

Ethiopia as a Tourist Destination: An Exploration of Italian Tourists' Market Demand

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Abstract : The tourism sector in Ethiopia plays a significant role in the national economy. The government is granting its pledge and readiness to develop this sector through various initiatives since to eradicate poverty and encourage economic development of the country is one of the Millennium Development plans. The tourism sector has been identified as one of the priority economic sectors by many countries, and the Government of Ethiopia has planned to make Ethiopia among the top five African destinations by 2020. Nevertheless, the international tourism demand for Ethiopia currently lags behind other African countries such as South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Tanzania, and Kenya. Meanwhile, the number of international tourists' arrival in Ethiopia is recently increasing even if it cannot be competitive with other African countries. Therefore, to offer demand-driven tourism products, the Ethiopian government, Tourism planners, Tour & Travel operators need to understand the important factors, which affect international tourists' decision to visit Ethiopian destinations. This study was intended to analyze Italian Tourists Demand towards Ethiopian destination. The researcher aimed to identify the demand for Italian tourists' preference to Ethiopian destinations comparing to the top East African countries. This study uses both qualitative and quantitative research methodology, and the data is manipulating through primary data collection method using questionnaires, interviews, and secondary data by reviewing books, journals, magazines, past researches, and websites. An active and potential Italian tourist cohort, five well-functioning tour operators based in Ethiopia for Italian tourists and professionals from Ethiopian Ministry of Tourism and Culture participated. Based on the analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire, interviews, and reviews of different materials, the study disclosed that the majority of Italian tourists have a high demand on Ethiopian Tourist destination. Historical and cultural interest, safety and security, the hospitality of the people and affordable accommodation coast are the main reason for them. However, some Italian tourists prefer to visit Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda due to the fact that they are fascinated by adventure, safari and beaches, while Ethiopia cannot provide these attractions. Most Italian tourists have little information and practical experiences on Ethiopian tourism possibilities via a tour and travel companies. Moreover, the insufficient marketing campaign and promotion by Ethiopian Government and Ministry of Tourism could also contribute to the failure of Ethiopian tourism.

Keywords : The demand of Italian tourists, Ethiopia economy, Ethiopia tourism destination, promoting Ethiopia tourism

Conference Title : ICBMT 2019 : International Conference on Business, Marketing and Tourism

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : January 30-31, 2019