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# **The challenges and opportunities of tourism management practices in Afar National Regional State, Ethiopia**

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**Abstract**---Afar region has potential for attracting tourists because it has located in the North - Eastern part of Ethiopia and it is the lowest area. the Afar Regional State, major destination challenges related to community participation, community organizations, benefit sharing mechanism, knowledge of the society about tourism, funding for tourism development, facilities and services in a destination, organizational structure, infrastructural development and stakeholder coordination have not been properly examined. Therefore, the objective of this study was to identify the major challenges and opportunities of tourism development in the Afar national regional state in the case of Ertale and Adar woreda. The design of the study is descriptive and has employed both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The researcher used instruments such as interview, questionnaire, focus group discussion and existing secondary sources for data gathering. The finding of the study shows many challenges and opportunities of tourism development in Afar region. The main challenges include bureaucratic problem, in sufficiency of basic infrastructures, low promotion in the sector, macroeconomic instability and problem of implementation capacity. According to this study general opportunities of tourism investment include good attention of Government, large market size, and mixed market economy, existence of ample resources and Availability of trainable man power. The sectors of investment opportunities include

public Infrastructures such as transportation, telecommunication, water supply, electricity etc and tourist Infrastructures such as hotels, restaurants, tour operation, conference centers, recreation centers etc. In general, even if the region has many opportunities of tourism investment, the performance of Investment was found to be at low level.

**Keywords**---tourism, tourist, tour, tourism management.

## **Introduction**

Tourism is often quoted as being one of the world's largest and rapidly growing industries. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) (2003), travel and tourism is the biggest industry in the world on virtually any economic measure, including gross output, value added, capital investment, employment, and tax contributions (Theobald, 2005). Projections concerning the levels of arrivals, receipts, and growth in employment for most destinations have all painted a fairly rosy picture (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2009).

According to World Tourism Organization, tourism growth has remained resilient in the face of adverse conditions, and it is now one of the leading sectors in international export trade. As indicated in the statistical publication of April 2011, Tourism Barometer, of UNWTO, the growth of international tourism were 882 million visitors and 851 billion U.S dollars in the year 2009 in terms of international arrivals and receipts respectively, and had reached 940 million visitors and 919 billion dollars receipts by the year 2010.

According to the same source, the picture in year 2009 compared to year 2010 showed an annual growth of 6.6 % in arrivals and 4.7 % in receipts. From this increasing trend, Africa received 46 and 49.2 million arrivals and 28.8 and 31.4 billion dollars during 2009 and 2010 respectively. As a result of this, Africa has a growth rate of 3.41% and 6.9% in terms of receipts and arrivals respectively during 2010.

Tourism has become one of the top five exports for 83% of countries and the main source of foreign income for more than 38% of countries. This promise of economic wealth is the predominant reason for tourism cited by affluent and less-prosperous countries alike (UNWTO, 2008). For many developing countries, tourism is one of the main sources for foreign exchange income and the number one export category, creating much needed employment and opportunities for development. Globally, tourism, in terms of export, ranks fourth after fuels, chemicals and automotive products. As indicated from UNWTO tourism highlights of 2010 report, the overall export income generated by inbound tourism including passengers transport exceeded US\$ 1 trillion in 2009, or close to US\$ 3 billion a day. Tourism exports account for as much as 30% of the world's exports of commercial services and 6% of the overall exports of goods and services (UNWTO, 2010).

Tourism, for Ethiopia, is a half century phenomenon that is said to have been started in early 1960's, with the establishment of Organization of African Union (OAU) in Addis Ababa and in preparation to host the founding submit of the leaders of the newly independent nations of the continent of Africa (Fleming, 1985). Due to these facts, enhancing the benefits of tourism through proper development and utilization of the tourism potential with which the country is endowed is an issue which has to be given much emphasis. Tourism, like any other industry, needs to be strategically and sustainably developed in order to unleash its potential positive impacts. Understanding of the need to lead the development of tourism sector within appropriate policy and strategic framework, to realize the development of tourism and to enable the sector to effectively contribute to the country's current effort to eliminate poverty, the Government of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian has formulated Tourism Development Policy as of August 2009.

However, tourism developments particularly in developing countries like Ethiopia are facing complex and numerous challenges. Unlike many business sectors, tourism is an amalgamation of various industries offering products and services ranging from airline and cruise ship travel and accommodation to restaurant meals, entertainment, souvenirs and gifts, park services, recreational vehicles, resort development, safaris, leisure and recreational Opportunities (Pres bury and Edwards, 2010). These amalgamations mostly bring its own problem for the proper functioning of tourism development in a particular destination. Recognizing the industry's enormity and its structural complexity, one of the essential conditions for the successful development and promotion of tourism in any country or destination is the active involvement of all players of the industry at all levels (Jeffries, 2001). Successful tourism development is therefore highly depending on all tourism and tourism related stakeholders' effort in a destination. This active involvement of the stakeholders should be towards providing a quality visitors experiences while assuring the sustainability of the existing attractions and developing the new ones.

Consequently, the challenge is thus to formulate tourism development strategies which specifically passes these challenges and enable to utilize the prevailing opportunities and to attach the benefits into the local economy while assuring the sustainability of the existing tourism resources. The effectiveness of tourism development in the future will ultimately, therefore, depends on what form of tourism has to be developed; who should be involved in the development of tourism and benefit from it; where and when the tourism development should be taken place; how the challenges can be tackled and the opportunities utilized; and what types of strategies can be appropriately implemented.

The Afar region has tremendous and untapped tourism potential having some World Heritage Sites, however, the number of tourists visiting the region and the annual revenue incurred out of the tourism business is very low (Meskele et al., 2016). Studies conducted in this regard identified challenges including lack of effective marketing strategies, lack of infrastructures, human resource and capacity, weak institutional and legislative frameworks, industry quality and standards issues, insufficient tourism and support infrastructure, and, uncoordinated and fragmented tourism planning and development both at the

national and regional levels in Ethiopia (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2015; Nafbek, 2017; Teshome and Demissie, 2018). However, in the Afar National Regional State, major destination challenges related to community participation, community organizations, benefit sharing mechanism, knowledge of the society about tourism, funding for tourism development, facilities and services in a destination, organizational structure, infrastructural development and stakeholder coordination have not been properly examined. Therefore, the objective of this study was to identify the major challenges and opportunities of tourism development in the Afar National Regional State in the case of Erta Ale and Afdera woreda.

Ethiopia is seeking to develop the tourism sector in all possible forms of tourism and developing all types of destinations in order to boost its economy and alleviate poverty throughout the country (Mohammed, 2012). The vision of ministry of culture and tourism is to see Ethiopia becoming one of the top five tourism destinations in Africa by the year 2015, which signifies transformation of the Ethiopian Tourism Industry into a viable (practical) economic sector by improving the overall performances of the industry and ensuring its rapid growth.

To realize this ambition, focusing on diversified tourism resources of the country and proper utilization would develop the tourism industry. Therefore, it is the time to study about the newly developed concept of tourism, Geo-tourism resources of the country focusing on assessing factors affecting geo-tourism development in Erta Ale active volcano. In another speaking, to develop the tourism potential throughout Ethiopia and let it contribute in the effort to reduce poverty and underdevelopment in the country, finding the main determinants of geo-tourism development in different parts of the destination is vital issue and it will help the country to come up with diversified destination. However, as to the researcher knowledge, organized and methodologically sound studies which investigate factors affecting geo-tourism development in Erta Ale active volcano.

The Afar National Regional State is located on the North Eastern part of Ethiopia; the Region has shares common bounders with Tigray, Amahara, Oromiya, Eretria and Djibouti republic. Afar Region is well placed to integrate with wider tourism development trends nationally, regionally and globally. Danakil Depression (lowland) is one of the main places in the world that harbors gorgeous (beautiful) natural beauties and amazing land resources like the Assale and Afdera Lakes, the Erta Ale volcano and the Dallol sulfur springs and potash minerals are the main attractions found in the region. In addition to this the Danakil Depression is one of the hottest and lowest places in the world, situating 116 meters below sea level. Being gifted with immense natural resource is not only what makes this place amazing, but also the fact that it harbors beautiful (gorgeous) colorful magma crater lakes bubbling from the earth's core and the potassium that are ejected from the inner of the land. It's a place where many tourists choose to visit. In addition to this, the pyramid-looking and various other shaped mountains that are believed to be formed of tectonic movements are the other beauty of the place. The salt pan that's founded on Lake Assale and Afdera, not only brings economic benefits to the region and country, but also the process in which they are formed and the lake changes into salt by itself is a mesmerizing sight, which needs a unique scientific study, by itself. (Afar Region and Its Development (Part I) By

Nuru Ahmed Tigrai Online - April 20, 2014). Considering its potential for tourism, the Regional State is working by focusing in this endeavor. And following the expansion of the infrastructural works in the region add with the appropriateness of the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway will provide tourists with easy access to the place through road transport.

In addition to this, the 'Semera Airport' which recently became operational, is becoming the other transport option. On top of the works done to expand up to standard service-giving institutions, the fact that banking services; which includes foreign currency exchange service, are becoming easily accessible is making the tourist to choose the region. Based on this, the region has been able to create huge tourism investment opportunities, whilst the investors involved in the sector are becoming successful by being involved in Tourism training, in service-giving institutions, in regional touring and private museum business.

In addition to this, there are other huge numbers of job opportunities in the region's tourism sector which can also be used for research and studying. When we look at the growing tourism flow into the region, we'll found out that it has to do with the peace and security that's founded in the region. As it's known, the tourism flow in a certain country grows, if there we guaranteed peace and security in that region. With regards to this, there have been many works that are done as part of the regions state government's effort to bring good governance, peaceful conflict resolution mechanics and to guarantee peace and security.

Bearing this in mind the regional government trying to do its best with regards to availing the infrastructures and has try to stable the security situations in the tourist attraction area. The proposed study therefore aimed at examining the challenges and opportunities of tourism development in the Afar National Regional State in the case of Ertale and Dalol woredas. Taking selected two woredas from zone two as the area of study. It is hoped that the study results will shade some light on the challenges and opportunities of tourism development in the region and will come up with possible solutions to improve for the challenges and opportunities of the tourism development will be suggested whereby if implemented would cause greater tourism development emanate on tourism industries.

### **Objectives**

The overall aim of this study will to investigate the challenges and opportunities for tourism management practices in Afar Region and point out on how best can it be tackled and enhanced.

### **Research Methodology**

In this study, a descriptive research design was employed to assess the Challenges and Opportunities of Tourism Development in Afar National Regional State in the case of Ertale and Dalol. According to Kothari (2004), a descriptive study design, which is concerned with narration of facts and characteristics concerning individuals, group or situation, is most often employed in social science research. In addition, a mixed research approach was used in this study.

This method is chosen because it provides an advantage to adapt the strength and avoid the weaknesses of using a single (qualitative or quantitative) research method. A mixed research method approach has become popular since the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods provide better understanding of the research problem and discussing the findings, even though the procedures are time consuming, requiring extensive data collection and analysis in new research development methods (Creswell, 2012). Besides, due to the nature of this study on which some data can be numerical while others are demanding phenomenological explanations cannot be addressed using either a qualitative or a quantitative method alone may not address all the specific aims and research questions mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study. In this study, therefore qualitative data were gathered through direct interviews; focus group discussion (FGD) and observation, whereas quantitative data were gathered by using a survey questionnaire.

Both primary and secondary data sources were used in this study. Secondary source were collected from different materials like written document, journal articles, books, different published and non published papers and websites were a part of data sources. The primary data were collected using questionnaire, which is the main data collection tool in this study, administered to the tourists, tour operators, local residents, tour guides and Afar region culture and tourism office as well as interviews, focused group discussion and observation. In subsequent paragraphs, each of these tools is described.

## **Results and Discussion**

In this chapter the collected data were presented and analyzed in the way to achieve objectives through answering of the basic research questions. As mentioned in chapter one, the main aim of this study is to assess trend of tourist flow and tourism development in Erta Ale active volcano geo-tourism site and propose the possible solutions that could improve tourism development in the study area. Therefore, the data discussed were made around five basic research questions

### **Analysis of Tourism Demand in the Study Area**

The analysis of the tourism demand is aimed at identifying the types of visitors, their need, and trip behavior during their visit to Erta Ale and Afar region thereby to identify the different market segments, past and present travel pattern and willingness to travel at the study area. It also presents the statistic information of tourist arrival to the study area.

The number of tourist arrival to the study area has also been examined in this study. It is important to have the statistic of tourist arrival for provision of tourist infrastructure in the future and to identify the opportunities of the study area. A better planning and management could be prepared using the statistic. However, the data available in the study area was very limited the researcher found only six years data from Afar Region has been found in the Afar Region Culture and Tourism Bureau.

As interview with key informant and tourists approved that, Samara and Logia cites have served as the stopover destination of tourists in the study area because hotels that relatively fit with international tourists are found in Samara and Logia cities only. There is neither hotel nor lodge or any kind of relatively better accommodation out of Samara and Logia and around in the study area.

### **Major constraints for tourism development to the study area**

Much has already been written on obstacles of tourism development and tourists' flow. Indeed, there are various developmental challenges of tourism development and tourists flow. Normally, it has long been recognized that the particular economic, political, and socio-cultural characteristics of destinations, particularly in LDCs, may restrict the extent to which opportunities presented by tourism may be realized (Ngenzi, 2009). Specifically, the following four broad factors were identified as a challenge of tourism development in LDCs (UNCTAD, 2001). These are Geographical characteristics: smallness, remoteness and 'land-lockedness' may limit access and investment; Vulnerability to external shocks: these include both natural disasters and external political or economic factors; Structural handicaps: limited transport and accommodation facilities; poor telecommunications; limited access to global distribution systems; human resources weaknesses and high leakages and intersectoral weaknesses and Policy environment: an absence of appropriate domestic policies for investment in tourism development. At the same time, ineffective institutional structures and a lack of expertise in planning or managing tourism at the national or local level may compound this problem. Despite a certain efforts made by the Ethiopian government in developing tourism all over the country through putting in place related tourism policies, improving tourism sites, investing high capitals to develop new infrastructures, there are still a lot to be done particularly in remote part of the country. In the implementation of the strategies towards tourism development and to attract a substantial number of tourists in the study area some issues are yet unsolved. The major issues slowing down tourism development and tourists' flow could be categorized in political instability and the subsequent bad image, marketing and promotion related constraints; service related barriers; infrastructure related problems and location constraints.

### **Instability/insecurity and Destination Image Related Constraints**

Events of violence can affects tourist destination image long after events has passed and stabled (Neumayer, 2004). Most of tourism stakeholders have a bad perception towards Afar region in general and Erta Ale active volcano in particular. In terms of deteriorating the image of the study area, tour operators have played a fundamental role. According to Marshalls (2007) tour operators are more involved in painting the picture of a tourist destination based on how they want to sell a tourist destination.

Mishra and Panda (2001) stated that travel intermediaries play the role of influencers for many of their loyal customers. This implies that they are of greater importance to both the tourist and the destination marketer particularly in the cases of destinations with far greater distance from the point of origin. McLellan and Noe identified them as gatekeepers of information, since they provide

Information about destinations even if travelers do not choose to use their services. Therefore, tour operators serve as an opinion leader and expert for taking a travel decision process.

Moreover, according to informal conversation made with some tour operators, most of tour operators did not take tourists to Erta Ale active volcano due to the security problem of the region. As one tour operator told the researcher that: "while we took tourists to the destination, we have a responsibility to keep the security and safety of our customers ourselves, we are also expected to pay 1,500 birr per person for four local police men in every packaged tour. Therefore, we are forced to ask high amount of fee from visitors which is higher than other parts of the country. These higher payments dissatisfy our clients every time, sometimes tourists cancel their visit to Afar and back to their country." Therefore, based on the above survey most of the time tour operators were not inspired to take their customer to the Adar Lucy Archaeological. Almost all tour operators were involved to take their customer to the study area, Afar particularly Erta Ale active volcano.

Beside to this, as Afar Region Culture and Tourism Bureau Marketing expert responses to structural interview reveal that: SOI Afar region have untapped tangible and intangible; cultural, historical, and natural tourism resources. For example, Hot spring lakes, historical palaces like Adele gob palace, Asberi mosque (500 years old). These are very few attractions among what we have, but we did nothing by these resources so far, because of low attention given for the region's tourism development before decades. It is from the 1960s up to now the central government have been in a position to promote the north like Lalibela, Gonder and Axum by giving the very title "Northern Historic Route" as a lone destination in Ethiopia; surprisingly this route represents the whole Ethiopia still today as far as the attraction of the country concerned in the mind of many foreign tourists. In contrary, Afar has been made to be branded only by being the origin of human kind 'Lucy' and hottest desert.

Moreover, the conclusion of the argument of the focus group discussion (FGD) also indicates that Erta Ale is the only active volcano in the country as well as among world's active volcano tourist attraction. However; this region is identified not by this actual tourism resource rather by marginality, desert, hot temperature and instability. Some the participants of FGD said that: "the recent incident on tourists deteriorates the image of Afar specially Erta Ale area. However, both the federal and the regional government turn their face towards the issue so now it has better image than before ". Therefore, based on the above argument, it is logical to conclude that insecurity image of the study area and its subsequent bad feelings were one among others responsible factor that contributes for the underdevelopment of tourism in the study area.

In order to know what reflections they have in their mind concerning Erta Ale active volcano as a destination in their post-visitation period, the following statement has been provided for foreign tourists. The main aim of this question was to know what seems like the post-visitation image of Erta Ale active volcano in the perception of foreign tourist. Ryan (2005) proposed that there are three stages of tourist behavior to the perspective tourist consumption process. The stages are Pre-during-and post-visitation. Likewise, the tourist behaviors include

the choice of destination to visit, subsequent evaluation, and future behavioral intention. The subsequent evaluation include the travel experience or perceived trip quality during the stay, perceived value and overall satisfaction while the future behavioral intentions include the intention to revisit and willingness to recommend.

### **Marketing and Promotion Related Barriers**

Marketing is the process of achieving organizational goals consists in determining the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than competitors' (Kotler, 1991); While Promotion means persuading prospective buyers through paid-for advertising, brochures, sales promotion techniques, public relations (PR) activity and the Internet. It includes advertising, direct mailing, sales promotion, merchandising, sales-force activities, brochure production, Internet communication, and PR activity (Clarke, 2001).The results of the survey clarifies that 62 (51.2%) of the foreign tourist as, Inadequate, did not recognize Erta Ale as, Moderate, a tourist destination and only 58 (47.9%) foreign thought that Erta Ale is known as a tourist destination. The above survey implies that less effort has been made at international level to promote and introduce Erta Ale as a tourist destination.

### **Means of tourist information about Erta Ale for the first time**

The above question was asked in order to identify the tool of communication by which most tourists have heard for the first time about Erta Ale active volcano. The answer would help to know the major tool that possibly was promoting the area in other countries and to identify which mechanism was popularly used by tourists. The outcome of the survey revealed that lack of programmed and organized promotion using internet since it is the easiest way of advertisement for potential tourists all over the world. Lack of advertisement using internet websites in this globalization period will make any tourism product out of the market.

The researcher has also conducted well structured interviews with different responsible bodies of Afar culture and tourism stuffs about the study area concerning marketing and promotion. For instance the head of Afar culture and tourism Bureau stated that:

"We have financial problem to promote our tourism resources internationally in organized manner. However, we have tried to promote the region's top ten tourist attractions using organized documentary film about Erta Ale in different year with the help of Walta information center, Haleta Advert and entertainment plc and Ethiopian radio and television. Recently this year in January 2014 there were group of BBC journalists were organizing a documentary on Erta Ale active volcano lava which we gave them everything they need. This will help Erta Ale destination to be known in the world.

The same question has been provided for Afar region tourism marketing and promotion expert. He point out that:

We have tried to promote our tourism resources by using national Media only; for instance, we promote our tourist attractions via Ethiopian Radio and Television using documentary film. In addition to theses we have also prepared leaflets, brochures and other printing media to disclose what the region have in terms of tourism attractions but the problem is not printing about the attraction it is about how we should distribute them/or international tourists!

Thus, it is rational to conclude that even though Afar region especially Erta Ale active volcano is unique natural attraction of the country and endowed with diverse tourism resources, there is no enough promotion has been made neither at national nor international. Therefore, together with other problem, absence of appropriate marketing and promotion become obstacle for the development of tourism in the study area.

### **Tourist Service and Tourist Information Center (TIC) Related issues**

The following statement had been used to know the impact of information for inbound tour operators. Lack of adequate information about the tourist attractions of Erta Ale active volcano was detracting tour operators from taking tourist to the study area. The results points out that 8 (16.7%) of inbound tour operators consented that lack of Moderate information about the tourist attractions of Erta Ale active volcano did not detract tour operators from taking tourists to the area and 40 (83.3%) of tour operators respondent felt that lack of adequate (inadequate) information about the tourist attractions of Erta Ale active volcano had role for the passiveness tour operators to Erta Ale active volcano. Tourists had been also requested the level of satisfaction by the provided information in Erta Ale active volcano.

Still another international tourist expresses his resentment on tourist service of the study area through informal conversation with the researcher as follow. Most guides were not professionally trained and did not have the required knowledge and experience in tourism and hospitality. I believed that Tourism service providers need not just to meet tourist's expectations; they must exceed them by delivering knowledgeable, guiding service and an unparalleled experience in a professional and friendly manner." He added that there was a lack of tourism culture in general amongst Ethiopians which undermined their ability to provide good service to tourists.

Based on structured interview with a head of Afar culture and tourism office stated that: To improve tourism in Erta Ale active volcano. We must give a good service so that our customers feel better served. To realize this we have tried to give training for locals and local tour guides. For those who guide packed camel to Erta Ale. In fact, there is complains by our clients and we believe as there is still a need to improve the quality of tourism products and services.

Generally, the results of the above survey confirmed that tourist's information services need to be improved. The level of service in general has been reported by

our respondents was poor this may be due to lack of organized system, lack of professionalism and slow response of hosts. This can be validated by the lack of a tourism and hospitality institutions in Afar region at all by the time of the study the researcher personally has got a chance to meet untrained local individuals who are currently working as tour guides in the study area.

### **Infrastructure Related Barriers**

As Brown (1999) stated although Africa possesses many natural and cultural attractions, by themselves they are insufficient to satisfy the tourist since they must be complemented by other tourist's facilities and a supporting infrastructure. To be availability of enough tourism infrastructures in a destination can be used as a link to the global economy and support investments. Tourist infrastructure in Ethiopia is generally very poor, with some of the world's worst hotel rooms, ground transport network, and ICT infrastructure (Mitchen and Coles, 2009).

### **The Future Prospects of the Study Area to be developed as Tourism Destination**

Though currently tourism business in the study area has found in its embryonic stage, there are some indicatives and optimism activities in tens of tourism venture for the near future. According to the response of Afar region culture and tourism Bureau managers for my written and oral interview, the greater obstacle of Erta Ale active volcano tourism development was the absence accommodation for tourists. They presented the situations: Indeed Afar region is gifted with both natural and cultural tourist attraction all are underutilized. Though did not commensurate with the available resource, tourists have flown to the region, but so far they are not comfortable with some basic infrastructural problems and the host community never been benefited that much from tourism. The most important reason for this was absence of accommodation for tourists to make them spent night in Erta Ale and nearby village. Almost all visitors of our attraction spent a night in Erta Ale and rush to leave the region within two days. To avoid this critical problem and to implement the suggestion of our customer, we have already designed a project to construct community based lodge and three standardized hotels in samara town. Now we are in a position to create awareness for the society so as to persuade them concerning the benefit of this lodge; then we believe the construction of this lodge will be launched within a short period of time.

In addition, the railway construction which is proposed to start from Tajura (Djibouti) cross Erta Ale active volcano mountains and railway is under construction to connect Afar region to the capital city. All of these proposed constructions could increase number of tourists and tourism development of the area.

### **Conclusion**

- The purpose of this study was to investigate the major challenges and opportunities of tourism development in the Afar National Regional State in

the case of Erta Ale and Dalol woreda. The study was conducted in Erta Ale active volcano geo-tourism site. The investigation was carried out at hotels, guesthouses, tour operators, and culture & tourism offices. These Hotels and other accommodation establishments were located in Addis Ababa, Logia and Samara cities. The participants of this study were foreign tourists who visit Erta Ale active volcano, tour operators in Addis Ababa, selected local residents, as well as workers in Afar region culture and tourism office. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied to conduct this thesis.

- The results of this study revealed that Erta Ale active volcano is attractive natural tourism resources. Most of the respondents believe that Erta Ale active volcano has a significant range of tourists' attractions with beautiful and unspoiled natural environment.
- According to this study the four top tourist generating countries to the study area were British, Canadian, France and Israel represent more than 60% of international tourist arrivals followed by Switzerland, USA, Spain, China, Africa and Russia have provided 39% tourist respondents each (See table 3). The outcome shows that majority of international tourists spent between 3 days & 1 week an international tourist. As one vital objective of this study, looking for tourist flow determinants, identifying the study area's major strengths and weaknesses in tourists' minds would tell what factors attract tourists and what deficiencies repel them or send negative signals to future tourists.
- Tourists were asked to position Erta Ale active volcano as compared to an average of others destinations in the Afar region image they have in mind in each item of comparison. In addition, as a way of assessing the image Erta Ale has in the world and they were asked to give their standing before and after their visit. The result indicates that Erta Ale active volcano was extremely endowed with natural and cultural attraction of Afar region. In spite of this, Barriers are inevitable in a developing tourism destination but it is crucial to identify these barriers to consider sustainability.
- Poor marketing and promotion of tourism resources: it is another obstacle of tourism development in the study area was. Therefore, this survey implies that less effort has been made at international level to promote and introduce Erta Ale as a tourist destination. Lack of advertisement using internet websites in this globalization period will make any product out of the market. Generally, tourism sector of the study area is missing vital demand-driving mechanisms: branding using internet websites which is marked as best way of connecting globalized world to larger marketing networks of developed world. Lack of basic infrastructure in the region was another main issue on tourism growth of the study area. The limited supply of standard hotels, lodge or equipped accommodation service is also problem of the study area regularly experienced by visitors. The absence of qualified and experienced human resources such as trained local tour guides was another problem seen in the study area which affects tourism development of the study area.
- In order to identify the tool of communication by which most tourists have heard for the first time about Erta Ale active volcano. Therefore, this survey indicated that there is lack of programmed and organized promotion using internet since it is the easiest way of advertisement for potential tourists all

over the world. Lack of advertisement using internet websites in this globalization period will make any tourism product out of the market.

- From this survey, as it has been said, many tourists are informed about Erta Ale by tour operators. Again table 17 reveals that usually promotion of Erta Ale active volcano has been made by tour operators.
- Thus, it is rational to conclude that even though Afar region especially Erta Ale active volcano is unique natural attraction of the country and endowed with diverse tourism resources, there is no enough promotion has been made neither at national nor international. Therefore, together with other problem, absence of appropriate marketing and promotion become obstacle for the development of tourism in the study area.
- The following statement had been used to know the impact of information for inbound tour operators. Lack of adequate information about the tourist attractions of Erta Ale active volcano was detracting tour operators from taking tourist to the study area.
- In order to identify the level of information for tourists the following statement had been used to know how did the foreign tourists qualify the adequacy of information for tourists? Therefore, more than half of respondents believed that even though Erta Ale active volcano is gifted with invaluable attraction, there was no enough information for tourists.
- Generally, the results of the above survey confirmed that tourist's information services need to be improved. The level of service in general has been reported by our respondents was poor this may be due to lack of organized system, lack of professionalism and slow response of hosts. This can be validated by the lack of a tourism and hospitality institutions in Afar region at all by the time of the study the researcher personally has got a chance to meet untrained local individuals who are currently working as tour guides in the study area.
- In addition, the railway construction which is proposed to start from Tajura (Djibouti) cross Erta Ale active volcano mountains and railway is under construction to connect Afar region to the capital city. All of these proposed constructions could increase number of tourists and tourism development of the area and considered as major broad future prospects of the study area.

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