - As evidenced by various statistical recodes of visitors' arrivals to the Eritrean Islands, it can generally be inferred that the total number of home and international visitors to the Islands has been remarkably unsatisfactory and below expectation when contrasted against the noble tourism potential that the Islands could guarantee. The reasons for this are many and varied. As it has been highlighted earlier, much energy and ink has not been injected to the tourism sector. The government was expected to responsibly have taken the initiatives to promote and encourage tourism prospects of these Islands. Bureaucratic complexities and government restrictive practices in processing and issuing travel documents for international visitors in the pretext of “national security” issues and other political expediencies are also typical elements of the problem. The statistics, which show visitors arrivals to the Islands, are also unreliable due to inaccurate recording of data and inappropriate method of handling it. For understandable reasons such misleading and distorted data could be a factor for erroneous or biased conclusions.

Table 6.8 presents the general trend of visitors to the Dahlak Islands in a summarized form.

Table: 6.8 Summary of Findings on Visitors Arrivals to Dahlak Islands 1996-2001

	Years					
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Eritrea	215	628	257	594	580	
Rate		192%	(144%)	131%	(2.5%)	
Africa	51	97	60	31	26	
Rate		90%	(62%)	(94%)	(19%)	
Europe	1723	1913	1258	1867	1900	
Rate		11%	(52%)	48%	2%	
USA	158	413	292	164	232	
Rate		161%	(41%)	(78%)	42%	
Australia	10	13	11	12	20	
Rate		30%	(18%)	9%	67%	
Asia	11	22	11	41	22	
Rate		100%	(100%)	273%	(86%)	
Total	2178	3096	1896	2729	3019	7317
Rate		42%	(63%)	44%	11%	142%

Remarks: A. The percentage figures show rates of increase from the previous year.

B. Percentages in brackets indicate decreases from the previous year.

C. For the year 2001 no data was obtained only total numbers based on table 6.7 were taken for comparison.

6.5 THE CURRENT STUDY:

Data Analysis and Findings:- Based on the questionnaires distributed throughout the country the analysis and findings of the obtained data will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

As the statistics indicate in Table 6.9, the number of individuals who visited Dahlak Island was 35% of the total respondents, which is below 50%. The rest 65% did not visit Dahlak Islands.

As column 5 of Table 6.9 shows, out of the total respondents 109 were females and 272 were males. The table was deliberately designed to show that the sample taken was in consideration of gender proportions except for the Gash Bark region where culture clearly

deprives women from active involvement in different activities, indicative that male dominance still prevails. Gender selection for foreigners was impractical since the number of international visitors was insignificant or small. Moreover, Column 6 of Table 6.9 indicates marital status of the respondents. Marital status was also considered in the selection of sample respondents to check whether or not it affects their behaviour, decision and attitude towards travelling.

Table: 6.9 Total Respondents' Profile by Region

Provinces (Zobas)	Total respondents Of each region	Total respondents Who visited & not visited Massawa		Total respondents Who visited & not visited Dahlak		Gender Of respondents		Marital status of Respondents			
		Visited	Not Visited	Visited	Not Visited	Male	Female	Single	Married	Divorced	Widow wed
Southern Red sea	45 100%	40 89%	5 11%	22 49%	23 51%	25 56%	20 44%	21 47%	24 53%	–	–
Debub	40 100%	35 88%	5 12%	5 12%	35 88%	30 67%	10 33%	20 50%	20 50%	–	–
Maekeal	90 100%	84 94%	6 6%	28 31%	62 69%	69 77%	21 23%	40 44.5%	40 44.5%3	6 7%	4 4%
Anseba	42 100%	34 81%	8 19%	16 38%	26 62%	31 74%	11 26%	22 52%	14 34%	5 12%	1 2%
Gash barka	40 100%	20 50%	20 50%	3 7%	37 93%	31 78%	9 22%	12 30%	28 70%	–	–
Northern Red Sea	94 100%	94 100%	–	30 32%	64 68%	66 70%	28 30%	48 51%	42 45%	2 2%	2 2%
Foreigners	30 100%	30 100%	–	30 100%	–	20 67%	10 33%	20 67%	5 16.5%	5 16.5%	–

According to the figures shown in Table 6.10, other factors being constant, income also seemed to have a positive impact on the number of individuals who travelled to the Island. As the trend shows for most provinces, respondents with higher income group have a corresponding higher tendency to visit the Islands. As Table 6.10 indicates, 96% of the total sample group who travelled to Dahlak were found to be within the income brackets of 3000 and above. As the information reveals, the number of visitors increased as their respective income increased. Therefore, treating other variables normal, one can safely conclude that income also plays a significant role in influencing the visitors' behaviour.

Table: 6.10 Total Respondents' Profile by Income

Provinces (Zobas)	Total Number Of Respondents	# of respondents visited Massawa with their Respective income groups in thousands (000)					Respondents Not visited Massawa	# of respondents Dahlak Island with their respective income group in thousands (000)					Respondents Not visited Dahlak
		Below 2	2-3	3-4	4-5	Above 5		Below 2	2-3	3-4	4-5	Above 5	
Southern Red sea	45 100%	10 22%	1 2%	10 22%	8 18%	11 24%	5 11%	1 2%	2 4%	3 7%	2 4%	16 36%	23 51%
Northern Red sea	94 100%	7 7%	16 17%	22 23%	17 18%	32 34%	–	1 1%	2 2%	6 6%	10 11%	11 12%	64 68%
Debub	40 100%	1 2.5%	4 10%	10 25%	8 20%	12 30%	5 12.5%	–	1 2.3%	1 2.3%	1 2.3%	2 5%	35 88%
Gash barka	40 100%	–	–	4 10%	6 15%	10 25%	20 50%	1 1%	–	–	–	2 5%	37 93%
Meakeal	90 100%	3 3%	8 9%	8 9%	20 22%	45 50%	6 7%	–	3 3%	8 9%	10 11%	7 8%	62 69%
Ansseba	42 100%	2 5%	1 2%	8 19%	7 17%	6 14%	18 43%	–	–	4 10%	2 4%	10 24%	26 62%
Foreigners	30 100%	–	–	8 27%	4 13%	18 60%	–	–	–	8 27%	4 13%	18 60%	–

As analysed in Table 6.11, the 134 respondents who visited Dahlak Islands had different motives. It is stipulated that 9% of the respondents said their prime priority was exploring the fascinating history and culture of the Islands. Thirty percent of the respondents' foremost motive was seaside relaxing on holidays. The other 13% of the visitors' simple motive to visit the Islands was spatial proximity. 28% of the visitors visited the Islands merely for adventure, to admire nature and hiking. 7% of the visitors were interested in visiting relatives and friends. This batch of visitors is assumed to be originally descendants of the Islands. The rest 13% had travelled to the Islands to enjoy sport recreation and physical fitness including diving. They resume to their 2nd and 3rd... priorities as it enumerated in Table 6.11.

Table: 6.11 Visitors' Motives to Visit Dahlak Islands

# Of visitors	Relaxing sea side Holidays	Exploring historical Cultural Sites	Proximity of Destinations	New experience Adventure Nature work & Hiking	Sport recreation Fitness Diving	Visiting relatives Friends
Rank 40 30%	1	2	4	3	5	6
Rank 17 13%	3	2	1	4	5	6
Rank 37 28%	3	2	4	1	5	6
Rank 12 9%	3	1	4	2	5	6
Rank 10 7%	3	2	5	4	6	1
Rank 18 13%	4	3	5	2	1	6
Total	17	12	23	16	27	31

As for Table 6.11 the numbers inside the box shows priorities of visitors' interest to visit Dahlak Islands. For example out of the total number of tourists (134) who visited Dahlak Islands 40 of them or 30% were said relaxing sea side holidays was their prime interest. And exploring historical and cultural sites was second. Furthermore, new experience, adventure, nature work and hiking was their third interest. Proximate of destination was forth. Sport recreation fitness and diving was fifth. Visiting relatives and friends was sixth.

As evidenced in Table 6.11 however, only 9% of the respondents visited Dahlak Islands with the intention to explore historical and cultural features of the Islands. The intentions and motives of the other are briefly probed on the same table. When collectively

scrutinized the data and information so collected illustrates that much has to be done to aware the local people of the rich historic potential of Dahlak Islands.

Table: 6.12 Visitors Level Of Satisfaction on the Tourism Aspect of the Dahlak Islands

Tourism aspects	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
History of Dahlak Island	99	35		
Local inhabitants	84	50		
Monuments	79	55		
Weather	88	46		
Peace solitude	97	37		
Day life	78	56		
Cultural events			76	58
Entertainment			73	61
Access to information and reception of gusts			63	71
Tourism signs			62	72
Quality and quantity of hotels and restaurants			59	75
Shopping			57	77
Transportation access to the Island			71	63
Transportation inside the Island			44	90
Night life			70	64
State of conservation and cleanness			78	56
Urban and architectural characteristics			61	73
Street lighting			58	76
Tourism related government rules and regulations			58	76

The first six rows in Table 6.12 demonstrate that most of the visitors were very satisfied with the natural setting i.e. history, culture and heritage, peace, weather and the daily recreational activities i.e. diving, snorkelling, swimming, skiing in the Dahlak Islands. Correspondingly, most of the respondents who visited Dahlak Islands substantiated their response by voicing "very satisfied" or at least "satisfied" to the ranks provided for purpose of scoring their impressions.

Concerning manmade tourist facilities and attractions the visitors' response was very negatively biased i.e. very dissatisfied. These impressions with no doubt hints that efforts have to begin from the scratch to make the Dahlak Islands one of the world's most favourite and popular tourism destination.

Table 6.13 Non-Visitors Level of Awareness Towards Dahlak Islands, By Province

	Dehub		Makeal		Anseba		Northern red sea		Southern red sea		Gash barka		Foreigner		Total	
	yes	No	yes	no	yes	No	Yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Have you ever heard a place called Dahlak Islands?	35	0	62	0	26	0	64	0	23	0	37	0	0	0	247	0
Do you know Dahlak Islands are interesting tourism sites?	10	25	20	42	6	20	25	5	3	20	7	30	0	0	71	142

As listed down in Table 6.9, 65% of the total respondents did not visit Dahlak Islands. As mentioned in previous sections of this paper, in general, inability of respondents' to visit the Dahlak Islands might be associated with several impeding factors including subsistence income, proximity of destination, gender problems, and tourism- related government rules and regulations and others.

Considering the non-visitors level of awareness (Table 6.13) towards the tourism potential of the Islands i.e. analyzing questions number 12 "have you ever heard the place called Dahlak Islands?" and 13 "do you know that Dahlak Islands are interesting tourism sites?" of the questionnaire, 100% of the respondents responded that they have heard of the place known as "Dahlak Islands." However, only, 44% of the total respondents know Dahlak Islands as an interesting and historical tourism sites. As the columns in Table 6.13 indicate, except for respondents from the Northern Red Sea who have an advantage of proximity, most of the respondents from the other provinces are not aware of Dahlak as rich in history and tourism attraction. Commensurately, 83% of the respondents from Northern Red Sea were aware of Dahlak Islands as a historic place though they were not able to visit them.

Based on non-visitor respondents' answer and the researcher's own observations among the many reasons that could have attributed to the low level of visitors arrivals to the Dahlak Islands, some of the primary factors include.

- Lack of all inclusive, effective national, provincial and local structure for the development, management and promotion of the tourism sector.
- Inadequate awareness of tourism, education and training on both the local people and tourism officials.
- Inexistence or lack of competence in financial terms of private sector due to the stringent and hard policies of the current command economic structure.
- Allocation of meagre funds and resources on tourism by the existing government in power.
- Lack of infrastructure- all forms of transport hotels and etc...
- Poor management and inadequate attention to the tourism industry and virtual neglect contrary to in ensuring and maintaining tourism attractions and facilities
- Complex, complicated, crude and tight tourism related rules and regulations imposed by the government.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although efforts were made at substantiating some pertinent inferences, remarks and recommendations in every section of the paper, those deemed needing particular attention and therefore, believed to be of high significance both to the researcher and the authorities of tourism in Eritrea are explicitly presented here below.

The first section exclusively deals with the general state of tourism in Eritrea. The main purpose of the section is to give a bird's eye-view of the level of the development of tourism in that country from a comprehensive perspective. It is assumed that remarks and conclusions forwarded in this section could contribute to the general understanding of the country's political, economic and social conditions and their over all impact on the development of tourism.

The second section is specific, in that it is particularly confined to the status of tourism development in the Dahlak Islands. With in the perspective of the general status of tourism development in Eritrea in general narrated in section one; and within the context of limited progress of tourism in the Islands, attempts were made to draw inferences or deduct pertinent remarks and conclusions upon analyzing cause effect relations and the resultant factor that could either impede or promote tourism in the country. Facts are descriptively narrated and figures computed to verify, quantify and qualify most of the remarks from which conclusions have been drawn.

7.1. GENERAL CONCLUSION

During colonial occupation, Italian and British colonizers used to visit and enjoy their leisure time in the Dahlak Islands. They practically did nothing for tourism to strive and thrive. According to Haji Ibrahim Suleyman a local inhabitant aged 86, with whom I had a brief chat while I was visiting Dahlak Islands, the Italians in particular were more interested in using Nocra to isolate Eritrean patriots who were rebelling against Italian occupation. The British also were not interested to develop tourism in the islands. There are

no recorded documents testifying to the legacy of colonial rulers with the vision of developing tourism either in the Islands or in other tourist sites in the country in general. Against this background therefore, except for its concepts tourism is relatively a new venture in Eritrea and as a consequence there is no as yet a comprehensive understanding of tourism even among some government agencies. To the consternation of the researcher and many others interested in the subject matter the very indigenous people who could have been benefited from income obtained from tourism are no better aware or knowledgeable than the public at large.

Some people in the private sector have very elementary ideas about tourism but their limited awareness does not exceed far beyond temptations and wishful thinking about the growth and expansion of the industry. It is therefore a pressing issue and a detrimental one that should be addressed aggressively, persistently and continuously to generate more awareness of the conceptual and contextual aspects and dimensions of tourism by all parties concerned. They should be well-versed and articulately oriented about its economic and social benefits so that they could be in a relatively better position to initiate and there by support the formulation of policies and strategies that could bring about favourable conditions for sustainable development of tourism. A concerted determination and action is necessary to actualize it with the vision of its significant contribution to national progress and wellbeing.

Programmes targeted at creating public awareness but cautiously trimmed to effect them have to be designed both as a short-term strategy; and as creating awareness heightens with the progress of time, to involve as many people as possible in the catering and management of the tourist industry. Familiarizing the industry could encourage investors and business men to incur finance in tourism. Nationals could be motivated to visit and tour their country's historic and cultural sites and could greatly appreciate the bounties and legacies of their possessions and heritage. To that end programs aimed at lifting-up awareness and familiarizing tourism should flawlessly and articulately be addressed with the ultimate goal of imparting profound impact and marked influence in the attitudes of the private and public sectors of the economic and social stratification of the country.

Government authorities responsible for formulating policies and investors interested in the tourist industry need to work jointly and hence they are required to be equipped with the knowledge and the skill to bring about innovative ideas and methods of managing tourism. Therefore, scrupulous energy should also be put in place to convince top government incumbents to formulate policies on tourism. Equally significant is the participation of the private sector in these endeavours. Awareness creating programs should be pursued with these likely prospects in mind. At the local level, it would be highly necessary to involve influential indigenous village elders and community leaders in matters related to tourism and to empower them have a say in the decision making process and the management of tourism. Their active participation in planning and impact assessments of tourism in their localities would not only socially and economically be rewarding for themselves but would also support efforts made by government to boost the industry.

Nevertheless generating awareness from the general point of view of tourism would not suffice to bring about desired ends. Equally very important would be raising community awareness about environmental protection; conservation of archaeological and historic sites; maintenance of and caring for traditional arts and crafts; are essential aspects that call upon the need of public awareness. These programmes that should be perceived as an avoidable, considering their priceless value to the conservation of the environment and the compelling and irresistible challenge they impose on tourists, as well as their vital contribution to tourism development in Eritrea. Such environmental awareness programmes can be presented in connection to those of tourism. But a separate environmental awareness programme aimed specifically at nature and wildlife conservation would be more commendable, given the negligent attitude of the local people and the government's pendent and passive mood as regards those bounties.

Tourism could only flourish with the existence of abundant attractions to the tourist. Hence for tourism to flourish, the bounties of nature including the conservation of wildlife and protection should be seen as indivisible. By the same token, if the industry is to be sustainable and bring about improvements in the total socio-economic conditions of the people in the country.

Much financial investment is required for developing tourism in Eritrea from both the public and private sectors. The private sector has to invest particularly for the improvement and construction of rural and local tourist restaurants so that tourists could have a better chance of knowing the indigenous people's culture and tradition from a closer geographical proximity. Obviously, investment in these projects should be augmented by establishing tour and travel operations including the procurement of buses and four wheels drive trucks which tourists could use in their travels on rough and dirty roads.

Small motorized boats should also be deployed in order for tourists to enjoy visiting some historically and culturally significant spots. Even though such undertakings pre-supposes a large sum of hard currency which the government can not afford at one given time, international financial institutions could be requested loans or funds for these specific purposes. Once these vital necessities are met well-organized and efficiently managed they could generate their own capital and profits that could partly be spent for repaying loans and partly for re-investing for the improvement and expansion of infrastructure of tourism sites. Such bold ventures could ultimately pave the way for improvement in the livelihood of the people and the economy of the country. In view of the positive economic and social benefits tourism could bring about therefore the fulfilment of the above basic requirements is not only essential but also detrimental.

To the knowledge of the Researcher, the dictatorial regime in Asmara is at logger heads with its neighbouring countries, namely: with Ethiopia, the Sudan and Yemen. For centuries the three countries had robust commercial links and their respective populations had been hosts to one another whenever civil wars or colonial wars prevailed in the region. Therefore, had Eritrea been at peace from within and with its neighbours its tourist industry could have developed and expanded.

Relatively speaking, the three countries mentioned above are scrupulously advancing their tourist industry; Kenya by far has the best tourist industry in the region. Against this objective reality visible in the region, Eritrea could have benefited a lot from their experience and expertise. Since the economic gains of tourism are closely linked to other sectors of the economy, if Eritrea subscribes to peaceful co-existence with these countries

its over-all economy could have shown unprecedented growth, which could have as well triggered its tourism industry to a much higher level of development.

Maintaining international and regional co-operation is important for Eritrea. Membership and active participation in international organizations and appropriating funds to lobby groups promoting tourism could provide the country with much needed information about tourism. International co-operation could also enhance the opportunity to establish contacts with tourism officials and other parties involved in the sector in other countries. Working in partnership could also open the door for participating in training session, workshop and seminars, which the country could amalgamate in its manpower plans.

Although Eritrea possesses basic tourism policy it is quite certain that it lags far behind in many dimensions. Considering the management, structure and dispensation of tourism in the country one could easily observe some very obvious draw-backs e.g. unrealistic and unproductive planning, out-dated and haphazard methods of follow-up and recording, especially those related to market trends and analysis, transportation technology and new types of facilities. Fragmented rather than integrated approach to planning has given rise to mismanagement, unaccountability and negligence, which according to the author's observation has culminated in the stagnation of the industry. Total inadequacy in formulating plans to achieve desired ends on the part of the authorities responsible for the sector is sad to say one of the prominent problems facing the industry.

Safeguarding and maintaining peace is an irreversible and unavoidable precondition for any country. There is no country in the world that has progressed or prospered in the absence of internal peace. The government of Eritrea should embark on peace within itself, so that its citizens could invest their finance and skill in any economic sector, including tourism. It should fully realize that only its resolute commitment to that end could help the country overcome its economic and social backwardness. The development of tourism should no therefore be seen in isolation. Tourism has become a victim of the regime. Its development could only be envisaged within the perspective of basic institutional and structural reform, whereby a given economic sector's revenue could support the other. The author hopes the government would listen. It should aim at abolishing its Stalinist-type of central planning

and submit its enormous profit-making establishments to its citizens and give free market economy including investment in tourism a chance. Its impoverishing economic policies should be up-rooted from the scratch.

The Eritrean government should give more priority to national construction and development which the destitute people vie to achieve. It should review and re-construct its diplomatic and commercial ties with its neighbouring states, the international community and essentially with international financial institutions on profound premises that could lend themselves to productive engagements worthy of improving its beleaguered economy, including the improvement of its stagnant tourist industry.

7.2. SPECIFIC CONCLUSION

Although the Dahlak Islands offer a suitable site for tourism development nothing has as yet been done to reap this potential. Based on the study on the attractions and facilities of the Islands the aim of this conclusion is to make an attempt at prioritizing some projects likely to give impetus to the development of tourism in the Islands. The researcher has relied on his own judgment to arrive at this conclusion.

The location of hotels and other tourist facilities in Dahlak Islands totally depends on the availability of fresh potable water. As regards fresh water therefore, at least for the time being, probably the only practicable sites are on the larger Islands such as Dahlak Kebir, Nocra or perhaps Dessei. In any case, proposed recreational areas where visitors could possibly enjoy water-skiing and other activities should be located well away from any marine park, bird sanctuary or other conservation areas in order for the project sites to remain immune from water polluting elements. Government authorities at any level of responsibility should continuously control the immunity and purity of the eco-system in these localities.

The Island of Nocra on the west coast of Dahlak Islands is generally thought to offer the best site for a tourist centre. For quite a long time government authorities have been considering establishment of a tourist centre on Shumma or Dissei, but I believe that Nocra

is more suitable for that purpose. I contend that Shumma could effectively be used as a game park for wildlife that could be transported from the near by mainland in reasonable numbers. Dissei is much nearer to Massawa and because of its proximity, it is ideal for day or weekend visits. Furthermore, Nocra has the following advantages over the other sites surveyed.

- Nocra occupies a central position for tourist exploration of the west side of the archipelago by virtue of its location thus its access is convenient. With its reasonably sheltered deep-water anchorage; it could be conducive for docking ferries, boats and ships. The government should exploit this structure and build on it other necessary ones so that its efforts in strengthening and developing tourism could economically and socially be rewarding.
- It possesses a large number of old buildings, which could be converted or simply used for providing building materials. The government should realize that this could help it save some money, which it could divert into other tourism projects.
- It has brackish water near to the surface that could be filtered and purified for drinking. The authorities need to be conscious considering the shortage of water in the locality. Water is life and they should be able to provide potable water if tourists are to be attracted.
- Old water storage cisterns and a large airstrip are available on Nocra. If renovated, the cisterns could contribute to the alleviation of the shortage of water supply. The airstrip if renewed and its facilities installed, it could prove pivotal in ameliorating much needed transport.
- The government should give utmost attention to reconstruct the airstrip, because that in its own right apart from facilitating new and fast transport it could as well generate reasonable revenue from hiring light aircraft.
- It contains a waterfront and jetties that could be improved and one jetty that could easily be repaired. The authorities should harness the potential of these utilities, not only because the utilities could cost modest expenses, but essentially because they could produce more water which is a scarce resource in the localities.
- Given the sparse population, Nocra is populated by a large idle local population, majority of whom are poor and destitute. The authorities should convert the idle manpower into human capital by providing employment opportunities and other

skills relevant to tourism so that they could support themselves and contribute to the growth of tourism.

- It also has an operational police station with a radio link to Massawa; the government should up-grade the conditions of the police station and equip it with modern communications equipment and appliances, so that not only the safety and security of the islanders is maintained but also those of visitors and tourists. It should believe that safety, security and peace is vital for the promotion and expansion of tourism.

What Nocra Lacks:

- Nocra Island lacks good bathing beaches, although excellent ones exist within a short boat journey (10-15) minutes. To augment that missing link with the Island, government authorities should put in place boats or submit that service to the locals so that they could earn their bread and butter on their own.
- There are few families of local people living in the old prison buildings. The government should make available other houses where the dwellers could settle, in order for the buildings to be used for other tourist purposes and hence a means of minimizing shortage of offices.
- The construction of a modern Tourist Centre will take time therefore it could not be practical to envisage, at least in the short-term, bringing tourists in large number, since the prevailing condition in the island, as described above, are not as yet developed, and even if there could be some simple facilities and amenities, they could only serve a very few tourists and internal visitors. Nonetheless, government officials need to develop short peace meal schemes with the view of entertaining small contingents of tourists to accommodate just enough according to available facilities and amenities.

Water - the water resources of the Islands need further development to provide adequate supplies for tourists and the local people. Whilst this development is being carried out, water must be brought from the mainland and if necessary stored in tanks on the Islands. As described before, the government is required to exploit the already existing water supply facilities and should also harness more water by pumping in desalinated water from the sea and should also excavate more water points deep-wells and earth dams that would

not only be used for resolving water shortages, but also for implementing simple irrigation systems. Any plan aimed at developing the tourist industry should embrace integrated small projects that could bring about equity of services, productivity and profitability.

Priority Tourist Attractions:- Diving and bird watching is generally good in Dahlak Islands. For those with plenty of interest in marine life most of the underwater area is virgin and unpolluted; hence the fish is not only abundant but also conversant. A number of ships could be seen wrecks in the area, which could impel tourists to investigate the causes for the wreckages. According to the researcher this is another dimension of tourist attraction government authorities should give due attention so that income from tourism could be obtained from diversified attractions. The Islands have not been thoroughly studied, base surveys conducted by the author are enough to confirm that for a passionate bird-watcher the attraction is exotic. For those keen on that aspect of attractions there could be more unexplored new ornithological material to be gained from a casual holiday visit of short duration. Such persons will, however, need readily available transport to and from neighbouring Islands. The government should respond to their needs if a holistic approach to the promotion and development of tourism is to be attained.

7.3. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The general conclusions drawn in part one tends to lend themselves to the following comprehensive recommendations.

7.3.1. Public Awareness Programmes

The creation of awareness programmes in Eritrea can systematically be prepared and organized by establishing and articulating the objectives and specifying the awareness techniques to be disseminated by determining and defining target groups e.g. students, community leaders, village elders, government officials, journalists, representatives of religious groups, diplomatic personnel, etc., Some of the basic public awareness techniques that could be recommended for Eritrean could include the following:

- Regular radio broadcasts that could impart basic concepts about tourism and about past events and on-going activities related to the sector. In a country where illiteracy is high and access to information from sophisticated communications technology is almost non-existent radio broadcasting is the best and fastest way to reach a large number of people in traditional and widely dispersed tourism areas.
- Regular or occasional local television programs on tourism. Programs can include interviews of persons involved in tourism, which could attract those new to the concepts and practices of tourism.
- Documentary films about tourism as it practically takes place in addition to showing development projects underway could enhance awareness if implemented on regular basis. Print media could as well generate awareness if it devotes some of its columns to that effect. Profiles of prominent local tourism professionals could help put impetus and impose positive impact on the people.
- Posters, brochures and booklets, designed for the purpose should be distributed in abundance not only to promote awareness about tourism but also to familiarize it as subject on its right. Any literature, feature poster ...etc. should be designed and printed in simple, straight and clear languages.
- Familiarizing tourism in the local school system, perhaps as part of social studies could be advantageous. It could be one of the best methods to institutionalize exposure of tourism for young people. By way of popularizing tourism, students could be encouraged to be keen on the matter, and hence a contributing factor to create awareness across the youth. Tourism officials should be pioneers in such undertakings.
- Guided tours should be organized for students and adults and for owners and employees of hotels, passenger airlines and tour agencies so that they could grasp the multi-dimensional benefits and operations of tourism.
- Organize competitions for children on tourism topics such as drawings of important tourist attractions of the country.
- Show the flow and economic values the tourist Dollar or Nakfa through various media.

- Organize community and village meetings on tourism in which people well versed in tourism could brief the people. This method of briefing could be important approach and particularly so where tourism development is proposed near to the communities. A series of meetings could be needed to motivate community involvement in tourism development.
- Special publications but periodic on tourism need to be designed for consumption of both the general public and organizations and persons directly involved in the tourism sector. The existing magazine on tourism “Eritrean Horizon” is not qualitatively and quantitatively adequate to meet the desired tourism development.
- Seminars and conferences need to be organized and conducted, and essentially for inhabitants near tourism localities, tour operators, appropriate government officials and potential investors in tourism, nationals or foreign on specific aspects of tourism as may be deemed necessary; so that the intended objective of disseminating concepts and dispensation of tourism could reach a cross- section of the country.

7.3.2. Investment in Tourism

The possibility for private investment in Eritrea is far-fetched as a result of the dictatorial system’s economy of impoverishment. If there could be very scarce resources they could not measure up beyond constructing small-scale projects e.g. snacks, restaurants small hotels, pensions and inadequate tour operations. For larger-scale projects foreign investment or joint venture, foreign and domestic is highly needed. An important source of foreign investment or flow of capital could be from the many Eritreans who have migrated overseas, a significant number of whom have over the years enough finance which they might wish to invest given peace and stability prevails in the country.

In Eritrea, current political, economic and social policies are not conducive for private investment in tourist facilities such as hotels, guesthouses and resorts, tour and travel operations and restaurants. Transportation services and other tourist associated facilities and services suffer for the same reason. Most of the existing facilities and services though old, few and inconvenient for the expansion of tourism and services are still government

owned. It is highly recommended that the tourism policy should be changed in favour of privatization if tourism is to be developed and expanded. Tireless efforts must also be made to encourage private investment, both local and international, in expanding and improving existing facilities and services.

7.3.3. Education and Training in Tourism

The Hotel and Tourism Training Centre at the Selam Hotel is not enough to meet the intended tourism development in Eritrea. It must therefore, be further developed both in terms of skill and knowledge required for training of trainers, who could also in turn train others working in tourism as per hotel catering management and tourist reception, handling and treatment. All involved within this sphere of operations should also be provided with standard procedure manuals so that they could overtime master their respective responsibilities. A periodic impact assessment of what they have gained from training would help improve the calibre and efficiency of all those concerned. First and foremost the technical and responsible personnel of Ministry of Tourism should be trained if tourism is to be guided according to expectations.

7.3.4. Conservation

We usually tend to think of conservation and National Parks only in terms of the territorial environment. The need to set aside areas for the protection of marine life particularly in shallow coastal waters is, however; equally important for both scientific and recreational purposes and in the long term interests of the commercial fishing industry. Marine National Parks, especially in tropical waters can play a valuable role as tourist attractions, as has been impressively demonstrated in the Bahamas, Australia, Japan, and East Africa. If exploited properly they could serve as biological research and laboratory centres and simultaneously as breeding reservoirs for flora and fauna and this would give impetus to the productivity of neighbouring coastal fisheries. Conversely, failure to set aside such conservation areas will automatically lead to industrial pollution, over fishing, destruction of the fragile aquatic habitats and other causes that result on the eventual disappearance of much of the spectacularly rich marine life of the coastal waters.

Although the Red Sea is well known as one of the richest areas in the world in terms of variety and abundance of marine life, no sufficient steps have yet been taken by any of the countries concerned individually or collectively to establish any kind of marine conservation or study area in the Red Sea. This un-harnessed bounty obviously offers a good opportunity for Eritrea to lead the way, since one of the most interesting and scenically attractive regions in the whole Red Sea area the Dahlak archipelago lies within its territorial waters. Apart from the need for conservation measures, it is equally understandable that the Dahlak Islands have considerable potential for development and expansion as far as tourism is concerned. Needless to say a marine park would provide an invaluable nucleus around which hotels and other tourist facilities could eventually be grouped.

In view of the need to conserve bird-life of the Dahlak Archipelago, a number of initiatives must be born in mind. In the first instance, any increase in the frequency of human traffic is bound to have an effect upon the numbers and breeding-pattern of the avian population—to its detriment—and strict measures of control will be necessary. This initiative should aim at ensuring that incursions into and destruction of habitats are minimized.

Quite apart from its possible value as a tourist resort, the archipelago is at present invaluable as a virtually unspoiled field for the study of the ecology and biology of the birds inhabiting it. Certain areas should be retained inviolate at all costs. One would hope that a conservation administration would be set up to run its functions parallel with any tourism enterprise that might come by in the short or long-term.

Furthermore, the researcher suggests that Dissei could be considered in the same light. Dissei's topography and birds have a greater affinity with the Eritrea mainland than with the remainder of the archipelago and it would be too remote to be included in the itinerary of any tourism complex based on, say, Nocra. It is better suited to being visited, as a general reserve, in its own right.

Certain Islands to the north of Nocra should also be afforded varying measures of protection and surveillance and on some, landing should be restricted to wardens, and others with accepted administrative reasons for visiting.

Finally, due to reasons beyond control the researcher was able to cover only a fraction of the Dahlak area, and this does not therefore pretend to be a comprehensive report. Nevertheless, the abundant wildlife and reefs of the Islands needs a comprehensive and well-built conservation measures, and of the obvious potential for tourist development through the creation of a Marine Park, provision of sport-fishing facilities and other means.

7.3.5. Regional and International Co-operation

Of high valuable importance to Eritrea is the World Tourism Organization (WTO), based in Madrid, Spain. The international conglomerate, which embraces inter-governmental organizations under its umbrella, is responsible to oversee support and coordinate development and promotion of tourism. It has many member states and affiliates representing other tourism-related organizations. For reasons related to coordination of its functions, it has set-up regional commissions including for example the Commission for Africa. Eritrea is so far not an active member of the WTO and its Commission for Africa. It badly needs the support and technical know-how of the world body and has to strive to maintain active membership.

Eritrea also has much to gain from encouraging regional co-operation of tourism. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is a regional development association and its member states include Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. Its primary agenda is to solidify regional co-operation on all aspects of development including tourism. In addition, Eritrea should be an active member of other organizations such as COMESA (Common Market for East and Southern Africa) and the Sahel and Sahara in West Africa so that in close collaboration with many states in Africa, it could acquire its proper place in the continent as regards tourism. Eritrea should aim at mutual regional tourism agreements within the Middle East with highly developed tourist industry and a better of economy. Bilateral and multilateral agreements can focus on co-

operation including encouraging regional tour programs, which would benefit all the signatory countries.

Many countries organize special tourism programs to commemorate World Tourism Day, on regular schedules each year. If Eritrea was to celebrate, it should for-see integrated festivals in a holistic manner but central to the commemoration day accompanied e.g. by colourful cultural performances, children's competitions in scenic drawings that depict the topography of the country and exhibits by tourism enterprises and the Ministry of Tourism. Each region could also have an exhibit of its tourist attractions and facilities.

7.4. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

On the bases of the preceding discussions made there in above the specific recommendations regarding the tourism potential of the Dahlak Islands both natural and man made will be discussed below.

Waste Disposal - Arrangements will need to be made for proper waste collection and disposal from resorts located on the offshore Islands. Dahlak Kebir may be large enough to locate a sanitary fill site on the Island. However, the other Islands are too small to provide a dumpsite and waste material will need to be taken to the mainland for proper disposal.

Topographical details - tourists will need maps and charts of the Islands.

Wildlife - regulations are required to protect the birds, fish and all wildlife of the Islands. The conservation of the wildlife is most important.

Vegetation - the lack of water and the presence of goats limit vegetation (the plant life of the Islands). To up-grade and expand the general attraction of the area, a concerted effort should be made to protect trees and plants and encourage re-plantation and reforestation.

Beaches and waterfront facilities - boats are needed to carry tourists to suitable beaches of their choice. These boats should be of shallow draught. Jetties on Nocra and Shumma could

be repaired to improve tourist facilities. The natural harbours such as Ghubbet Mus Nefit would make excellent beaching and sailing areas.

Climate and meteorological conditions - the climate in November– April is considered most suitable for tourists. However, even in this time period the temperature and intense sunlight, combined with the reflected heat from the desert terrain necessitates the erection of simple, strong sun shelters.

Biological aspects - the Islands appear to be reasonably safe for tourists, but nevertheless sensible precautions must be taken. Good sanitation is needed if the fly menace is to be avoided.

Infrastructure facilities - some skilled labour may need to be brought from the mainland for the construction of the tourist centre. Relatively little building material is required from the mainland if Nocra is selected as the Tourist Center. Some material will be needed for the erection of sun shelters. The natural attractions of the Islands are widespread and tourists will require transport to reach them. Boats and vehicles will be needed. Hovercrafts are also a possible solution, especially in the shallow areas in the north east of the archipelago. Equipment with which to perform aquatic sports will need to be provided for tourists, unless they bring their own.

Health - Although eye disease is prevalent in some of the Islands, it is not considered that this constitutes an undue risk to tourists. However, flies will breed quickly if sanitation is neglected. It is deemed advisable that at least medical auxiliaries should be based at the tourist centre. If large numbers of tourists are envisaged, then it may be necessary to have a Doctor in residence.

Tourism Promotion - Marketing and advertising may be done through a variety of media such as through printed brochures, Internet, television and word of mouth. Publicity Associations should be approached to help disseminate information. Any brochure produced to advertise the establishment should include an easily readable map. The establishment of a small post office at the tourist centre would be an added facility.

7.5. REMARKS

In order to harness and effectively utilize the Dahlak Islands for tourism, it is remarked that a three-stage plan be put into effect i.e. short, medium and long-term operations. So far as the author of this research is knowledgeable, no attempt has been made to demarcate this periods in planned manner.

7.5.1. The First Stage (Short Term)

It is remarked that the much imposingly located Nocra should be the major site for the Tourist Centre. Needless to say, at least some basic infrastructure be installed to suitably accommodate tourists. Whenever possible tireless efforts should be exerted to influence visitors to come in self-contained groups aboard by motor vessels or in parties to camp on the Islands. Tourists should also be encouraged to spend a few days relaxing in Massawa before and after a visit to the Islands.

Presently there is no official structure responsible for promoting, planning, coordinating, administration, monitoring and evaluation of tourism in the Islands. And as such as part of the short-term plan it is remarked that a small tourist office be set up in the old prison on Nocra. This office should be able to provide:

- Water - in limited quantities from cisterns or tanks, refilled from the mainland;
- Fuel for boats and vehicles;
- A few small boats that may be hired for local journeys, water-skiing or fishing;
- Two Land rovers for journeys into the interior of Dahlak Islands - two are necessary in case one should break down and the tourists be stranded a long distance from drinking water. Local people will also be required to act as guides.

Other Facilities Needed in the Short Term

- Dahlak Island should own a small bar and a shop selling souvenirs - water skis, underwater swimming equipment and beach kits. Tourists or visitors short of money could hire such commodities from this shop. A generator will be needed to provide electricity and cooling system whenever needed.
- A post office should be set-up in Dahlak Island, which provides stamps and philatelic souvenirs. Telegraphic facilities such as radio will be needed to link- the office with the mainland.
- The old prison buildings, which have been converted to rest rooms should be fitted with basic furniture and their sanitation be well maintained. Investing in such simple and cheap undertakings will not be expensive.
- Maps and charts of the area have to be prepared so that tourists and national visitors could have a clear understanding of the topography, climate, vegetation and fauna and flora of the islands.
- In connection with the development of tourism it is remarked that land should be cleared up for an airstrip in Nocra. The airstrip should be designed for landing light aircrafts, which at latter stage could be enlarged to take large ones. Fire extinguisher and trained fire fighters should be available at the airstrip.
- A medical orderly should be included in the staff of the tourist office. He/she must be equipped with adequate medical supplies to deal with minor illnesses or ailments and should have access to call upon the services of a Doctor in Massawa for support or emergency cases.
- At the initial stage of development, the Eritrean Tourism Organization should take the initiative of encouraging a self-contained groups of tourists to visit the Islands, It would be best if these parties were to travel aboard by motor yachts and light cruisers. In the cooler months of the seasons, camping facilities could be brought out by air or by sea from the mainland and camp on or near Nocra.
- Simple open-sided sun shelters with, strong (windproof) roofs should be erected on attractive beaches. It is remarked that corrugated iron should not be used because it prevents sight-seeing all around and rusts quickly in humid seasons.

- The old prison on Nocra should be tidied up and as many trees and plants as possible should be planted in drums (to conserve water).
- The main jetty at Nocra should be repaired.
- A filtration and pumping system should be provided at the wells behind Nocra police station. The water produced may be treated and stored in the cistern at this location and piped to the old prison.
- Regulations to protect bird life, fish and game must be enforced.

7.5.2. The Second Stage (Medium Term)

- It is remarked that in the medium term the facilities on Nocra Should be expanded and the Tourist Center should be enlarged. This envisages the renovation and conversion of the main building of Nocra prison into a small self-contained hotel.
- The waterfront must be re-established to facilitate landing of stores in the reconstruction stage and later to aid the landing of tourists. A regular ferryboat should connect Nocra to the Main Island and the airstrip be enlarged to accommodate a large type of aircraft.
- A doctor should be present on Nocra during the tourist season.
- A game reserve should be created on Shumma with wildlife brought from the mainland. A game warden should be attached to the tourist centre staff to ensure that all wildlife of the Islands are protected.

7.5.3. The Third Stage (Long Term)

It is remarked that in the long term the hotel on Nocra should be expanded. It is envisaged that other renovated buildings on Nocra should be used for family chalets. Obviously this plan will depend largely on the continued availability of water or the transportation of this commodity by boat from Massawa.

An alternative stage in the long term would be to build a completely new hotel and centre on Nocra. It should be stressed that this would be a costly matter and a most detailed water resources survey with test drilling should be carried out before this project is undertaken.

On Dahlak Kebir the herds of Soemmering's Gazelle certainly constitute tourist attraction which could be increased by the introduction of further desert and semi-desert species which might thrive in this particular habitat. Such species would include Oryx, Dorcas Gazelle, Gerenuk and Ostrich. One further possibility that might be considered in the long term is the introduction of a few wild asses or zebra, perhaps on one of the larger uninhabited Islands. If such an introduction was to prove successful, a measure of protection would be afforded to an endangered species whose conservation is otherwise likely to be a matter of extreme difficulty, and at the same time a tourist attraction of very considerable significance would have merged with the progress of time.

No cultivation of any type whatsoever was seen on the Islands, which is an indication of the lack of water for irrigation. Other long-term consideration may be, should water ever become available in sufficient quantities, there is no reason why any of the plants grown in Masswa should not be cultivated in the islands. It must be noted however, that the water supply will have to be abundant since it will inevitably be brackish and irrigation with inadequate amounts would rapidly lead to an accumulation of saline deposits and hence, the ruin of the soil. If on the other hand, sufficient water is used any excess salt will be washed out of the soil. Perhaps the most viable proposition, at least in the initial stages of any development, would be the use of container, such as cut-down oil drums, for growing plants in the vicinity of buildings.

Finally it is remarked that the following conservation measures will also be helpful:

- a. Island of Shumma and its surrounding reefs for a distance of one kilometre from the shore should be declared a Reserve wherein all forms of wildlife are protected and fishing is prohibited, whether by line, net, spear or other means.
- b. The killing of turtles and the taking of their eggs should be prohibited. Fishermen taking turtles in their nets should be required to return them to the sea unharmed.

- c. The killing of all birds and the taking of eggs should be prohibited in the Dahlak Islands.
- d. The Dugoug (a rare sea-dwelling mammal found in these waters) should be fully protected.
- e. The commercial exploitation of coral, as is at present apparently taking place at Dohul Island, should be prohibited until a proper investigation has been completed.
- f. The use of explosives for fishing, blasting coral or any other purposes in coastal waters should be prohibited.

Eritrea has sufficient attractions that, when well developed as an integrated product, the country can be considered primarily as a single-destination, especially for the short and medium haul Middle Eastern and European markets. However, there are possibilities for Eritrea to also be part of multi-destination regional tours related to neighbouring countries, the Horn of Africa and East Africa which the country should take advantage of. Conservation of tourist attraction features and their presentation or interpretation are essential. All of the features require conservation if they are to be viable attractions for tourists. Conservation of attraction sites must be undertaken even though they may not be developed as attractions in the near future, in order that they are available when needed.

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www.world-tourism.org

www.wttc.org

Appendix 1

The Questionnaire

SECTION 1: IDENTIFICATION

Q1. Name of Zoba _____

Q2. Marital Status _____

Q3. Age _____

Q4. Gender _____

Q5. Level of Education: - Primary _____
Middle _____
Secondary _____
Vocational/technical school _____
Higher Education _____

Q6. Monthly income (in Nakfa)

Below 2000	<input type="text"/>	2000 - 3000	<input type="text"/>	
3000 – 4000	<input type="text"/>	4000 – 5000	<input type="text"/>	Above 5000 <input type="text"/>

SECTION- 2 QUESTIONS AND FILTERS

Q7. Have you ever visit Massawa (the largest port of Eritrea?)

Yes No.

Q8. Per year how frequent do you visit Massawa? _____

Q9. In which months of the year do you often visit Massawa? _____

Q10. On average per your visit for how long do you stay in Massawa? _____

Q11. In your visit to Massawa which tourism aspects are very interesting for you?

1st _____

2nd _____

3rd _____

Q12. Have you ever heard the place called Dahlak Island?

Yes

No.

Q13. Do you know that Dahlak Island (51 km. Far from Massawa) are well – known historical islands and very interesting tourism destinations in the Red Sea coast of Eritrea?

Yes

No.

Q14. Have you ever visit Dahlak Islands?

Yes

No.

Q15. If your answer to Q13 is no, please give four basic reasons for not visiting?

1st _____

2nd _____

3rd _____

4th _____

Please, questions that follow will only be for those respondents who visit Dahlak Islands.

Q16. How many times did you visit /Dahlak Islands? _____

Q17. In which months of the year do you often visit Dahlak Island? _____

Q18. Per your visit, on average for how long do you stay in Dahlak Island? _____

Q19. What were your motives to visit Dahlak Island? Please give priorities to your motives by giving rank (i.e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc.) on the space provided)

Motives	Rank
Relaxing seaside holiday	_____
Exploring nature's beauty	_____
Exploring historical and cultural sites	_____
Entertainment	_____
New experience and adventure	_____
Sport recreation and fitness	_____
Visiting relatives and friends	_____
Business purpose	_____
Proximity of destination	_____
Health reasons	_____
Shopping	_____
Nature works and hiking	_____
Other motives (please specify)	_____

At the time when you visit Dahlak Islands please indicate how satisfied you were with the following tourism related resources of the region. Use the same procedure to answer Q20 to Q 37.

Tourism Aspects	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Indifferent	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Q. 20 History of Dahlak Islands					
Q. 21 State of conservation and cleanness					
Q. 22 Local inhabitants					
Q. 23 Mouments					
Q. 24 Weather					
Q.25 Urban and architectural characteristics					
Q. 26 Peace solitude					
Q. 27 Cultural events					
Q. 28 Access to information and reception of gusts					
Q. 29 Tour guides and tourist guide books					
Q. 30 Quantity and quantity of hotels and restaurants					
Q. 31 Hotel and restaurant					
Q. 32 Shopping					
Q. 33 Transportation access to the island					
Q. 34 Transportation inside to the island					
Q. 35 Day life					
Q. 36 Night life					
Q.37 Tourism related government rules and regulations					
Q. 38 Entertainment					

Q39. Comparing the Massawa what sort of unique tourism experience did you get by visiting Dahlak Island? Please mention some.

Q40. Comparing to any other tourism destinations (especially Islands) you visited before what sort of unique tourism experience did you get by visiting Dahlak Islands? Please mention some.

Q41. Based on your visit to Dahlak Islands what do you think to be the best tourism potential to be exploited in these islands? Please mention some.

1st

2nd

3rd

4th

Q42. Please give any comment or suggestion that you assume to be relevant for the development of tourism in the Dahlak islands of Eritrea

Thank you,