

# Factors That Inhibit the Development of Tourism in Sierra Leone after the Rebel War

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to investigate the factors that inhibit the development of tourism in Sierra Leone after the rebel war. Various studies have been done on the economic contributions of tourism to a country and little attention has been paid to this topic and particularly Sierra Leone. A tremendous effort has been made by both the public and private sectors after the ten year rebel war towards the development of tourism. Despite remarkable progress in this respect, the tourism sector in the country has been constrained by both internal and external factors such as human resource capacity, inadequate fund, implementations of tourism policy, poor marketing strategies etc. A survey was conducted among Ministries and Agencies who are directly and indirectly associated with tourism activities. One hundred (100) respondents were selected by a simple random method. Questionnaire, face to face interviews, discussions and external sources were the main research instruments. The Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analysis the relevant data. It is recommended that the highlighted problems are to be addressed by the appropriate authorities in the country.

**Index Terms:** tourism, human resource, domestic tourism, infrastructures, marketing and policy

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sierra Leone's devastating 11-year rebel war destroyed much of its infrastructure, and left its economy in disarray. In 2004, two years after the end of the war, Sierra Leone asked the Investment Climate (IC) Advisory Services of the World Bank Group to help create a better business and investment climate that would lay a foundation for the country's future economic growth. One focus area was to promote Sierra Leone as a vibrant and desirable location for business, particularly in one of the country's most promising sectors. Tourism in Sierra Leone, as in other developing countries, has become the most dynamic and fastest growing industry. It is an aggregate of many different industries and services, and is influenced by almost every facet of society. Many governments in developing countries including Sierra Leone expect economic and social benefits from tourism development such as:

- a) foreign exchange earning
- b) the development of areas with no other immediate possibilities of expanding economic activity
- c) creation of employment opportunities
- d) a boost for the local production of the goods and services consumed by the tourists
- e) more tax revenue for the State
- f) the integration of national cultures and societies and safeguarding of the national cultural identity from foreign culture influences
- g) reasonable returns on investment in the sector
- h) the promotion of the true image of the country to attract holidaymakers and foreign entrepreneurs as part of the drive to step up international political and economic cooperation
- i) encouraging fair distribution of national income and creating new markets for consumer goods
- j) providing additional infrastructure and amenities that will encourage and support the tourist industry as well as benefit local and national interests

After the declaration of the end of the rebel war in 2002. So many strategies such as incentives for indigenous Sierra Leoneans to import free of tax any goods in respect to tourism development which saw a massive construction of many hotels, restaurants, motels and guest houses in Freetown. As a result of this, there are more of these facilities available now as compared to before the war. The tables below show the contributions of travel and tourism to GDP, employment and growth up to 2014.

**Table 1: describes the economic contribution of travel and tourism. Real 2014 Prices**

Sierra Leone (SLL bn real 2014 prices)	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015E	2025F
1. Visitor exports	165.5	166.0	261.5	246.0	220.0	120.4	121.2	168.9
2. Domestic expenditure	506.2	530.0	571.3	541.0	562.0	548.8	546.7	1015.7

including government individual spending								
3.Internal tourism consumption	761.6	696.0	832.8	786.5	783.5	667.1	666.9	1174.6
4.Purchase by tourism providers including imported goods	-324.1	-295.5	-393.9	-352.3	-346.7	-292.5	-290.6	-510.9
5.Direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP	437.5	400.6	438.9	434.3	436.8	374.6	376.3	663.7
Other final impacts(indirect induced)	216.6	238.7	261.5	258.7	260.2	223.2	204.5	395.4
6.Domestic Supply Chain								
7.Capital Investment	91.8	293.0	408.1	295.6	152.7	142.6	143.0	258.0
8.Government collective spending	33.4	34.5	35.7	42.1	42.0	45.0	46.5	84.6
9.Imported goods from indirect spending	-16.2	-33.3	-93.3	-65.8	-51.3	-50.4	-50.4	-83.7
10.Induced	203.6	214.0	187.8	198.9	180.0	152.2	148.8	282.2
11.Total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP	1,011.6	1,147.4	1,238.6	1,163.8	1,020.5	887.3	888.5	1,601.1
12.Employment Input(000) Direct contribution of Travel and tourism to employment	30.4	27.7	29.4	27.0	24.7	21.4	23.2	31.1
13.Total contribution of travel and tourism to employment	70.8	79.6	83.1	72.0	57.1	49.6	53.3	72.6
14.Other indicators. Expenditure on outbound travel	157.9	135.0	146.6	127.1	130.2	130.2	141.5	232.9

(Source: World Travel and Tourism Council 2015)

**Table 2: Describes the economic contribution of travel and tourism. Nominal 2014 Prices**

Sierra Leone (SLL bn real 2014 prices)	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015E	2025F
1.Visitor exports	89.4	106.6	197.0	207.6	205.6	120.4	132.1	288.5
2.Domestic expenditure including government individual spending	322.1	340.3	430.4	456.3	523.8	546.8	594.9	1,844.5
3.Internal tourism consumption	411.4	447.0	627.5	664.0	729.4	667.1	727.0	2,133.0
4.Purchase by tourism providers including imported goods	-175.1	-189.7	-296.8	-297.4	-322.8	-292.5	-316.8	-927.8
5.Direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP	236.3	257.2	330.7	366.6	406.7	374.6	410.2	1,205.2
Other final impacts(indirect induced)	141.3	153.3	197.0	218.4	242.3	223.2	244.4	718.1
6.Domestic Supply Chain								
7.Capital Investment	49.6	188.1	307.5	249.5	142.2	142.6	155.9	470.3
8.Government collective spending	18.0	22.1	26.9	35.5	39.1	45.0	50.7	153.7
9.Imported goods from indirect spending	-8.8	-21.4	-70.3	-55.5	-47.7	-50.4	-54.9	-152.1
10.Induced	110.0	137.4	141.5	167.9	167.6	152.2	162.2	512.4
11.Total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP	546.5	736.8	933.2	982.4	950.2	887.3	968.5	2,907.6
12.Employment Input(000) Direct contribution of Travel and tourism to employment	30.4	27.7	29.4	27.0	24.7	21.4	23.2	31.7
13.Total contribution of travel and tourism to employment	70.8	79.6	83.1	72.0	57.1	49.6	53.3	72.6
14.Other indicators. Expenditure on outbound travel	85.3	86.7	110.5	107.3	121.3	130.2	154.2	422.9

(Source: World Travel and Tourism Council 2015)

**Table 3: Describes the economic contribution of travel and tourism (Growth)**

Sierra Leone Growth,(%)	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015E	2025F
1.Visitor exports	-20.7	0.3	57.5	-5.9	-10.2	-45.5	0.7	2.7
2.Domestic expenditure including government individual spending	15.0	-11.1	7.8	-5.4	4.1	-2.8	0.2	6.4
3.Internal tourism consumption	4.8	-8.6	18.5	-5.5	-0.4	-14.7	0.0	5.8
4.Purchase by tourism providers including imported goods	8.4	-8.8	33.3	-10.8	-1.6	-15.6	-0.6	5.8
5.Direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP	2.2	-8.4	0.6	-1.1	0.6	-14.2	0.4	5.8
Other final impacts(indirect induced)	2.3	-8.8	0.6	-1.1	0.6	-14.2	0.4	5.8
6.Domestic Supply Chain								
7.Capital Investment	0.5	210.1	30.3	-27.6	-18.3	-6.6	0.3	6.1
8.Government collective spending	12.1	3.3	3.6	17.8	-0.1	7.0	3.4	6.2
9.Imported goods from indirect spending	5.6	0.9	34.6	-8.4	-5.0	-0.4	0.7	5.8
10.Induced	-3.5	5.1	-12.3	5.9	-0.5	-15.5	-2.2	6.6
11.Total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP	0.7	13.4	8.0	-6.0	-12.3	-13.1	0.1	6.1
12.Employment Input(000) Direct contribution of Travel and tourism to employment	2.7	-8.7	6.0	-8.0	-8.5	-13.5	8.3	3.0
13.Total contribution of travel and tourism to employment	0.8	12.0	4.4	-13.3	-20.8	-13.0	7.4	3.1
14.Other indicators. Expenditure on outbound travel	14.6	-14.5	8.6	-13.3	2.5	0.0	8.7	5.1

(Source: World Travel and Tourism Council 2015)

## II. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS

Tourism is a growth industry and its growth potential is likely to continue (NTB 2015). In the context of Sierra Leone, the tourism development is not without its problems. These problems can be identified in broad terms: external and internal.

### 2.1. External Problems

- a) **Cost:** Cost is the primary factor affecting the tourism industry. Domestic travel becomes increasing limited as price of petrol keep increasing. The casual road tripper may decide to stay at home rather than making that trip to Sierra Leone when gas prices are on the rise. As the price of gas increases, the price of flights goes up as well, negatively impacting long-distance and international travel. Additionally, international travel may be negatively affected by high rates of inflation and poor exchange rates. That is why many local people cannot afford to make international travel.
- b) **Weather:** Weather plays an important role in the tourism industry. As most travellers seek warm or mild temperatures with little rain while on vacation, areas that are prone to wet or cold weather do not thrive in the tourism economy. Rainy and cold seasons see decreased amounts of visitors throughout other countries and Sierra Leone is experiencing it too. Similarly, incidences of extreme weather and national disasters such flooding which disturb the capital Freetown in September every year is preventing many travellers from visiting certain areas, as safety becomes a primary concern during these times.
- c) **Safety:** Safety is a primary concern of travellers of all types. Safety becomes particularly important when traveling abroad and to developing countries. Widespread political unrest can cause even the most adventurous tourist to avoid visiting unstable countries. Outbreak of communicable diseases can also hinder tourism industries, especially because returning to home countries can be difficult during outbreaks. For instance, the Ebola outbreak from 2014 to 2015 stopped many people from traveling into the country as many airlines cancelled their flight. Domestically, the crime rate of tourist areas, specifically traffic safety and incidents of petty theft, negatively affect the tourism industry. For theme parks, the safety record can also be a negative factor.
- d) **Access to Amenities** Though every traveller arriving in Sierra Leone are with the expectation of experiencing different types of amenities, the lack of certain amenities could deter even the most adventurous traveller. For instance, easily attained transportation is a major concern for both the budget and the luxury traveller. If public transportation is difficult to understand, unreliable or dangerous, budget tourists travelling abroad may be deterred from visiting Sierra Leone. The same thing goes with private transportation for luxury travellers. Other amenities that affect tourism include clean water,

affordable food and housing, easy visa processes and access to reliable medical care are all difficult to access in Sierra Leone.

**e) Relative Peace in the sub-region.**

The rebel wars in Liberia, Ivory Coast and Guinea have ended and peace is now the order of the day. These countries have now embarked on massive tourism promotion to their colonial countries which have seen an increased in number of tourists visiting these countries more than before the rebel wars.

**2.2. Internal problems**

**a) Inadequate infrastructures**

Infrastructure refers to structures, systems, and facilities serving a country, city, or area, including the services and facilities necessary for its economy to function. It typically characterises technical structures such as roads, bridges, tunnels, water supply, sewers, electrical grids, telecommunications, and so forth, and can be defined as "the physical components of interrelated systems providing commodities and services essential to enable, sustain, or enhance societal living conditions and the development of tourism in a country. All of the above mentioned are challenging issues for the development of tourism in Sierra Leone. The few available ones are inadequate for both domestic and international tourist staying in Sierra Leone.

**b) Weak human resource capacity**

One of the major problems of developing tourism attractions in Sierra Leone is the inadequacy of competent and trained tourism personnel. The staff structure of the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs reveals that not up to two staff with a first degree in tourism management or related subjects. The rest are holders of first degree in Sociology, Culture and Art History. The National Tourist Board has one undergraduate and many other staff with Higher National Diploma and National Diplomas. The training of Tourism manpower will facilitate the development of these identified attractions in which will promote rural development. Thus, tourism attractions are usually located in the rural areas and by developing and promoting the tourism attractions; the rural areas will be also developed. This will hitherto, solve the problem of rural- urban migration of able youths to seek unavailable jobs in the urban centres.

**c) Weak training institutions**

A good number of training institutions in the country offering courses in Tourism and Hospitality Management lacks the human resource in this sector. Milton Margai College of Education and Technology being the leading institution has a Campus for such training but cannot boast of single undergraduate staff in Tourism Management or Hospitality Management. Majority of the staff are Higher National Diploma and National Diploma holders. The same applies to all other smaller institutions that recruit their staff from Milton Margai College of Education and Technology. Another aspect of the weakness lies with inadequate training facilities such as demonstration kitchen, Front office and Housekeeping. As a result of such, students graduating from these institutions lack the practical know how as these equipment used in hotels and other related industries were not made available to them during their training. This has caused a lot of establishments not being able to meet international standards as staff from these institutions cannot perform. This is having a negative impact on the tourism development. No matter if both the domestic and foreign investors can build hundreds of hotels, there is a need for trained and qualified staff to service these facilities. If they are not available, it will negatively affect the level of customer satisfaction which in turn will drive them away to other countries where better services are delivered.

**d) Absence of a national carrier**

Government of Sierra Leone in the past have indulged herself by running a national carrier called Sierra National Airlines irrespective of whether it was profitable or not. The reasons for this are many: government sees the potential of world tourism and wishes to take a slice of its revenue, having a national carrier is a source of pride to a country. Airline generates foreign exchange, create employment and promote tourism. For example, 'airlines owned by governments in other Africa like Kenyan are being seeing as major source of revenue and promote the Kenyan tourism wherever it flies to. The negative impact of Sierra Leone not having one airline has been experienced during the war and recently the Ebola outbreak. Owners of these foreign airlines left the country except for few. This did not only create difficulty in travelling but saw a huge increase in air fares for short distances. For Sierra Leoneans who were to travel to Ghana or within West Africa had to first go to Europe and board another flight to their destination. These foreign airlines operating in Sierra Leone main objective is to maximize profit and pay less attention to the promotion of the country tourism'

**e) No strong linkage among the tourism developers, private sector and training institutions**

Strong linkage among these players had helped in the development of tourism in so many countries. In the case of Sierra Leone, this has not been seeing as it is always government engaging the private sector to develop tourism leaving out the provider of the human resource in the engagement. Whether intentionally no one knows. The government is expected to create an enabling environment for the private sector to invest. With my 14 years lecturing at the Tourism Campus of the Milton Margai College of Education and Technology witnessed a meeting where these three bodies had engaged in strategizing ways to develop tourism in the country. Neither any proprietor wanting to construct a hotel engage the training institution to ascertain the quality of training they should provide to meet the standard of the proposed hotel. The situation in country is like dis-jointed efforts among the key players.

**f) Dominance of foreigners in the tourism sector**

The tourism sector in Sierra Leone is dominated by foreigners ranging from standard restaurants to hotels. The travel agency business is controlled by the Lebanese, airlines by foreigners from different countries and the hotels by the Chinese, Lebanese and other foreigners. The negative impact of this is seeing in monies paid by tourists visiting the country are being leaked out of the country through the personal savings of these foreigners operated in their home countries. Key positions in these establishments are for the foreigners and lower position for Sierra Leoneans. Socially, they had no regard for local staff as many complaints have

been heard of these foreigners abusing the local staff and nothing has been done to put a stop to it. All what is heard ' these people are here to help develop our tourism'

**g) Low income earning of the local people**

Low income of Sierra Leoneans has derived them from not enjoying tourism products in their own country. The cost of tourism products in the country is preventing local people to patronize these tourism facilities as their disposable income is not enough to provide them a plate of standard food in any restaurants in Freetown. Local food stuff like pawpaw, mango, pineapple, etc are not affordable by local people to make them have a fruit after meal. All of these deprivations are as a result of low income earning. There is no way tourism can be developed in any country where the local people do not fully participate.

**h) Lack of strong marketing strategies**

Marketing is being viewed as one of the various ways the country can communicate with consumers in and out of the country about her products. Many developed and developing countries had embarked on selling their products through advertising in the various media. A good number of foreign and local markets are not adequately informed about tourism products in Sierra Leone. Adequate information especially through website is a major challenge for the National Tourist Board, Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the private sectors. Printed brochures that are to be distributed free in all our embassies in the world could also help to sell the country image in terms of tourism.

**i) Lack of tourism policy**

One of the principal objectives of establishing a tourism policy is to guarantee and safeguard the effective standardisation of processes and practices within the respective tourism industry in which the policy is implemented. This standardisation fosters uniformity and consensus regarding practices which can result in increased sustainability and an overall improvement in the quality of the tourism product. Furthermore, an appropriate use of environmental and human resources should take place as a result of the implementation of a tourism policy. As it relates to application and enforcement of Tourism policies, thorough assessment and analysis must take place in order to identify disparities and missteps, an essential step towards maintaining consensus. It is this analysis which allows the development of a tourism policy that is specifically tailored to a territory or region, thereby addressing issues that are indigenous to the respective area targeted. Another advantage of having a sustainable tourism policy is to facilitate government's heightened involvement in the activities of the tourism sector. If policies are implemented, leading to decrees and laws being entered into force, the result should be an increased effectiveness and efficiency of tourism activities. The absence of tourism policy for Sierra Leone poses a challenge for the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs.

**j) Weak linkage with international organisations**

World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is the most widely recognised and the leading international organisation in travel and tourism today. It is a specialised agency of the United Nations. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy and a practical source of tourism know-how. With its headquarters in Madrid, Spain the World Tourism Organisation plays a central and decisive role in promoting development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, with the aim of contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace prosperity and universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Member states are expected to pay yearly subscription to enjoy the benefits from the organisation. Sierra Leone has not been able to meet her commitment to the UNWTO and therefore does not benefit from supports in terms of training, research and projects.

**k) Cost and standard of living**

With the current trends of things in Sierra Leone, increased tax on imported drinks will eventually cause business not to order for such items any longer. As a result, they will disappear from the local market because of low demand. When tourists realise that these items such as beer is not available in the Sierra Leone market and want to enjoy drinking it when they visit the country will eventually select another destination with these basic goods. The money which should have been derived as the result of tourism activities will now be in another destination. Restaurants, guesthouses, hotels will begin to have dropped in visitors which will have negative impact on the industry.

**L) Absent of regional offices**

Regional National Tourist Offices are national tourist organizations founded with a view to promoting and creating the identity, and to enhance the reputation of tourism at regional level. Their mission also includes the planning and implementation of a common strategy and the conception of its promotion, proposal and the performance of promotional activities of mutual interest for all subjects in tourism in the region, country and abroad, as well as raising the overall quality of the whole range of tourist services on offer in the region and country. Such has not been actualised in Sierra Leone as it is only the National tourist Board that is based in Freetown

**III. RESEARCH APPROACH**

**3.1. Research Design**

The research design of this project was a non-experimental or a survey, one which determined the factors that inhibit the development of tourism in Sierra Leone. The researcher gathered extensive data from employees of Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, National Tourist Board, hoteliers, carriers, travel agencies and tour operators. To this end, questionnaire covering the purpose of the research was prepared and used to collect data.

**3.2. Study Area**

The tourism industry is one of the biggest sectors that gives employment to the people of Sierra Leone. The industry comprises owners of hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, airlines, travel agencies, tour operators and tourist handling agents.

**3.3. Sample**

In designing the research study, the researchers took into consideration the need to make inferences from the sample of the population in order to answer the research questions and also meet the research objectives. A sample size of 10 respondents from

each sector ,25 from the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and National Tourist Board and 25 from five training institutions offering courses in tourism and hospitality management from certificate to higher national diploma.

### **3.4. Sampling Technique**

In order to get very accurate result for this study, employees and owners of these tourism establishments who are directly involved in the activities of tourism and hospitality were concerned, thus selected. The simple random sampling method was used to select the sample from the population.

### **3.5. Method of Data Collection**

Many methods were available to gather information, and a wide variety of information sources were identified. The most important issue related to data collection is selecting the most appropriate information or evidence to answer the purpose of the study. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were captured through the use of questionnaires and personal interviews. Secondary data was collected using journals, textbooks, handbooks and manuals, review articles and editorials, as well as published guides. Data on the internet were located using search tools. The World Wide Web was searched for information.

### **3.6. Data Collection Instrument**

In view of the nature of the topic, it was realized that a questionnaire would be the main and the most appropriate instrument to use. Questionnaires are an inexpensive way to gather data from a potentially large number of respondents. The researchers gave a serious thought to the wording of individual questions. This was done to ensure respondents answer objectively to the questions in the questionnaire.

### **3.7. Data Analysis**

The data analysis involved reducing the raw data into a manageable size, developing summaries and applying statistical inferences. Consequently, the following steps were taken to analyse the data for the study. The data were edited to detect and correct, possible errors and omissions that were likely to occur, to ensure consistency across respondents. The data were then coded to enable respondents to be grouped into a limited number of categories. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 17.0) was used to process and analyse the raw data. The Data was presented in tabular form, graphical and narrative forms.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

Despite the multifaceted characteristics and attractions of tourism, the sector is not to develop. The developments of the sector depend purely on the peace and security of the country. The process of developing the sector requires good marketing, market research, interpretation, orientation and promotion if the sector is to be successful. It is perceived that, the sector development depends heavily on intervention of the private sector. This development requires infrastructural support from the public sector such as good transport, communication networks, and public services such as water and electricity supplies.

The foreign tourists especially from Europe could be the backbone of the development of tourism industry in Sierra Leone and thus help bring prosperity to the nation. To continue to increase overseas earnings from tourism means hard work, especially the public, private and training institutions. Thus the proposed strategies aim at a better utilisation of existing capacity, resources and agents in Sierra Leone .In the area of co-operation between the public sector and the private sector and training institutions, the government must create an enabling environment for the private sector in the management of the tourism industry. Whether or not the industry will regain its lost glory depends upon the depth of commitment from the tourism industry, and the lessons learned from the present problems.

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