

Challenges and future potential of Tourism development; the case of Nekemte town, western Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT: Tourism is an important source of foreign exchange, job opportunity, environmental protection and preservation of heritage. It is postulated as one of the important industries for poverty alleviation. This study was conducted in Nekemte town, Western Ethiopia to identify challenges and future potentials of tourism development in the town. Qualitative methods were applied to collecting and analyzing data. Totally, 37 respondents were selected purposively. Hence, The finding of the study indicated that safety and security, lack of promotion, infrastructures, accessibilities, low awareness of local communities, lack of trained and skilled manpower by tourism profession, low attention of local government and weak mutual support and coordination among stakeholders are major challenges that hinder the development of tourism sector in the town. The study also investigated that there are different potentials of tourism resources. However, these resources are not fully utilized and available for tourism activities. Therefore, this study forwarded that local authorities and tourism governing bodies should provide professional training, consultancy service for who interested to participate in the tourism industry, made a proper tourism development plan and strategies and link surrounding tourism resource and tourist destinations which goes with the national tourism policy. Tourism stakeholders play a pivotal collaborative role to improve the awareness of local and businesses men to harnesses the tourism potential of the areas and promote the sector in a manner that is both financially and environmentally sustainable and increases the share of the sector in the socio-economic development society of the area.

KEY WORDS: Tourism, Nekemte, Tourism challenges & opportunities

Date of Submission: 25-08-2020

Date of Acceptance: 09-09-2020

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the largest and rapidly growing industries in the world. In the early years of the twentieth century, tourism has continued to expand due to Technological developments, especially in air travel, increases in personal wealth, and availability of greater amounts of free time such as holidays with pay, the total worldwide international tourist arrivals become to over 25 million in 1950. The continuing growth of tourism in the past century clearly indicated that the greatest contribution of the sector in its economic, environmental, social and cultural dimensions. Globally, as an export category, tourism ranks fourth after fuels, chemicals and automotive products. The contribution of tourism to economic activity worldwide is estimated at 5%. Its contribution to employment tends to be relatively higher and is estimated in the order of 6-7% of the overall number of jobs worldwide (UNWTO, 2010). Apart from a vehicle for economic development, Tourism is also increasingly becoming an important sector for simultaneously initiating cultural and Environmental conservation in many countries. According to Anstrand (2006), Tourism can increase the preservation and transmission of cultural and historical attractions that often contributes to the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, the protection of local heritage, and a revival of indigenous cultures, cultural arts and crafts. In spite of the best efforts of the African Union in developing a common visa, travel restrictions still abound for foreigners across the continent. Most African countries receive minimal support from government treasuries to develop tourism infrastructure. Finally, the brand image of Africa has unfortunately been one of poverty, hunger, war, strife, epidemic diseases and other such negative perceptions in the past centuries. For this reason, Africa's underdeveloped tourism sector is attracting an only little number of the total tourist arrivals in the world. As a service sector, tourism services are playing special importance in boosting up the image of a Nation and also in facilitating the economic growth and development of a Nation (Mckercher, 1995). As one of the developing countries in Africa, Ethiopia and its tourism is becoming an important sector contributing a great deal towards the social, cultural, and economic development aspects of the country (MoCT, 2011). Ethiopia holds many natural and cultural tourist attractions and tourist destinations with a greater

variety than its neighbors to attract tourists; but it has not been able to utilize its potential resources (Melaku, 2010).

On the other side, Ethiopia is a capital city of African because the African union located in Ethiopia, Ethiopian airline the almost the leading airline from Africa and to be a member of a star alliance, Ethiopia now building the leading African manmade dam, lastly, Ethiopia is one the leading African country that was registered heritage by UNESCO. All these are opportunities for the growth of the Ethiopian tourism industry. Western Ethiopia is endowed by different natural and cultural tourist attractions including the study area (Nekemte town) however; in case of different challenges from different perspective tourism attraction resources and tourism sector development were not yet fully utilized. As a result, there is a small benefit share of the tourism sector for the local community, stakeholders and GDP of the country is very low.

The tourism industry in Ethiopia could be legitimately described as one that is still in its infancy.

The sudden and dramatic shift of the country's political leadership and development ideology from Monarchical absolutism and markets to military dictatorship and socialism in 1974 EC had a dramatic arresting impact on both foreign and domestic tourism development in the history of the development of tourism sector in this country. The image of Ethiopia for a long period of time is known by poverty, instability and political problem including the war and instability in the horn of Africa. Ethiopia holds different natural and cultural tourist attraction and destination with its great unique setting and artifacts which display the Ethiopian past civilization. Specifically, Nekemte town is highly endowed with various natural and manmade tourist attractions which capable to generate both domestic and international tourists to the town and the region such as Kumsa Moreda palace, Wollega Museum, sorga artificial lakes, etc. Despite the town has such huge tourism potentials, the town failed to fully utilize and benefited from these resources; this may be due to various numbers of socio-economic and environmental as well as political problems that seriously affect tourism in the town. However, there is no study efforts have so far been made to assess the problems and the future prospects in a comprehensive manner.

In order to realize such tourism potentials, assessment of challenges and future potentials are the main themes of this study becomes indispensable. Then this study focuses on assessing the main challenges and potentials for the development of the tourism sector in the town and surrounding areas. This can be of great help for the development of tourism industries in the town, planners and concerned organizations in promoting sustainable tourism, socially accepted, economically sound and environmentally friendly both at local, regional even at the national level.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 Description of the study area

Nekemte town is located at 327 km from Addis Ababa. The town was founded in 1865E.C as a small village under the auspices of King Moroda Bakare. The word Nekemte was derived from the owner of the land whose name was "Nekemte Gada Otaa/Ottawa/ who had lived for a long period at this specific place. Initially, it was serving as a center of trade root; by the name "sarara" trade exchanged their product like ivory, gold, silver, and different types of grain from Maji and Kafa to Mituwa, Gondar and Gojjam the northern parts of the country. The town has an altitudinal range of 1,960 to 2,170 meters above sea level and its temperature range is 14° C to 26° C and its annual rainfall is between 1500 to 2200 mm. It is medium size town and one of the first grades of 20 cities of Oromia. Nekemte is surrounded by Guto Gidda in the north, Wayu Tuka in the east, Guto Gidda in the west and south.

Nekemte was the capital of the former Wollega Province and is home to a Museum of Wollega Oromo culture. It is a burial place of Onesimos Nesib, a famous Oromo who translated the Bible to Afaan Oromo Language for the first time, in collaboration with Aster Ganno. It is also the seat of an Apostolic Vicariate of the Roman Catholic Church. Nekemte is the host city to the newly built Wollega University as of 2007. It is served by an airport that is currently on building to commercial flights. Nekemte is at the center of the road network and economic center for south-western Ethiopia also it connects western parts of the country with the center of the country.

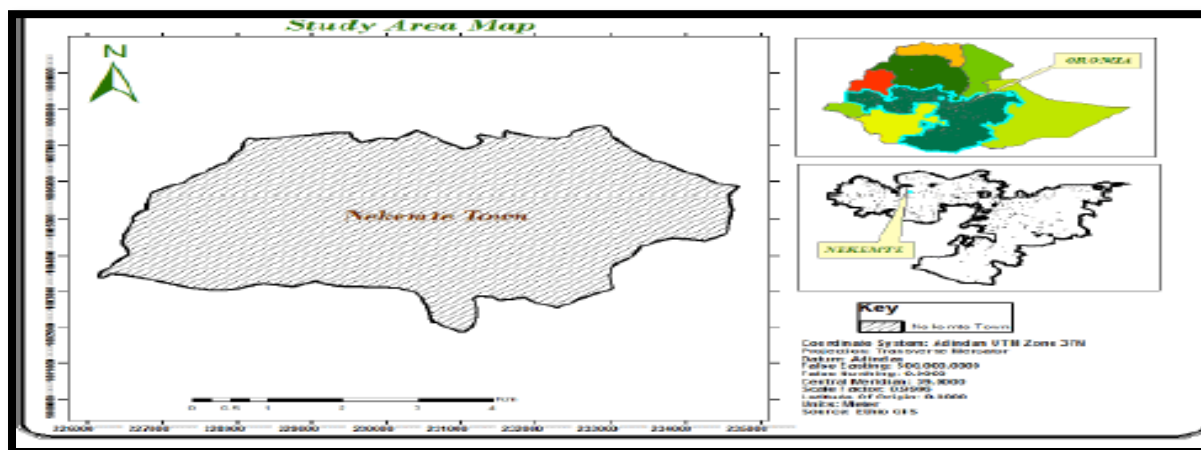


Figure: - 1. Map of Nekemte town/ the study area

2.2 Administrative Structure of Nekemte Town

The unique opportunity of Nekemte town is that it's located at the junction point and strategic site for business for western Oromia and western part of Ethiopia. According to the master plan (2009) of the town, the total area of the town is 5,580 hectares. Most of the people in the town depend on trade activities. It is also the capital city of East Wollega zone and it is a gate way to the western part of country that can serve as a key to economic development of the society. The administrative structure of the town was established as a form of municipality in the year 1949 EC. Currently, the administrative structure of the town is divided into seven (7) sub-city administrations and each sub-city administration further has 80 clusters and 308 developmental groups (Nekemte town administration office, 2018).

2.3 METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative research approach and descriptive research design. The target sample population of this study is a group of peoples that has direct relation with tourism activities like employee and manager of culture and tourism office of Nekemte town and East Wollega zone, owner and employee of hotels, souvenir, and tourist attractions and destinations. Therefore, primary data were collected from 37 purposively selected respondents were selected purposively. In this study, the challenges and future potentials of the sector in the town were obtained by a combination of in depth interviews, observations and revision of written document. All collected data was analyzed by using triangulation cross-checking of information obtained through interview, documentary analysis and observation with secondary data in data analysis of the study to assess the convergence of the information.

III. RESULTS

The study was conducted by using 37 purposively selected respondents from the study area and secondary data obtained from the reviews of secondary data sources. Accordingly, the following results were obtained and recommendation was forwarded.

3.1 Synthesis of major issues, challenges and opportunities of tourism industry

Ethiopia possesses a plethora of tourist attractions, yet tourism infrastructure is at its infancy; tourist products are poorly maintained; access to tourist products are difficult and can be inappropriately expensive, and there is a lack of marketing to attract tourists to the country, and a lack of marketing of tourist attractions once tourists are in the country. The lack of marketing within Ethiopia is evidenced by the profound absence of tourism information at Addis Ababa's Bole International Airport. There is a lack of signage to tourist attractions and it is almost impossible to find brochures or maps of the city or its attractions (Robinson, 2016). The tourism sector is one essential component of Ethiopia's national development and transformation. It is set in a national environment that faces tremendous opportunities such as a fast rate of economic growth, the significant expansion of transportation and communication facilities, a massive construction boom and an entrepreneurial population. At the same time challenges of widespread poverty, massive unemployment, recurrent food insecurity, high rate of annual population growth, worsening environmental degradation and underdevelopment of the productive forces of the economy.

Tourism, as a labor-intensive sector of the economy, has the potential of improving the lives of people and the economies of communities at different geographical scales. It should capitalize on the country's rich and diversified cultural heritage and natural resources. The promotion of both domestic and international tourism

should address such important issues as poor standards of accommodations and services; poor international image and visibility as a tourist destination; weak demand among international tour operators and travel agencies; weak capacity of major Ethiopian tour operators; weak supply chains serving the tourism sector; weak management and coordination structure; weak products; unfocussed institutional structure to generate policies, regulate the sector and define strategies and neglect of domestic tourism.

3.2. Challenges of the tourism industry in Nekemte town

Observably, in most developed countries, the smokeless industry has the lion's share in the overall economic growth and development of a country. The tourism sector has now become a major source of income for various stakeholders engaged in the sector. It becomes the most viable and sustainable economic development option to overcome the high unemployment rate, especially in urban areas. If tourism is managed with a strong focus, it can directly benefit the poor groups through the employment of local people in tourism enterprises, goods and services provided to tourists, or the running of small and community-based enterprises, etc., having positive impacts on improving the local livelihood of the community (UNWTO, 2010). Nonetheless, keeping in mind the positive progress such as an increase in tourist flows, employment generated and income obtained from the tourism sector, one should admit that the tourism sector is facing a lot of constraints that are hampering its potential for development. In this regard, despite Nekemte town endowed with various natural and manmade tourist attractions, it had not benefited to a great extent from the sector for years due to various factors. Then this study assessed major challenges and hindrances of the sector in Nekemte town and its surroundings as follows.

Lack of promotion: - Tourism promotion is the process (set of means and actions) designed to inform potential visitors about the tourism product offered, sharing with them its most attractive and innovative attributes. It is vital for the development of the tourism sector and local tourist attractions. However, in the study area, tourism promotion and marketing was not done yet. The result of the data revealed that the Media, culture and tourism sector did not promote tourism resources both for domestic and international tourists. East Wollega Zone Culture and Tourism Office is a government-driven office which is assigned at the zonal level for all tourism deeds. Its role includes marketing and promotion activities in the zone. Most of the area's tourist attractions are not known to the public and international communities. Therefore, aggressive promotional activities are expected from the bureau. As per the data obtained from Nekemte culture and tourism office experts team,

...Most of the town tourism destinations and tourism attraction resources were almost unknown internationally/nationally and even by the residents themselves, even those who have information about the country's tourism resource, the bad image that the country has retarded them not to come. Therefore, the lacks of promotional and marketing efforts influence the town's tourism development. Even though the town culture and tourism office trays to open its website but the office has no time coverage on local and national radio (FM) and television and nothing is not done still now in a promotion (Nekemte culture and tourism office expert, 2019).

Even though promotion is vital in offering tourist attractions, destinations, tourism products and services to potential internal and external tourists, the result of the study revealed that tourism promotion in Nekemte town is not done up till now. Media play a critical role and responsible for creating awareness about tourist destinations available to both domestic and overseas travelers. In the study area, tourist destinations and attractions were not promoted by both electronic and non-electronic ways of promotion. The residents were losing and the coming generations were not known about the history and current status of their historical and natural tourist sites. In the case of this, tourist attractions and destinations in the study area were not known even by domestic tourists and by the local community itself at all. Therefore, this study identified that lack of promotion is one of the main challenges of the tourism sector in the study area.

Infrastructural challenges: - Tourism infrastructure is the basis of tourism development and utilization of existing destinations resources. From a tourism industry perspective, the town's off-road tourist attractions harm the competitive position concerning other attractions that are more developed. The under developments of attractions are undesirable tour operators and tourists visiting most of the attractions. This means that road development has a tourism component. Inaccessibility could be compensated by developing the name and fame of attractions. Most of the town's attractions were not known by tour-operators, tour guides and tourists. Developing the name and fame of attractions could mean the growth of tourist arrivals on tourism attractions due to the likely increase in demand. Today, tourists are surrounded by the internet, mobile devices, travel agencies, tour operators, suppliers of transport, hoteliers, guides, local entrepreneurs offering activities, the locals, the things to do and see at the destination such as attractions, typical landmarks, museums, heritage sites, events, natural characteristics, governmental and non-governmental agencies as well as technology that shape the conditions of their travel, etc. Promoting tourism attractions, tourist facilities and infrastructure are needed to fully develop the potential of Nekemte town's tourism attractions. Data obtained from the culture and

tourism office revealed that the under developments of infrastructure is the major obstacle for the development of the tourism industry in the town.

Challenges related to Political issues, Safety, and security of the study area: - Safety and Security is a vital component for a destination to remain competitive, attract investment and maintain a positive image as a tourist destination. According to the World Economic Forum (2015) despite the rich diversity in natural and cultural resources, African countries (more especially in Sub-Saharan Africa) are not ranked favorably in the Tourism and Travel competitive index due to several challenges they face. The vulnerability of the Ethiopian tourism industry, including western Ethiopia, is significant. National security issues determine the vulnerability of the tourism industry. Concerns are related to political instabilities and related disasters. Without safety and security thinking about the tourism industry is impossible everywhere in the world. I.e. safety and security is a key for the tourism sector. The issue of political instability in east Africa is affecting the tourism industry in the region. The consequences of political instability were highly affecting the development of the tourism sector in Ethiopia including the study area.

Low awareness of local community: - Local communities knowledge and Participation in tourism sector is capable of transforming the passive attitude of the community into responsible and favorable outlook, inspiring entrepreneurial ventures, building partnership and collaboration, promoting a spirit of cohesiveness and the rejuvenating relationship between people, tourism destination and external stakeholders (Moscardo, 2011) and consequently, can increase the prospects of more successful and sustainable development (Dyer, et al, 2007). In the study area awareness creation on tourism and tourist is not well done by the concerning body including media. The culture and tourism office was not effective in promoting tourism resources. The sector's financial problem is hindering the office to reach its main goal by making local community-centered. Community-based tourism development is the most suitable for both the sector and the participated stakeholders in the sector. However, as the result of this study revealed that the other main problem for the underdevelopment of the sector in the study area is the lack of awareness of the local community.

Weak mutual support and coordination among tourism stakeholders: - Unlike other industries, tourism by its nature is a multi-sector activity that involves several stakeholders participating directly or indirectly in its development (Tesfaye and Taye, 2017). According to Waligo and Clarke, (2013) define tourism stakeholder as persons or some groups engaged in activities which are related to tourism development that can pressure or be influenced by decisions and actions related to those activities. The result of this study revealed that there are capacity limitations among tourism stakeholders and mutual support and coordination of efforts among stakeholders in the study area. As our (Ethiopian tourism) perspectives the following tourism stakeholders with their respective roles and responsibilities which includes local communities, public authorities (i.e., culture and tourism, agriculture, rural development, administration, micro, small and medium enterprises development agency, etc), NGO's, private sectors (hotel, travel & trade, handicraft production, micro, small and medium tourism enterprises entrepreneurs, destination facilities and service providers and the likes), public and private schools, institution, colleges and universities. However, the results of the obtained data revealed that the participation and mutual support among the listed above stockholders in the study area for the development of the tourism sector were weak and there were no initiatives to do together.

Low attention from local government: - Local government has a direct impact on the total tourism experience of tourists, and the competitive position and attractiveness of any tourism destination and it is influenced by the diversity, quality and overall blend of its services and resources (Rogerson, 2013). Despite local governments have a critical role in creating the context and stimulation actions to ensure that tourism is more developmental and sustainable to empower residents in Nekemte town the attention of the local government to the sector is very low. When local government give attention to the sector and facilitating tourism by provisions of basic tourism services, public amenities, Promotion of the physical attractiveness and aesthetics of the locality (beautification of the area) and the regulatory environment the sector can generate job opportunities, income, develop the regional and destination images. However the results of the study revealed that despite the tourism sector can generate lion share in creating job opportunities and generate income for locals and increase the GDP of the country, local government give low attention for the sector and fail in fully utilized the existed tourism attraction and destination in the town.

Lack of tour operator and tour guide in the region including Nekemte town: - Tourism is not only a huge industry but also a complex one too. It comprises of large and small companies from multi-national corporations that own hundreds of other companies to family-run small tourism businesses like guest houses (Tepelus, 2000). One of such businesses that facilitate tourism is the tour operating industry. Tour operators are a central link in the tourism supply chain having the potential to influence both the tourists and the primary producers of tourist services. According to Cavlek, (2004) The intensity of their (Tour operators) development in the world so far shows that they are actors who can adapt to changes and new trends in the tourism market relatively quickly and successfully. Nekemte town and its surrounding area possess massive natural and cultural

tourist destinations and attractions that are great potential for tourism development. However, it has not been exploiting its potential adequately. And despite the major role of tour operators in facilitating tourism activities, in the study area, there are no legal tour operator and tour guides.

Lack of educated tourism professionals and trained manpower: - The overall quality within the hospitality and tourism sector depends on education and professional development, i.e. on the overall level of education of employed personnel in the sector. High-quality and sustainable development of tourism demands an efficient national policy of education and professional development. Only educated personnel in hospitality and tourism enable the development of new technologies, innovative products and services, aiming to increase the competitiveness of the tourism product, destinations, company and country. This is unhidden truth. However, the result of data in this study revealed that in the study area one of the main challenges of the tourism sector is the lack of educated and trained manpower by tourism professions. For this reason, the sector at governmental offices is run and managed and governed without tourism professionals and experts. Also the tourism office at both zonal and Aanaa levels used as the place where the demoted employees from the different sectors are staying and wait they are resigning from employment/carrier. This is due to low attention from government to the sector and the image of the sector considered as the list/undermined sector in governmental structure and in generating development opportunities.

Service provision and accommodation-related problem: - The results of data for the study revealed that the sanitation of the hotel in general as average and low respectively with complaining in the service which renders in the hotel as lack of sanitation, boring menu and lack of different foods including foreign dish, low standard hotels as well as lack of recreational facilities are among the service providers and accommodation-related problems. There is a serious shortage in the number and type of tourist facilities at existing and potential tourist destinations and vicinities. Moreover, the quality of service is unsatisfactory for tourists. The researcher is tried to understand from the feedback of tourists after their stay at Nekemte Hotels.

3.3 Opportunities for tourism sectors in Nekemte town

The town's possession of varied attractions regarded as an opportunity for the sector. These opportunities are from different perspectives like natural attractions and destinations, manmade heritages, ritual areas, culture, and lifestyles, etc are the tourism opportunities of Nekemte town. The potentials and opportunities of the tourism sector in Nekemte town were discussed below

Kumsa Moroda palace: - Built by the King of Wollega in the 1870s, the Kumsa Moroda Palace has only recently been opened to the public after long years of neglect. It sits 1km north of the Wollega Museum. Dej, Kumsa Moroda was the last of the independent kings of Leka Nekemte kingdom until 1892 (Mulugeta, 1991). Before surrender it's to the central Ethiopian Empire in 1892, he managed to keep up his status as the king of his kingdom. It is during the reign of this king that the historic palace was constructed at the center of Nekemte town. The palace was made of a large proportion of local material and with local labor. The beauty of craftsmanship is seen in the building of the palace, and its long life shows the local knowledge and skill that the people had at that time. The museum and the palace make the town of Nekemte invaluable for tourism, research and studying the history of the Oromo people and of others (Nekemte culture and tourism office, 2019).

Wollega Museum: -Wollega Museum is one of the major museums with ethnographic and historical collections established during the Dreg regime, 1974 E.C. It has three sections: the ethnographic, the historic and the exhibition show sections/rooms. The building of this museum was designed by German Democratic Republic Government/GDR/ (Dagafu, 1994). The museum is smart. Its structure and shape are alphabetical. It contains many antiquities and artifacts. When observed from down to top view a "W" shape is seen, and when it is viewed cheerfully, from top to down, it gives "M". W – To describe Wollega, M –to describe the museum. Then you will read it together Wollega ethnographic museum. The exhibited artifacts and antiquity heritages were collected from Wollega societal civilization. The exhibits are the four broad categories of culture: material culture, social culture, ideological culture and the arts. The museum has three exhibits/parts (1) Art galleries. (2) Social and ideological gallery (3) Material culture. In general, this museum is containing around 1760 remains of cultural materials of Wollega Oromo and cultural materials of western Ethiopian Oromo societies as a whole. Then this museum is one of the top opportunities for tourist attraction of the town.

Sorga Lake: - Lake Sorga is one of the pleasant sites of Nekemte town, which was established by Lutherans missionaries. The lake is found on 3km southwest of Nekemte city. It is landed on 62 hectares with 20m depth. And it is encircled by a natural forest that makes the area attractive. This lake has various importance for the community and tourism. It serves the local people for enjoyment during their wedding ceremony. Additionally, it allows for fishing and irrigation activities. Generally, Sorga Lake is used for fishing, irrigation and for other agricultural activities (Nekemte Culture and Tourism office, 2019).

Hadiyya Irreecha Event: - The followers of *Wakefeta* religion conduct their yearly thanksgiving prayer and glorify their god at Hadiyya River, Nekemte town one's a year. *Wakefeta* is a spiritual belief adhering to One Creator god (the Almighty God) (Assefa, 2015). The yearly ceremony of thanksgiving held often at the end of September, usually a week after the Maskel (finding of the true cross), is known as Irreecha.

Thousands of Oromo people and especially *Wakefeta* Oromos are attending the ceremony (Nekemte culture and tourism office, 2019). The increasing number of participant from different ethnic groups and the attractiveness of Hadiyya Irreecha festival is another opportunities for Nekemte town to attract tourists.

Relative location of the town: - Nekemte is at the center of the road network for South-western Ethiopia. The first major road dates to the early 1930s, with a road that extended from the capital Addis Ababa. Later, the new road was constructed connecting Addis Ababa to Asossa via Nekemte. Postal service for this town has been present as early as 1923. A branch of the Ethiopian electric light and power began providing electricity to the town by 1960. By 1957, phone service extended to the city (Etefa, 2017). These facilities are currently serving both the public and tourists visiting the area. The remains of an Italian military plane shot down by the Black Lion Patriots in 1935 proudly sit in front of the Wollega Museum. Inside, displays give a good insight into the Wollega Oromo life and culture (East Wollega zone culture and tourism office, 2019).

The Western Tourist Route: - The west Oromia tourist route starts from the town of Guder and goes to the west as far as to Dambidollo town and beyond the Garjeda forest. This route is known by its wealth of wildlife, forest, rivers, river falls, glorious history of kingdoms and historical heritages left behind kingdoms. This route covers west Shawa, Horro Guduru Wollega, East Wollega, west Wollega and Qellam Wollega zones. This route can be joined from the south-western route via the road that links Nekemte to Beddele. Another road from Gimbi also connects this route to Mettu town of the south-western route. This route leads to Benishangul Gumuz and Gambella national regional states in two directions. The Gambella way eventually, connects the western route Oromia to the south-western route. From the western tourist route, one can travel either to the Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State or to the Gambella National Regional State, and then back to the south-western route of Oromia (Lonely Planet Publications, 2016).

Culture and Lifestyle: - The land beyond the West Shawa to the west up to the border of Oromia was formerly called Wollega Province. This broad land is now divided into four administrative zones. Despite the administrative divisions, but the peoples share the same culture and tradition of which they are proud of. They belong to a group of Maccaa Oromo. The majority of the people are producers of coffee, spices, fruits and vegetables. Butter and honey are also produced in large amounts in this area and then marketed to the central part of the country. The Oromo of west Oromia is well known for its traditional songs called *Geerarsaa* by which they encourage and praise heroes. A typical style of songs called *Hiyyaase*, *Gello*, and *Kumkumme* was very popular in the area in which people sing and dance in large groups. The people in this region are also known for their traditional foods such as *chumbo*, *Anchoote*, *Buna-Qalaa*, *Caccabsa* and *Qori*. The impressive and colorful traditional clothing of the people, which has an important position in their life, makes these people unique. The tradition of making and using furniture and housewares from wood, clog, cattle horn, and leather is what the people are endowed with. Even though the tradition of praising hunters swept a large population of wildlife in the area, the area still holds a primary position in its wildlife resources in the country. An important place to experience the culture of the people is the Wollega Museum. This museum is a place where we can discover all artifacts, traditions, lifestyles, cultural materials and their civilization in the past which display the total history and their way of life of Oromo societies in the area for a long period.

Surrounding Tourist destination opportunities: - Nekemte town is the economic center of western Ethiopia. It links other regional states like Benishangul Gumuz and Gambella regional state to the center of the country. Western Ethiopia holds different cultural and natural tourist destinations. Since tourism development connects with the nearest/neighbors tourist destination to develop with to gather to generate more tourists to their respective destination. Then the nearby potential tourism resources and the strategic place is to add another chance for the development of tourism.

3.4 Potential of the tourism sector for the socio-economic improvement

The results of the study revealed that when all the existed opportunities will fully utilize and when challenges of the sector in all perspectives where solved, the tourism resources in the town and western region of Ethiopia have a great potential to change and improves the socio-economic and living conditions of the society. This needs rigorous planning, management and technical /professional skills, resources from those who participate in the tourism sector.

IV. CONCLUSION

Nekemte has numerous tourism resources with great potential for tourism development. But, due to the discussed challenges above the town and western parts of Ethiopia were not indispensably benefitting from the tourism sector. Many of its tourism resources are not studied and promoted due to low attention from local government and other tourism stakeholders. Lack of scientific research conducted on the tourism sector in the area. Lack of infrastructural facilities; be deficient in awareness among the local communities both about tourist and tourist destinations and the failure to make the town tourism resources offer for public visitors affected the development of the sector in Nekemte and its area. Limited attention of the local government that is given to the

sector (concerning the protection and management of tourism attraction resources) is also another critical challenge for the sector in Nekemte town and west region of the country. The findings from document analysis indicate that there are two major manifestations of this challenge. These are the institutional structure of culture and tourism office and mismatch between the employer's skills and the required skills and lack of skilled man powers hired in culture and tourism offices.

Generally, we can conclude that the area is full of potential resources of tourism and contrary to this, the sector is far from generating the expected benefit from these resources due to lack of strong and consistent management in coordinating and consulting about the permanent and sustainable utilization of these tourism resources, low attention from local government and weak mutual support, lack of community awareness about the potential of the sector to the communities and to the GDP of the country. The result of the study revealed that there are opportunities that promote the development of the tourism sector in the town. Therefore, this study forward that for further development of the tourism sector in the town all tourism stakeholders including local government, media and the local community should have work to gather on the sector. Creating awareness about the role of tourism activities and tourists on socio-economic development was an area that needs critical attention from concerning bodies. Promoting, inviting and support who want to invest in the sector in the town is also another area that needs immediate remedies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The success of this research work is the cumulative output of the contributions of different individuals and governmental sectors that must be acknowledged. Therefore, I would express my deep gratitude to the kind and selfless people and governmental sectors who willing to share their time and knowledge. Also, I express my heartfelt thanks to individuals who contribute to this study especially; Mr. Fanta Wakwaya and Mr. Bikila Regassa. Thanks for Research; Community engagement and Technology transfer Vice president of Wollega University for devote financial and material resources and efforts to facilitate this research work.

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