

AN APPROACH TO A STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING LIBYA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT: Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. It has been observed that, for many countries, tourism represents significant potential for future development, while for others it offers a diversification of the national economy. In addition, people at all levels and occupations in society are affected in one way or another by this fast growing and important industry. Libya possesses a variety of natural and man-made tourist attractions, which can be used for competitive advantage in the global tourism market place. However, in order for Libya to capitalize on this natural advantage, the Libyan tourism industry leaders and policy makers are called upon to formulate and implement a systematic tourism strategy. This strategy should be consistent with the best practices found in the highly competitive global tourism market.

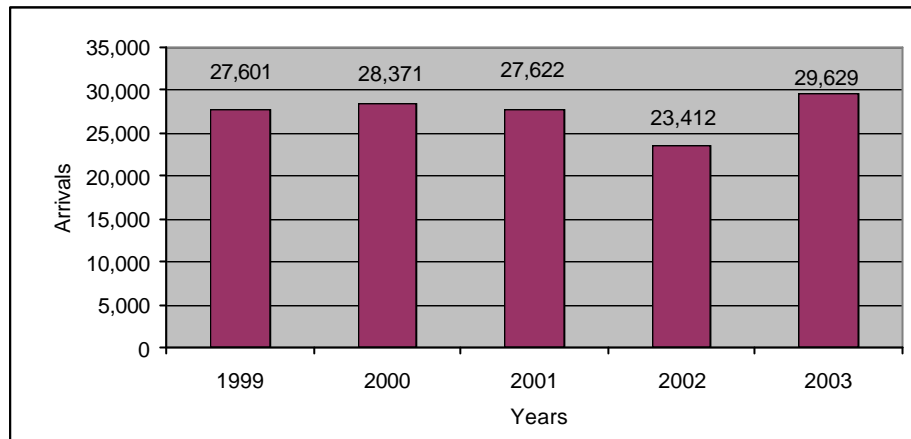
The aim of this paper is to indicate how the strategy should be formulated to meet the necessary requirements to improve the tourism industry in the country.

Keywords : Strategy, Tourism, Libya, Development, Planning

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of civilisation, travel has been a feature of all human society. According to the World Tourism Organization (2002), it has been estimated that there were 25 million tourist arrivals globally in 1950 and this has risen to 693 million by 2001. Also, receipts from tourism have grown even more rapidly from less than US\$2 billion to US\$463 billion over the same period. It states that tourism is the world's largest growth industry with no signs of slowing down in the twenty-first century. The study of tourism 2020 vision, forecasts that international arrivals globally will reach one billion by 2010, and 1.6 billion by 2020 (WWTC, 2002). Moreover, by 2010, the tourism economy contribution is estimated to grow to 12 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and it will support 250 million jobs (9 per cent of total employment) (WTTC, 2002).

According to information from WTO (2004), the information includes arrivals of non-resident visitors from various countries world-wide to Libya. From the data international tourist arrivals from top generating tourist markets during 1999-2003 are shown in Figure 1. These data show international visitors who really travelled to Libya for tourism purposes and does not include, those who visit the country for the purpose of seeking work.

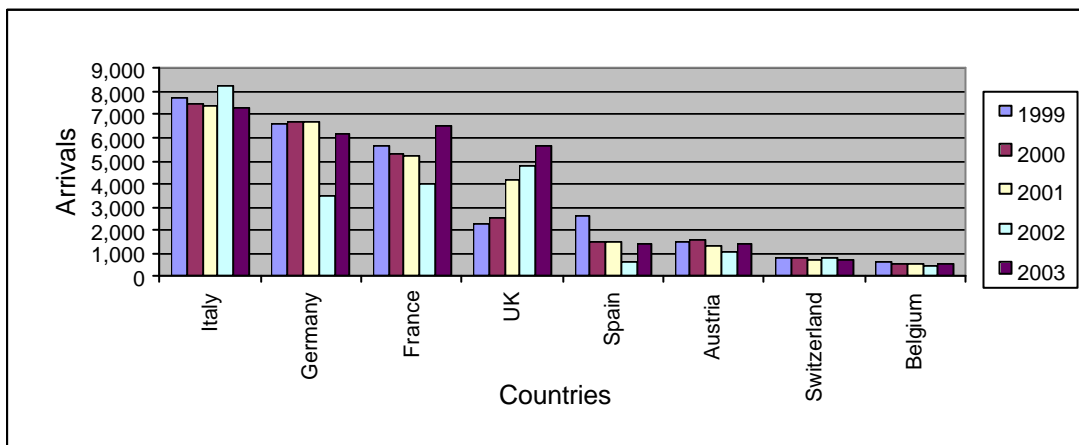


Source: World Tourism Organisation (WTO, 2004)

Fig 1 International tourist arrivals from top generating tourist markets to Libya (1999-2003)

Figure 1 indicates that tourist arrivals from those markets increased from 27,601 in 1999 to 32,374 in 2003. On the other hand tourist arrivals went down from 27,622 in 2001 to 23,412 in 2002 showed (-15.24) per cent compared to 2001, due to September 11th impacts, which affected international tourist arrivals all over the world. In addition international tourist arrivals witnessed a slight decrease (by -2.64 per cent) in 2001 compared to 2000, due to the weakening economies of major tourism generating markets.

Figure 2 illustrates numbers for Libya as a tourist destination from the top generating tourist markets during the same period. It can be noted that, most international tourists visiting Libya are generated from Italy, Germany, France and the UK respectively. A small number of international arrivals represent the other countries. The Libyan tourism authority is trying to boost the number of tourists generated from these markets and aiming to target new tourist markets from various countries around the world, such as the USA, Japan, China and South Korea etc.



Source: (WTO, 2004)

Fig 2 Libya's visitor numbers from the top generating tourist markets (1999-2003)

PROBLEMS FACING TOURISM IN LIBYA

Libya has an extensive and varied range of tourism resources that are spread widely throughout the country. These include attractive natural features and many different

landscapes of the vast Libyan desert, human achievements in the form of buildings, town, art history as well as modern man-made attractions etc. These unique attractions need the provision of additional facilities to improve the presentation and interpretation at the major sites as well as leisure facilities to improve visitor comfort.

Problems such as inefficient resource allocation, poor infrastructure, and frequent policy reversals, in addition to the United Nation (UN) international embargo, which has been recently lifted, are major reasons for the delay and observed slow tourism development. The UN international embargo has been a major deterrent for tourists. It has resulted in delay in tourism development and made it difficult for tourists, who have instead had to travel through an arduous, physically exhausting road into and out of the country through the Tunisia-Libya land border.

Despite the fact that Libya possesses a splendid variety of tourist attractions (natural, historical and cultural), the problems facing the tourism sector and the development of tourism activities in Libya are several and each needs to be considered carefully in order to formulate the right policy to tackle them. These problems can be summarised as follows:

Lack of tourism-related infrastructure

The sufficient infrastructure necessary for the development of a successful tourism sector is lacking. Alexander's Gas & Oil Connections (1999), adds that:

"Tourism is part of a plan to make the country's economy less dependent on oil. Libya, however, has done little to improve its tourism infrastructure despite its drive to attract visitors".

Most important amongst these, is that there is a lack of available accommodation in terms of both quantity and quality close by the principal attractions such as, classical archaeological sites, selected coastal areas and convenient desert stopover points suitable for international tourists.

The facilities regarding the presentation of some attractions is not wholly adequate for visitation by tourists in aspects such as, lack of road signposting and informative signposting at places of interest that are in a language other than Arabic, inadequate road maps of Libya as well as detailed ones for the principal towns and cities, beside that the need to improve the existing information centres at the site areas and establishing some more all over the country. In addition, despite the large number of restaurants, there are only a few that are of an acceptable standard to international tourists. Besides that, there is little or no entertainment or cultural activities organized for presentation to visitors. In addition, the availability of Libyan souvenirs and handicrafts in general, and those of unique quality in particular, is poor. Consequently, the shortages of these facilities will definitely have its impact on the level of tourist demand.

The visa entrance system might be another deterrent for international tourists, as well as the fact that the official currency exchange rate for the Libyan dinar is at a high level, which results in uncompetitive prices for tourist related services such as accommodation and transportation, compared with neighbouring countries. Moreover, tourist accommodation in some tourist areas is not up to standard to meet international tourist market requirements and there is a lack of tourist information centres. Also, the poor communications between the travel trade in the international tourist market and Libya has resulted in an absence of awareness and knowledge in the tourist generating markets of Libya's tourism resources and attractions.

Lack of awareness and image

Beside the severe lack of tourism infrastructure, there is a lack of awareness and image of Libya as a tourist destination among international tourist markets. The promotional tools, which are presently employed by, GBT (General Board of Tourism) and local tour-operating companies are insufficient. Therefore, the need for a more effective promotional campaign has become essential in order to change the negative image of the country as a tourist destination that has been held in the outside world and particularly European tourist markets resulting from western media in the last couple of years. Moreover, this helps in providing adequate awareness and image about Libya's tourist product to the international tourist markets.

At present Libya is viewed as a cultural destination to be visited mainly for desert and adventure together with historical attractions and good weather. In fact there are many other tourist attractions, which presently are not fully exploited, such as beaches, water sports etc and this leaves much more room for development.

Lack of competent human resources

The tourism industry is a labour-intensive service industry dependent for survival and competitive advantage on the availability of good quality personnel to deliver, operate and manage the tourist product. The interaction between tourist and tourism industry personnel is an integral part of the total tourist experience (Amoah and Baum, 1997). According to HCTC (1995), tourism and hospitality have one of the highest levels of skill shortages (cited by Jameson, 2000), and Libya no exception.

In Libya, tourism related services has a lack of good quality personnel. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop human resources, particularly indigenous personnel, for delivering quality services for tourists, as well as enhancing general skills of the local workforce. All hotels and beach resorts should be staffed with skilled managers and technical services personnel to be more familiar with customers' needs and wants, help them and handle their enquiries and complaints as well as to meet an international standard of skills. As the industry continues to develop and managerial roles and companies become more complex, the nature of the unit management role will increasingly require the skills and knowledge that education and training bring.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the diverse problems hindering tourism development in Libya, there is still a wide a scope for the development of a modern and sustainable tourism industry in the country. Generally this calls for the adoption of appropriate plans and strategies, which are needed for the development of this important sector to the national economy. Libya is among several countries, which have introduced tourism as an attractive developmental option to sustain the national economy, which for many years has been bolstered by the oil factor.

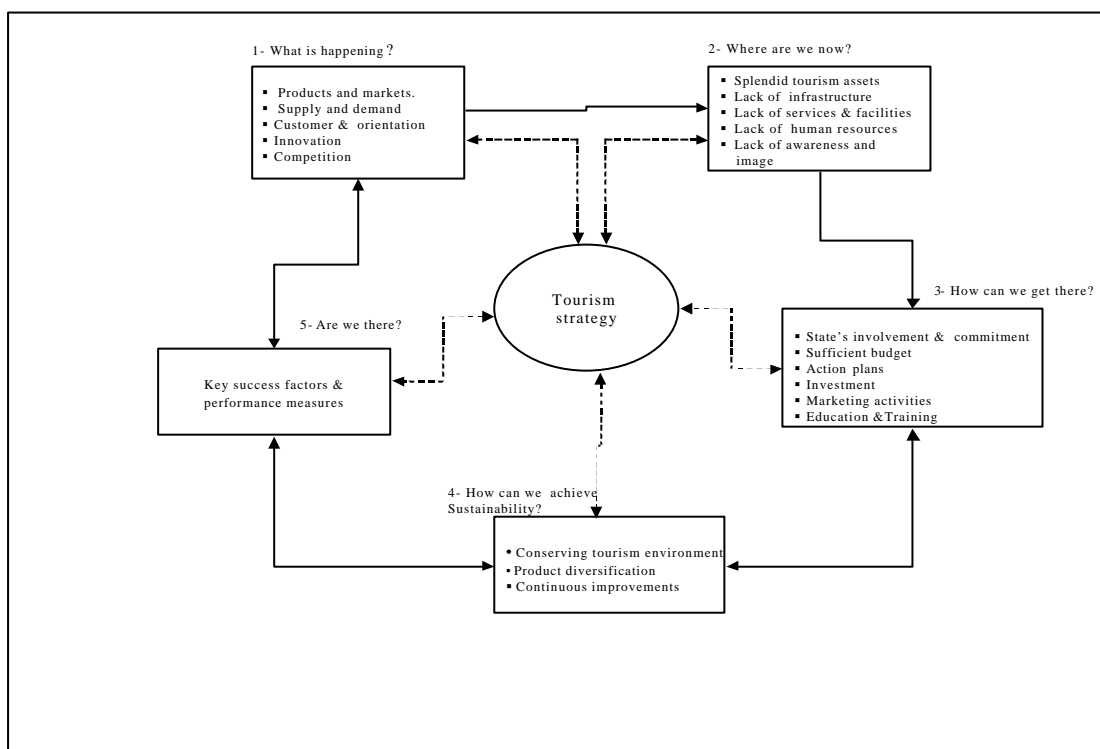
At the national level, it is primarily government responsibility, to formulate a tourism policy, which should be translated into a plan. Such policy should clarify how tourism is seen in the context of the national economy, what objectives are to be pursued, how tourism enters into regional and national planning. These objectives should then be translated into quantified targets and rates of growth. In the Libyan context, policies on tourism appear to be too broad and lacking detail, which makes it difficult to translate them into plans.

Sustainable development for the Libyan tourist sector is severally depend on the type of policies and strategies formulated by the GBT that should take a positive and more vital role

in stimulating and directing investment towards the achievement of the drawn objectives. Therefore, it should reconfirm that international tourism is the priority area after the country's hydrocarbons trade, and recognise it as a key player in the national economy. It should be made clear and definite in theory and practice that international tourism is entitled to enjoy the same position and preferential policies as the hydrocarbons trade did.

Strategic approach to improving tourism development in Libya

As tourism activities are crucially affected by activities undertaken by other sectors in the economy, the sector should not be considered in isolation and should be in harmony with overall national aims. The tourism strategy is aimed at the Libyan tourism industry policy makers as they formulate tourism policies and plans to improve tourism development in the country, as illustrated in Figure 3.



Source: Prepared by authors

Fig 3 A strategic approach to improving Libya's tourism industry

Tourism in Libya faces a number of opportunities, which it should fully exploit in order to sustain and accelerate tourism development in the country. On the other hand, the development of tourism will encounter some challenges, which might hinder or slow down the development of the sector. Therefore, analyses of the opportunities and challenges, with which Libya's international tourism is confronted, and lessons from the successes and failure of other tourist destination countries, all help to formulate appropriate plans and policies for managing tourist resources. This all helps to suggest the choices of effective policies and strategies that Libya should undertake for its tourism development in the shadow of the country's new orientations to reduce its economy dependency on the oil revenue.

Immediate to short-term objectives

These can be stated as:

To stimulate various companies (public, private domestic and foreign) to invest in tourism infrastructure and to sustain and improve image, awareness and knowledge of the country's tourist product within the tourist market. To improve tourist services standard, level of planning and decision-making.

Medium to long-term objective

Based on current situation of the Libyan tourism sector, the medium to long-term objectives could be considered to be:

To make the tourism sector a vital contributor to the national economy of the country by achieving sustainability.

In order to achieve the above objectives, the following key issues and priorities should be considered. Initially, there is a need to overcome a number of weaknesses, as illustrated in Fig 3. These weaknesses relate to tourism aspects, which do not allow the country's basic tourism strengths to be fully exploited.

There is a need for a comprehensive set of tourism regulations covering consumer protection requirements, customs and immigration, environmental protection, land use planning and zoning, allocation of resources, exchange rate, food quality controls, tariffs, health, sanitation and safety. Some practical measures such as a welcoming attitude to international visitors at the airport, border or port should be introduced without delay. In this regard, training for customer care may help to overcome the common problems faced by tourists at such places.

KEY FACTORS FOR ACHIEVING TOURISM GROWTH

Government involvement and commitment is a significant perspective of tourism development. Government usually provides the physical infrastructure necessary for tourism, such as roads, airports and communications. Adequate transportation infrastructure and access to generating markets is one of the most important prerequisites for the development of any destination. In addition, it can attract both domestic and foreign investment, which will stimulate the economy.

Government involvement in developing countries including Libya has become essential especially in the initial stages of tourism development. The industry could not survive without them. Governments have the power to provide the political stability, security and the financial framework which tourism requires. They provide essential services and basic infrastructure.

Finance represents a core factor for any business. In the Libyan case, in order to utilize its extensive and varied range of tourism resources (natural and man-made) effectively, increased finance should be allocated for tourism in the country's national economic strategy. The public and the private sectors' cooperation and collaboration play a vital role in the development of the sector. If tourism is to flourish more widely across the country to reap the socio-economic and environmental benefits, government commitment with increased budget for the tourism development is essential as, obviously, without budget and estate commitment, tourism will never develop.

An adequate budget for funding tourism projects and implementing tourism plans is an important factor for accomplishing successful tourism growth. Some tourism development plans were prepared to further tourism in the country. However, non-implementation of these

plans mainly due to insufficient budget, in addition to some other reasons, were a major drawback to accelerate tourism development. Therefore, in order to achieve tourism growth in the country the government involvement and commitment became essential to overcome any financial problems concerning the development of the tourism sector, which should be combined with an effective controlling system. According to Clayton (2003), in a situation of external shocks, mismanagement, corruption or some combination of these factors, which may lead to significant unproductive over spending, without commensurate or growth, this usually requires governments to get their budgets back under control. In addition, the establishment of a tourism development bank is recommended to enhance tourism growth in the country.

Action plans are required to take immediate action towards the establishment of tourism-related infrastructure. The aim of planning for tourism is to identify major issues that are likely to affect the development and management of tourism as well as to develop policies and programmes to assist in making the industry more viable and sustainable. Many have argued that, in order to achieve integrated and sustainable development, the macro level of economic and development policy must incorporate social and environmental factors at the outset of planning (Clayton, 2003).

Tourism in Libya is included in the national plans, but the resources are not allocated to achieve the sector's goals. The delay in the execution of tourism plans in the given time has been a major problem in the slow growth of tourism in the country. Therefore, the provision of necessary requirements, such as sufficient capital with an effective controlling system to avoid corruption, in addition to the provision of good expertise, flexibility etc to allow the completion of the projects, have become crucially urgent and important. A prepared plan, which cannot be implemented to achieve the desired results is useless and a waste of resources as Jenkins et al (1991), argue that:

“ much of the effort and funding given to tourism development planning has resulted in the preparation of technically excellent master plans, often detailed as physical development plans. Too little attention has been given to the implementation of these plans and particularly to post-plan audits.”

Wall, (2005) added that, in developing countries, there is continued emphasis on master plans which are often made by external consultants, who usually come from developed countries, where there has been a shift in the emphasis on tourism master plans for larger areas. Those external consultants often do not undertake such tasks in their places of origin. In fact, such master plans are designed to attract external investors by ensuring potential developers that there is a broad vision for the destination area and that their investments are desired and secure.

Therefore, action plans are required, to accomplish positive results. Plans for the tourism sector should not be considered in isolation. As tourism is an interdependent sector, plans for tourism should be integrated with other sectors' plans. Problems arise when development is rushed, with little consideration for the environment. Therefore, the socio-economic and environment fabric of the country should be carefully considered in order to achieve sustainable tourism development.

Investment in tourism infrastructure must be addressed as soon as possible as it is a core factor for tourism development. This cannot be achieved unless the provision of physical infrastructure is completed. Developing a new tourism-related product or service, requires intensified efforts at the initial stages in order to gain an adequate proportion of the international tourist market share and then to maintain this position in the medium to long-run. In Libya, where tourism is viewed as an economic alternative for gaining economic growth, the government should make investment as easy as possible for prospective

investors. Consequently, this could lead to an increase in the tourism market share and enable Libya to compete more effectively.

Sufficient funding, and establishing an appropriate atmosphere for investors that might boost confidence among them, is required to encourage local and foreign investment to invest in tourism related services by treating tourism investment legislation as a special and more distinctive case in order to be more attractive. This might take the form of exempting both domestic and international components from tax for a certain period of time in the full investment. The development of more tourist accommodation such as small and medium-sized hotels, beach resorts, roadside travel lodges and guest houses to meet the demand of prospective international and domestic tourists at a competitive price and more “value for-money” facilities could lead to sustainable tourism development and fast promotion of the country as a tourist destination. Similar investment policies in the oil sector which has been very successful, could be adopted for investment for Libya’s tourism industry. Encouraging foreign investment (renowned companies in particular) to invest in tourism-related services, could generate employment for Libyans and bring in the highest technology and experience.

The need for marketing activities, which Libya is currently lacking, represents a core factor for achieving tourism growth in the country. In addition to awareness and knowledge about the tourist product and improving the image of Libya as a tourist destination among international tourist markets, marketing plays a vital role in understanding the needs and desire of the actual and potential customers. Help in responding quickly to tourist markets, changing conditions, offering the country’s tourist product in a more attractive way than its competitors as well as portraying the diversity of the Libyan tourist product in terms of society and culture, history and heritage while targeting specific segments related to individual types of activity or pursuit.

In order to increase the awareness and image of Libya as a tourist destination, it is proposed that a foreign tourist office should be established in major tourist generating countries. As a cost saving device or interim step, the London office for example, should be responsible for some other countries in the European Union. In the long run it will be essential to have an office in the USA, which would also serve Canada.

The importance of a destination having a foreign office lies in its ability to help travel agencies in a tourist generating country to influence the choice of the destination in various ways. Furthermore, the need for a foreign office becomes more crucial when it is considered that travel agencies handle about 70% of travel business.

Tourism planning and development authorities with a well developed institutional framework at various levels (federal, provincial and local) are required to manage the existing resources to meet the tourist market demand. A fully provisioned marketing section with competent professionals is the most important need for the country to introduce its assets in the tourist market and to the travel trade. As a result, the formulation of marketing plans which are missing in most of the Libyan tourist enterprises due to the lack of expertise etc have become essential for the co-ordination of marketing activities. The marketing plan basically should have objectives/targets, strategy (utilisation of tourist marketing mix), time limits, budgets and controls.

Education and training is required for enhancing the skills of those working at all levels in the tourism industry, which is critical to its future prosperity. Training should be performed in a wide range of skills, including management and information technology. The industry needs skilled managers and staff who are capable to identify and meet the needs of international visitors. Training facilities should be provided at university level to produce better educational programmes directed towards planning, developing, development and management of tourism. Beside the formal education system, informal training, either on-the-job or through programmes should be carefully tailored to meet defined objectives and

targeted at specific types of individuals. Foreign expertise to train tourism personnel on specific aspects, should be organised by the public and the private sectors to provide a base for future education and training and to improve the standards.

The tourism training institutions in Libya have formulated educational and training programmes for the industry but at this stage they lack both efficiency and sufficiency. As a matter of fact, we have to recognize that it will take a long-term sustained effort for the industry to adapt to the view that effective human resources development is critical to business performance. Moreover, education helps change people's perceptions towards tourism and raises their awareness of the opportunities and challenges involved in tourism.

Ways to achieve sustainability

Practical steps and modalities are needed in order to translate these broad objectives into realistic policies aimed at attaining sustainable tourism development and making the tourism contribution to GDP higher to reduce dependence on the oil factor. In this regard, there are further factors need to be taken into consideration:

Conserving the natural and built tourist resources for future generations against any environmental damage will lead to long-term tourism development. Management of the natural and built resources and tourism planning should be directed towards quality as well as growth. In this context the level of management should be improved and staffed with competent personnel. The development of tourism should be linked to other sectors of the economy, if it is to stimulate production in agriculture and industry that will contribute to the development of a more balanced economy and reduce the percentage of foreign exchange leakage.

In order to suit the needs of long range development of the tourism sector and to solve its problems, management planning is essential to know the positive and negative effects of tourism on the environment with a view to preventing environmental degradation. Problems start to emerge when development is rushed, with little consideration for the environment. The extra volume of visitors arriving at particular destinations causes most of the damage done to the environment as a result of tourism. These destinations are likely to be affected by congestion, smoke, ecological disruption, land use pollution etc.

As a result, for Libya to attain sustainable tourism development, it is crucial to consider environmental issues as a key factor in the overall development of the tourism sector. Distinctive investment incentives to local and foreign investors could help to conserve the natural and built environment. In addition, it is apparent that successful tourism planning requires the involvement and participation of residents in the destination areas. Interaction between tourists and residents plays an important role in conserving the local environment. This could be attained, by developing a tourism product that makes the visitor care about and feel for the local environment.

Moreover, diversification of tourism products becomes a necessity as modern tourism activity has shown a growing tendency towards it. Keeping pace with the rapidly changing and complex requirements of tourists in a highly competitive international tourist market and allowing the emergence of new tourist destinations cannot be achieved without tourism product diversification combined with a high standard of tourist services and facilities for the presentation of those tourism products.

The image of Libya as a tourist destination is entirely based on historical places, desert and culture. In other words, the image of the country in the viewpoint of tourists is as a cultural destination. Therefore, the opportunity for diversifying the tourist product exists. Libya can become one of the best sea, sand and sun destinations in the world, which requires heavy investment in beach resorts, hotels and sea sport facilities.

Moreover, many other tourism resources such as business tourism, scuba-diving, spa tourism, wildlife, mountain trekking, marine-based activities (e.g. game fishing, flotilla sailing) and fairs tourism are not fully exploited due to the lack of tourism services and facilities, which could play a significant role in diversifying the country's tourism products. Those tourism resources might be helpful for Libya both in the short and long-term and could create more leisure and construction activities for other areas apart from the capital which may create community well being and encourage settlement of people in rural areas who would otherwise prefer the urban areas for job seeking purposes.

The major objectives of developing international tourism in all countries is to increase foreign exchange, which aims to increase the number of tourists and prolong their length of stay. Therefore, tourism product diversification has become a necessity for Libya to encourage more tourists and prolong their length of stay.

According to a survey undertaken by the author, which has been conducted with international tourists visiting Libya, the length of stay of these visitors is relatively short. In order to encourage visitors to prolong their length of stay, diversification of the tourist product has become a necessity. Extending opportunities for visitors to consume can be encouraged by offering intensive tours programmes and more convenient and preferential treatment for tourists, such as tax-free shopping, convenient payment systems (credit card machines etc), the provision of proper shopping facilities for incoming tourists, and the development of unique souvenirs and gifts which are warmly received by visitors.

According to Getz (1993), shopping villages combine both visitor-oriented services with natural or historical attractions, giving the visitor an opportunity to combine both shopping and tourism (cited by Eccles, 1995)

Conferences and conventions tourism is a major economic activity in most developed countries. After the lifting of UN sanctions on Libya, many foreign companies came forward seeking investment in various sectors. This encourages the opportunity to conduct conferences and conventions, which require sufficient congress halls and facilities offered by hotels in Libya. Conferences organizational skills and event development knowledge are required to channel the market.

The necessity of developing convention tourism in Libya should be recognized because of the following factors: This specific tourist market yields large financial benefits; it helps to extend the tourist season the whole year round; it can be an opportunity for special promotion and advertisement for Libya as a tourist destination; it gives an opportunity to the participants to experience various tourist products of the country, therefore, raising the possibilities of coming back as ordinary tourists as well as conveying the message to their friends and relatives (word of-mouth).

Continuous improvement is needed, as Libya may face increased tourist demand in the future. Whether the Libyan tourist market will be able to meet and take advantage of this increased demand will depend on how various tourism organisations both public and private cope with the problems in the present and take the necessary steps to meet the challenges of the future. Three important aspects should be considered carefully to achieve sustainable tourism development: The product's life cycle, the socio-economy and the environment. Problems arise when development is rushed taking little or no consideration of these three aspects. These development problems can be resolved, by responsive tourism planning as well as by the government and industry working towards sustainability. In addition, to remain competitive in the tourist market place, new products or concepts need to be developed.

The effort of Libya's General Board of Tourism (GBT) and other tourism organisations in the country should focus on the development of the quality of the tourism product and services. In addition, all tourism projects should have the appropriate capacity and the range

of facilities that will allow their coexistence without affecting the natural, historical, social, cultural and economic environment. Consequently, the greater tourism attraction of Libya will be preserved for posterity, and holidaymakers may continue to enjoy activity-based leisure time both in and out of season.

For achieving successful and sustainable tourism development, in addition to related-tourism infrastructure and tourism product diversification, Libyan tourism needs continued improvement in marketing activities and training in order to meet the continually changing tourism markets' demand. Marketing and promotional activities will be indispensable if Libyan tourism is to survive the keen competition of established and emerging tourist-receiving countries. Finally, it may be said that Libyan tourism will not achieve any improvement unless an adequate budget is devoted to tourism plans and marketing activities. Moreover, a product that works in harmony with the environment remains successful for much longer as well as generating income for both the public and private sectors.

CONCLUSION AND CURRENT RESEARCH

Tourism development is seen as a way of improving a country's economy and social well-being, but if this development is not handled carefully, problems began to emerge. The development of tourism products should be combined with a sustainable focus, which helps to fit in with the local environment and ensure its preservation. The successful formulation and implementation of a tourism development policy is predicated upon the mobilisation of human, capital, physical and other resources. These resources spearhead any tourism policy, for they ensure the identification of the tourism product, organise its marketing, and they are responsible for the overall control of the sector and its integration into the national economy. If they are inadequate, tourism plans will not succeed. Overall, careful consideration should be taken of the following elements:

- Plans for the tourism sector should not be considered in isolation but should be integrated with national and regional planning.
- Improving the tourism infrastructure and creating an appropriate atmosphere for investment in the sector.
- Local involvement and control over tourism development.
- Foreign, private-public sector partnerships for tourism development.
- Availability and allocation of appropriate resources such as financial, human, product, etc.
- Building image of Libya as a tourist destination through a marketing and promotional campaign.
- Promoting community tourism awareness campaign
- Increasing awareness and knowledge about the tourist product among tourism generating markets.
- Product diversification to increase tourism income.
- Product's life cycle, socio-economic and the environment are important to achieve sustainable tourism development.
- Innovation of new products or services is necessary to remain competitive.

Current research

Research problems

This research project being currently undertaken is concerned with the development of the tourist industry in Libya, which has splendid tourist assets. These assets in the shape of

scenery, culture and history need to be projected through policy and planning measures to sustain tourist growth in the country.

There is a need to conduct research in order to find out the root of problems hindering the development of tourism in Libya.

Strenuous efforts are therefore being made to improve the tourism sector in Libya. Nevertheless, in spite of the considerable care, which is being taken to put the policies of the General Board of Tourism (GBT) into effect, the absence of both foreign investment and financial support from the Libyan private sector is delaying the process.

Research aims and methodology

The research aims to identify implications for improving planning and policy making within the tourist industry in Libya. A triangulation approach method was adopted in the study using qualitative (interview), quantitative (questionnaires) and observation. Postal questionnaires were sent out to 36 tour operators/travel agents in the UK. Of these questionnaires, 15 were returned. Only 5 of them were answered by tour operating companies who sell Libya as a tourist destination, whilst 10 of these questionnaires were answered by tour-operating companies who do not sell Libya as a tourist destination. The purpose was to identify the major reasons for the observed small share that Libya possesses of the UK's tourist market. The websites of both the UK's tour operators featuring Libya and other countries as a tourist destinations, and tour operating companies' administrators in Libya were a major source for the author to find out the names and addresses of tour operating companies in the UK engaged in package tours to promote Libya as a tourist destination, as well as the ones, which have never sold Libya as a tourist destination.

The delivery and collection questionnaire was directed at international tourists visiting Libya. Finally, a total of 282 usable questionnaires were entered into the analysis. Its aim was to research what image and expectations international tourists have about Libya and to find out the degree of satisfaction with Libya as a tourist destination.

A set of interview questions, was directed to key tourism administrators in Libya in order to conduct face-to-face interviews. These included the Libyan General Board of Tourism (GBT) and other provincial tourism boards, local tour operating companies and local hotels. The majority of those key tourism administrators were representatives on the board level of their associations. The sample included five tourist boards, five local tour-operating companies and seven local hotels. The objectives were to understand how they perceive international tourism and evaluate the tourism related problems and potential. In addition, an objective was to assess the level of marketing activities and promotional strategy undertaken by those various tourism bodies.

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