Land-Use Planning and Community Participation

The Case Study of Libya

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Abstract

Although Libya is not a tourism-dependent country, this activity could become one of the most important sectors for the Libyan economy and its importance for the country's development is increasing year by year. Libya possesses vast supplies of undeveloped land with enormous potential for various sectors development. Community participation is regarded as an important tool for successful tourism development planning in developing countries, such participation is difficult to put into practice because of shortcomings in structural, operational and cultural limitations in the tourism development process. The huge space of undeveloped land can be exploited in broadening the bias of tourism development in terms of new construction work and new or refurbishment of facilities to meet the requirements of the international tourism generating markets. The paper is going to discuss three major issues: First, the state’s role in facilitating the regulations both in terms of land use, financial support and other related aspects as well as the essential implications needed to encourage both local and foreign investors to invest in tourism related services. Second, the S.W.O.T analysis for Libya as a tourist destination and development proposals for the essential prerequisites needed for the development of the Libya’s tourism resources will be presented. Finally, several suggestions are put forward for a future framework for community participation in the study area.
Introduction
Libya is an African country. It is bordered to the north by the Mediterranean Sea, with coast line approximately 2,000 kilometres. It has a total area of some 1,760,000 square kilometres, to the east is Egypt, to the south is Sudan, Chid and Niger and to the west is Algeria and Tunisia. 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 as illustrated in figure1. 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 visitors comfort.

Source: [http://www.shati-zuara.de/english/Libya/libya.html](http://www.shati-zuara.de/english/Libya/libya.html)

Figure 1: Map of Libya's principle tourist attractions
Despite the UN embargo on international flights, Libya has witnessed a large influx of visitors, especially from neighboring countries in particular Tunisia and Egypt. In addition, a number of overseas visitors have come into the country through the Tunisia – Libya land border from different countries such as, Italy, UK, France and Germany.

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.

Land-use planning regulations play a significant role in creating a distinctive Libyan ambience and environmentally sustainable tourist product. Tourism as an activity is based on interactions of particular destinations and so requires coordination and the cooperation of both public and private sectors. The importance of tourism has brought about the realisation in Libya that this industry deserves special attention.

Many developing countries have tried to exploit the tourism industry for economic stimulation by getting foreign investment, capital, and surplus from currency exchange (Din, 1997 and Telfer, 2003). However, even when the governments’ economic achievements from tourism are recognised, their response to public participation process during the stages of tourism planning and development is always questionable. Local community participation in the decision-making process is always limited or sometimes marginalized, particularly in developing countries (Timothy, 2000). Local communities not only fail to participate in the decision making process, but also fall short in maximising the benefits of tourism development (Scheyvens, 2003). Researchers (Hall, 1989) stress the importance of public
participation in the decision-making during tourism planning and development. Tourism planning involves many stakeholders, such as government agencies, private companies, and non-government organizations (NGOs), which should strengthen the importance of public contribution in the public participation process. It is the public who are the most important party, since it is they who will be most affected either positively or negatively (Tosun, 2000) by tourism planning and development. In fact, public participation in tourism development does not only relate to the decision-making process and the benefits of tourism development, but also regarded integral to sustainable tourism (Green, 1995 and Murphy, 1988).

**Land-Use Planning of Tourism Resources in Libya**

Governments of many developing countries including Libya have introduced tourism as an attractive developmental option to sustain the national economy, which in Libyan case has, for many years, been bolstered by the oil sector. The Libyan economic development plans of the 1970s and 1980s were based on the diversification of the Libyan economy away from oil. This was due to two reasons. Firstly, the reduction of world oil prices over the previous decade and, secondly, the lack of formal economic plans to overcome this problem (WTO, 1998).

The first Tourism Master Plan was completed in 1990 with help from international consultants. The plan provided a detailed explanation of the policies for tourism planning and development in Libya. However, just over (% 10) of the plan implemented (Abuharris, 2005). Local residents need to be informed of tourism development since the lack of knowledge of tourism might result in the low level of awareness in the participation process and could contribute to negative perceptions.

In many locations in Libya there are similar or competing tourism products e.g. in classical tourism sites. At present tourism market demand may not be strong enough
to support the development of all potential tourism in each part of the country. Therefore, the allocation of tourism potential throughout the Libya’s regions became essential without distorting the natural distribution of resources. Particular attention should be paid to the development of tourism attractions in locations that can be linked into attractive tourist circuits, in order to introduce visitors to some of the less well known and less visited areas of the country. Regarding this issue the WTO (1998) introduced proposal of the refurbishing of existing hotels and establishing of new hotel accommodation in different areas as shown in Table 1.

According to the Libya’s GBT (General Board of Tourism) Physical development in Libya is subjected to the urban and rural planning law No (5) of 1969, which obliges every municipality to prepare a detailed plan for future urban development in towns and settlements within their boundaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Bedrooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>2770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Southern</td>
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<td>Central</td>
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<td>Eastern</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (WTO, 1998)

There is no legal requirement to prepare plans for areas outside existing settlement and most desert and other remote areas are not subject to detailed planning control. In each planned urban area or settlement, authorities are required to propose land use classification zones to control and regulate development. Within these zones, detailed planning regulations with regard to safety and security requirements for public buildings. The comprehensive building regulations currently available in
Libya are those prepared for Tripoli, and these have been widely adopted throughout the country. Key regulations for tourist related uses are:

- minimum site area are to be determined by the relevant planning committee;
- maximum building height is 15 meters;
- site area coverage is limited to 25 per cent;
- the depth of the site should not be more than 2.5 times the site width; and
- the floor area to site area ratio should not exceed 100 per cent.

**Destination Planning**

Land use-planning plays a crucial role to apply sustainable principles at all government levels. These principles relate to sustainable development in its broadest sense including economic, social and environmental aspects. In addition, decentralisation of land use planning and decision making raise the question of suitable local institutions and organisations for managing these tasks. For example, it is understood politically that environmental problems can only be solved by involving/mobilising the local people (Enemark, 2001).

Also cited by Hall, (2000), several criteria were identified, which might be applied in the identification of destination zones:

- The region should have a set of cultural, physical and social characteristics that create a sense of regional identity.
- The region should be larger than just one community/attraction.
- The region should contain adequate tourism infrastructure to support tourism development. Infrastructure includes tourism services and facilities.
• The region should contain existing attractions or have the potential to support the development of sufficient attractions to attract tourists.

• The region should be accessible to a large population base. Accessibility may be by road, scheduled air passenger service, or cruise ships.

• The region should be capable of supporting a tourism planning agency and marketing activities to guide and encourage future development (Gunn, 1979 and Smith, 1995)

Destination planning should be integrated with community planning. Officially community plans traditionally focus on physical public needs, especially for updating and enlarging public structures and systems. These needs are often for resident transportation, water supply (potable and gas) fire protection, and for police and public safety (Gunn, 1979). Regulations for land-use and structures such as zoning ordinances and building codes, are included in most city plans. Steiner (1991), states that any land planning process must begin with understanding landscapes and then make changes only in ways that protect and conserve these important foundations (cited by Gunn, 1979). Goodwin, 1993 added that building of an urban landscape is not just physical and economic. It is also social, cultural and political, and changes in these process can play a significant role in easing economic transformation and helping to form new a round of coherence (cited by Hull, 2000).

**Site Planning**

To achieving higher quality tourism developments action on two levels are required: Firstly, design guidance to rise the standard of tourism schemes and facilities. Secondly, land-use planning and building regulations need to provide a great protection to areas of landscape beauty, particularly beach and costal areas. Pennington, 2002 indicates that the pattern of land use that constitutes of both urban
and rural environments cannot be left to the selfish individuals and the vagaries of competition. These are best left to the benevolent patrimony of the state.

Every development proposal should be contain comprehensive design solution for sewage treatment, water supply, waste/garbage collection and disposal, water storage, electricity supply, waste and foul water drainage systems and telecommunications links.

There is a critical need to minimize the visual impact of developments, especially in sensitive locations such as beach areas, mountain ridges and in certain desert locations. For example, it is particularly important that buildings do not appear obtrusively above the sky line on hillsides or above the level of existing trees in beach areas or oases. This can only be achieved through understanding of a site and its relationship with the surrounding landscape. It is essential, therefore, that all schemes are designed on the basis of detailed topographical mapping of the site and its surroundings. Existing vegetation needs to be accurately surveyed and species identified. Plans need to be drawn up to determine what trees need to preserved and which should replace with new planting.

Investigations need to be carried out to ascertain whether any archaeological or historic remains are located in the area. Developers should enter into discussion with the Tourism and Antiquities Department at the earliest opportunity to allow time for any detailed surveys or excavations. In addition, new tourism related development should seek to reflect and build upon the country’s heritage in order to create a uniquely Libyan ambience and environmentally sustainable product. There is crucial need to recognise cultural traditions and regional characteristics.
There should be enough space around all tourism sites except those in dense urban areas. Buffer zones should be either landscaped with appropriate plants and trees or any existing vegetation preserved. In addition, beaches should be left in as natural a state as possible and public access on foot to be waters edge unimpeded. It is important to leave adequate space on the beach entirely free of all permanent or temporary structures (WTO, 1998).

As parking requires a large user of land, therefore, it needs to be fully integrated into the landscape design of the scheme in order to avoid the negative visual impact of large paved surfaces. The Libyan architectural design and styles should reflect the country’s response to climatic constraints, cultural and historical processes. For example, the use of locally available materials in areas where construction was traditionally in local stone and olive wood as in the mountain areas, mud bricks and palm tree wood in desert areas.

**Stakeholders Views on the Community Participation**

Face to face interview was conducted with stakeholders to find out about their view on community participation. Stakeholder interviews identified three problems in the public participation processes in Libya. The first relates to government control in the decision-making processes. This situation existed during the Structure Plan and Local Plan studies. Excessive control by the government limited the public’s involvement in the decision making process. One of the government officers explained: if the public disagree with the plan they can make an enquiry to the State Planning Committee. That was the highest level of participation in any physical plan development in this country...even though, the state planning committee considered the enquiry, the committee was still free to make a decision which they held to be relevant. Interestingly, the residents understood how the decisions were made. Although they
were encouraged to attend the draft plan exhibition, they did not have an opportunity to raise any questions or suggestions. Community leaders viewed the exhibition technique as not effective since the residents could not participate actively. One of the community leaders stated his regrets: Usually, the decision was made at the top level of administration without in-depth involvement from the local level. Even when they (government officials) went to the local level, the approach used was not effective because we were not able to be actively involved. The weaknesses of the existing participation approach were another major concern for most of the interviewees. They claimed that flaws in the current practice had limited residents’ opportunity to be properly involved in the decision-making process concerning tourism projects. A community leader explained his views on that situation: I think he said that the priorities in the participation process was just to inform the residents but not to look at their reaction...actually, some of the residents had objections but the problem was that they didn’t have proper means for voicing their objections...the government approach was very simple...we were only involved in the early stages of participation. An officer from the government department also did not deny the failure of the existing participation process. The officer remarked how the limitation exists: One of the failures was when we did the Structure Plan or Local Plan, the consultant should carry out the household survey among the community, this can be one way for public participation and I think it is not enough. He explained further that, the residents just to fill the questionnaire without having a discussion with the consultant to draft the plan together will be resulted in ineffective participation. The government officials thought that resident may have a negative attitudes for participating because of their limited knowledge and awareness about the purpose of participation process. He added that, the residents may not participate because of their attitude as normally; people will not react unless something happens, they just wait to see what will happen.
to the development before giving their feedback. In addition, the community leaders claimed that the residents may not involve because of insufficient information. They stressed that the government needs to inform and educate the residents prior to any participation process. One of the community leaders explained further: One of the NGO representative, blamed the government for not educating the residents. Based on his experience were not involved because they are not understood about the Structure Plan and we advise the state and local government to educate local community about tourism development, the benefits to get involve and the consequences from the development. We suggest that they should organize a seminar or forum for local community.

**Conclusion**

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. It has been observed that for many countries tourism provides significant potential for future development, while it also offers diversification of national economies. People at all levels and of all occupations in society are affected in one way or another by this fast growing and important industry. As a result, planning to develop tourism or expand present tourism development must be studied very carefully. In some developing countries, tourism has replaced oil at the top of the list in terms of foreign currency movements and employment. However, the centralization of a tourism planning apparatus, which is the only body that governs all decisions and is responsible for implementing plans, together with other defects, is delaying the development process.

For Libya to accelerate tourism development and exploit tourism resources for sustaining the national economy, a number of important issues need to be considered further.
All kinds of construction should follow up the formulated regulations in terms of land-use design, safety and security. In order to achieve a tourist product that is economically, socially, environmentally, and culturally viable, the involvement of residents in the planning process is essential. Educating the public about the meaning of the participation process and what they should do when they come to participate, since many of them still cannot understand the purpose of the participation itself. Participation can be done using different kinds of methods, as questionnaires, seminars, forums, exhibitions and etc.

References


