

Fixing the challenges frustrating tourism in Africa

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The United Nations designated the year 2017 as the International Year for Sustainable Tourism for Development due to tourism's capacity to enhance economic growth through job creation, the attraction of investment, fostering entrepreneurship, preservation of ecosystem and biodiversity, protection of cultural heritage and promotion of empowerment of local communities.



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Even at the international and national levels, policymakers have come to recognise the potential of tourism and this knowledge is reflecting on the laws and policies being formulated. Beyond just enhancing inclusive growth and economic development, tourism can complement development strategies aimed at fostering economic diversification and structural transformation within the right policy context.

Tourism has the potential to significantly contribute to a nation's GDP, employment and export earnings. The sector is fairly job-rich, employing comparatively high share of women and youth. On a global scale, women make up between 60 and 70 percent of the tourism labour force, and half of its workers are aged 25 or younger. It thus has the potential to foster more inclusive growth (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2017).

The multiplier effect

Also, considering that globally most international travel takes place within a traveller's own region and that, with a rising African middle class, if continental disposable incomes increase, there is a greater scope for boosting continental and intra-regional travel in Africa.

Tourism helps to generate and spread incomes and has strong spillover effects for poverty reduction through stronger linkages. These stronger linkages propel a multiplier effect that can generate economic benefits at the national level, employment opportunities and poverty reduction at the local level.

Sadly in many countries, tourism linkages remain weak and underexploited. As a result, the foreign investors, international tour operators and foreign airline companies are benefiting most from the value added of the sector while very limited benefits are available to the destination country and very little flow to the poor (UNCTAD, 2017).

Major challenges preventing African from unlocking its tourism potential

Promotion of peace, justice and strong institutions are necessary for achieving any economic development or goals. Most African nations, however, face tough challenges and constraints in leveraging the benefits of tourism services in trade and economic development. To this end, Jumia Travel examines four major challenges preventing the continent from unlocking the potential of tourism.

Intersectoral linkages

If linkages between tourism and other productive sectors are enhanced, tourism can then promote economic diversification and structural transformation. Unlocking the potential of intersectoral linkages will contribute to structural transformation, alignment of cross-sectoral issues, and included into policy frameworks at the national, regional and local levels.

Enhancing the capacity of tourism to foster more inclusive growth

Tourism has a critical role to play in the global fight to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development goals is tourism. No doubt, it will generate economic benefits and boost productive capacities. Beyond these, tourism can foster inclusion by creating employment opportunities among vulnerable groups such as the poor, women, and youth.

Tapping the potential of intra-regional tourism through deepening regional integration

Because of the increase in the continental and intra-regional tourism in Africa and the opportunities it offers for economic and export diversification, African countries are bound to benefit if they made significant progress with the free movement of persons, currency convertibility and liberalising air transport services. This would enhance greater access to tourism destinations and boost the competitiveness of destinations. Regional economic communities and countries, therefore, need to comprehensively plan for intra-regional and continental tourism.

Harnessing peace and stability for tourism

The development of tourism can foster peace, so too is peace essential for tourism. African countries with tourism potential should, therefore, implement policies that can strengthen the sector. There's a bi-directional causal relationship between peace and tourism and the effect of peace on tourism is much greater in magnitude than the impact of tourism on peace.

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