

NAVIGATING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ECO-POLITICAL DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES: LITERATURE AND DATA EXPLORATION

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ABSTRACT

The world comprises different societies that are competing for development. This depends on the abilities and capabilities of the society to explore the instrument of tourism for development. While some have economic and political resources, others are disenfranchised which stimulate inequality particularly in societies' with tourism opportunities that lack political will for tourism development. However, through economics and political incapability, many societies are eco-politically landlocked. This study delves into the understanding of the basic concept of tourism, effronteries towards tourism development in eco-politically disadvantaged communities and presents descriptive data on selected countries from three continents – Europe, Africa and Asia. We observed from the descriptive analysis that COVID-19 Pandemic negatively caused considerable decline in the international tourism arrivals in all the selected countries. It is generally important that countries should open up to the societies that are suffering from eco-political disadvantage.

Keywords: Tourism, tourism development, neuroscience, neurotourism, virtual reality.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this modern 4.0 industrial society, tourism is enveloping the world's highest aspirations in economics, social and especially in leisure (Stephenson, 2014). It has played a pivotal role in the economic development of nations that placed priority on its development (Cárdenas-García et al., 2019; Prosser, 1994). Dubai, among the Arab Emirates, is a case study of modern tourist destination (Deffner & Liouris, 2010; Stephenson, 2014) where Dubai currently has the world busiest airport due to tourism (Yas, Mardani, Albayati, Lootah, & Streimikiene, 2020). Tourism has intrinsic value for promoting rural development (Saarinen, 2019). As well, the economic value-oriented in terms of employment in the critical areas to human life makes tourism a unique industry. These critical areas consist of formidable transportation agencies, expansion in restaurants and accelerating modern shopping malls. Others include activation of local markets, exportation of local products, production of attractive souvenirs, expansion of hotel and home-stay accommodations and the creation of artistic impressions for sale to tourists (Al-Nafjan, Aldayel & Kharrat, 2023; Prakoso, Pradipto, Roychansyah, & Nugraha, 2020). Not only does it promote economic benefits, it equally increases traveling education in the areas of visiting new locations, familiarization into other people's cultures and traditions, as well as, promoting integration across communities and countries.

Despite these great benefits of tourism, in most communities, COVID-19 brought new perceptions to the tourism industry. It was predicted by the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2020) that global international tourist arrivals would fall within the range of 60% and 80% in 2020 (cited in Zeqiri et al. 2020). Also, the state of tourism shows that many communities are eco-politically disadvantaged (World Bank, 2023). This eco-political disadvantage may be life-long when ethnicity and religious differences find themselves in the power resource allocation. In other words, most towns and villages that have the advantage of tourism establishment as an instrument for community, social and physical development are economically and politically landlocked. This invariably is cutting-edge of the contributions of tourism to growth and welfare in most communities in the developing countries. This paper intends to critique the concept of tourism, identify effronteries against tourism development and analyze descriptively, how Europe, Africa and Asia reacts to tourism development between 2019 and 2020 using World Bank development indicators of international tourist arrivals.

2.0 UNDERSTANDING TOURISM CONCEPTS

2.1 Tourism: What it is

The definition of tourism has taken different dimensions overtime because it is multidisciplinary and connected with many activities such as business, culture and leisure (Camilleri, 2018). While tourists were referred to as visitors (at the United Nations Conference on International Travel and Tourism (UNCITT) in 1963, it is common to combine travel with tourism. Although all travels have purpose(s) (Camilleri, 2018; Cooper, 2008; Holloway & Taylor, 2006), tourism is a situation where an individual leaves his living environment to become a visitor in a new environment of choice. This led to developing a broader definition by Tourism Society as; “tourism is the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work” (cited in Camilleri 2018 p.2) for leisure and or business activities.

Although this broader definition of tourism looks more mature and acceptable, it does not classify tourism into domestic and international engagement. Thus, the meaning of tourism underwent several changes with passage of time. On the one hand, at the International Conference on Leisure Recreation Tourism (ICLRT) in 1981, argues that; “tourism may be defined in terms of particular activities, selected by choice, and undertaken outside the home environment. Tourism may or may not involve overnight stay away from home” (cited in Camilleri, 2018). This opinion of ICLRT defines domestic or national tourism, that is, tourism taking place within the same country. On the other hand, ten years after, in 1991, United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) argues that “tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside of their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business or other purposes” (UNWTO, 1991 cited in Camilleri, 2018). This definition of UNWTO suggests international tourism, which can be inbound or outbound.

Despite these new ideas of tourism, a new position comes up which is about the virtual reality (VR) of tourism arising from technological innovation. The proponent of VR argues that tourism has been influenced by virtual technology. In other words, VR is an application that finds itself in promoting architecture, video games, tourism, entertainment industry, education

and other economic sectors with relevance. This VR proponent negates the earlier definition, demanding that tourism definition should incorporate VR (Guerra et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, putting these definitions and ideas together, it is clear to argue that tourism is an economic activity, an industry, that provides leisure after work or during people's vacation. It organizes every blossoming economic activity into a common economic pot (i.e. industry) with or without knowing of its processes. Tourism is multi and interdisciplinary in nature (Cardodo et al., 2024). Example of these economic activities is tertiary education. Tertiary education tourism drives education stakeholders from the north, south, west and east of the country and around the world. As the population grows in a tourist destination, other economic activities would spring up, thereby expanding production, growth (Cárdenas-García et al. 2015), social, cultural and technology.

2.2 Neuroscience and Neurotourism Relevance

In the recent development, researchers in tourism have diversified into neurotourism (Cardoso et al., 2024; Abeer Al-Nafjan et al., 2023; Njegovanovic & Zagreb, 2020), which is becoming a significant aspect of neuroscience. Neuroscience is a unique aspect of medicine discipline, or in general, a field of science that actually deals with the nervous system of living things. In other words, neuroscience studies the three components of the nervous system, i.e. the brain, nerves and spinal cord. Originally, psychologists and the field of medicine were engaged in studying the three brain components because it deals with human emotions and the human cognitive domain. However, neuroscience study has been widening to neuro-economics, neuro-marketing and neuro-tourism which becomes multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. It integrates various fields such as molecular biology, anatomy, physiology, and computer science to comprehend how the nervous system works and control the human body for effective decision taking.

Although tourism is as old as human history, in recent times, researchers have descended to the use of neuroscience methodologies to investigate the perception of tourists in the tourist destinations. This procedure of investigating tourists' emotions, reactions, feelings and perceptions about a tourist destination is known as neurotourism. While the psychologists earlier played a pivotal role in neuroscience research, investigating the workings of the brain in relation to human development is currently achieved through digital apparatus (Sonuç & İşçen, 2022). At this juncture, Al-Nafjan, Aldayel and Kharrat (2023) argue that "Neuro-tourism is the application of neuroscience in tourism to improve marketing methods of the tourism industry by analyzing the brain activities of tourists". Since tourism activity is about people's leisure which connects with the brain (i.e. thoughts and emotions), then, it is a way of adapting methods of neuroscience in tourism activities to yield required human welfare, growth and development. Why it is important to use the methodology of neuroscience in tourism was argued by Al-Nafjan et al. (2023) that neuro analysis provides output accuracy regarding the "conscious and unconscious emotions" of the tourists. They stressed that the method accommodates neuromarketing in three cognizant areas: eye-tracking, brain-computer interface (BCI) and galvanic skin response.

2.3 Understanding Eco-Political Disadvantaged Society

Every society requires steady development where communities have a diversity of opportunities. However, some societies are more disadvantaged than the other due to economic and political exclusions. As it is, this concept, eco-political disadvantage society, from our perception, represents a society where people living in a community, nation or country have little or no opportunity for common wealth sharing compared to others. In other words, they are landlocked in economics, social integration and politically disenfranchised in development. The World Bank (2023) argues that in every country, there are deprivations across social groups especially lagging in economic, political and social life participations. They lack economic and political wills to grow the society they belong to. As such, the power resource (Brady, Blome & Kleider (2017) fails to distribute welfare packages to such disadvantaged communities because the communities have no representative at the corridor of power during resource sharing. Generally, this is known as structural exclusion (World Bank, 2023). Recently, the world development direction on developing communities and societies lies on social inclusion and sustainability. Evidence shows that “one third of the global population is at risk of exclusion from services, access to markets and participation in cultural and political spaces” (World Bank, 2023).

3.0 EFFRONTERIES AGAINST STARTUP TOURISM IN ECO-POLITICAL DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

The strength of a community developer is to harness the basic resources available in the community such as abilities and capabilities. Although communities differ in culture and ideology, communities that are attempting to establish a tourism industry have diverse challenges. There is an argument that tourism is a “naïve and unrealistic concept” (Prakoso et al., 2020; Blackstock, 2005) because of failures that usually arise from planning implementation. These failures might be categorised under major headings: operational, structural, cultural (Reindrawati1, 2022) and technological know-how. A clear picture of the challenges is presented in Figure 1



Figure 1: Tourism Start-up Challenges

3.1 Operational Challenge

Previous study emphasized that operational challenge encompasses the “lack of access to information, lack of efficient decision-making structures, lack of discussion platforms, lack of knowledge, and lack of transparency and accountability” (Reindrawati, 2022, p.1). Information or awareness of establishing a tourism industry in a community is elusive to people in the rural communities’ as well as their leaders due to poor knowledge and level of education. Also, the unawareness, most times, arises from the lack of political power resource. In other words, lack of political participation by members of the community could cause operational disequilibrium. Poor education is the cause of low political participation () in most rural communities where tourism opportunities reside. Whereas, if previous economic evidence consider education as agent for growth (Barro, 2001, Aghion, Boustan, Hoxby & Vandenbussche, 2009; Al-Hattami & Al-Ahdal, 2016; Onwuka, 2012; Obasuyi & Rasiah, 2020; Paduka, & Zainuddin, n.d.), the lacking of knowledge among the community members in the eco-political disadvantage communities is a strong challenge to tourism development in landlocked environments.

3.2 Structural Challenge

Unlike the assertion of Arthur Lewis in 1966 that poor people are responsible for their poverty which brought about structural theory of poverty, the structural factors could inhibit tourism establishment in tourist advantage communities. One of the factors is the state of corruption of the community members. In communities where educated members are greedy, implementing tourism policy becomes a serious challenge. Although there was a belief that corruption has a positive effect on some macroeconomic variables (Leff 1964), corruption is understood to have a direct negative impact on economic activities (Mauro, 1995; Myint, 2000). Diversion of funds coming from the government towards tourism establishment is possible at all levels of tourism development. For example, Odo (2015) argues that the Nigerian government is aware of the evils of corruption in every bit of government activities, thereby putting in place the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) agencies. Communities with a high rate of saboteurs through corruption are liable to deter their tourism development.

Reindrawati (2022) clearly states structural factors to include weak community development, lack of access to tourism planning experts, lack of education of the people, poor tourism budget, governance focus and unsuitable government policy. For example, communities with high tourism attraction often face government policy challenges regarding resource distribution such as regional development policy (Magradze, 2020). Also, since economists believe in scarcity (Fisher, 1979; Elisha, 2021; Adesina, 2017), the budget allocation, many times, did not support the resources for all communities at equal level and times. Hence, many communities would wait, particularly when the political power and participation of such communities are weak.

3.3 Community Cultural Challenge

Cultural tourism has been recognized for promoting tourism development. Simply, interest in culture, history and artistic impression has promoted cultural tourism (Magradze, 2020). Despite an increase in cultural tourism, challenges exist. Previous findings showcase history of colonialism, awareness of the community, mistrust, unequal distribution of costs and benefits, conflict of interests and power disparities (Reindrawati, 2022; Adebayo & Butcher, 2021;

Wanner & Pröbstl-Haider, 2019; Wanner & Pröbstl-Haider, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2018; Kala & Bagri, 2018) as cultural challenges to tourism development.

3.4 Technological Know-How Challenge

There are three major factors that affect economic growth – human capital, physical capital and technological progress (Cameron, 1998; Sulaiman, Bala, Tijani, Waziri, & Maji, 2015). While human and physical capitals are required in tourism development, the industrial 4.0 technology is changing all aspects of human activities. We understand that tourism is about leisure. In so doing, getting required technology to operate tourism in communities might pose a considerable challenge (Van Nuenen & Scarles, 2021; Lee, Chen, Wu, & Xing, 2021). For example, Afsahhosseini (2020) argues that information and communication technology (ICT) helps to search, evaluate, locate, use, manage, present and communicate information with family and friends when at tourist destinations. The ICT instrument includes internet accessibility, mobile network and computer centre that would promote establishment of a sustainable tourism industry. In Adelina Zeqiri et al. (2020), they discuss waves of technology that triggers sporadic growth in the tourism destinations. They include “reality media (such as virtual reality [VR] and augmented reality [AR])” (van Nuenen & Scarles, 2021, p.119). Hence, in the recent decade, there is a paradigm shift from hospitality-to-hospitality industry 4.0. The “hospitality industry 4.0 aims to create more personalized and digitalized services for consumers (i.e. the tourists)” (Zeqiri, Dahmani, & Youssef, 2020, p.58). It is specifically to avoid mass tourism but allow individualized experiences and sustainability of tourism (Ben Youssef & Zeqiri, 2020). These technological instruments, when they are not available at proposed tourist destinations, might pose difficulty in tourism establishment in eco-political disadvantaged communities.

4.0 EUROPE, AFRICA AND ASIA TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: COUNTRIES' TOURISM COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS USING DATA EVIDENCE

This section employs World Bank statistical data to provide descriptive analysis on the development of Tourism in selected European, African and Asian countries in terms of arrivals. It presents the analysis between 2019 and 2020 international tourist arrivals. The available data for countries' selected are presented. 2019 serves as the country's experience of tourism prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020. Post COVID-19 Pandemic would have been presented but data are not available. The future descriptive analysis might present the post COVID-19 Pandemic experience.

4.1 Overview of European Tourism Development

Europe is one of the continents that covers at least 2% of the earth surface and is composed of forty-five countries as at 2023. It has about 10,180,000 square km and has a population of 747.8 million as of 2021. According to World Development Indicators (2023), the list of ten (10) selected countries in Europe on international arrivals in 2019 and 2020 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: 2019-2020 Tourism Development: Some Selected European Countries on International Arrivals: Volume, Change and % Change

Country	International tourist arrivals (2019)	International tourist arrivals (2020)	Volume of Decrease (Change)	% Change
	(in million)	(in million)		
Spain	126,170,000	36410000	-89760000	-71.1
Turkey	51,747,000	15971000	-35776000	-69.1
Italy	95,399,000	38419000	-56980000	-59.7
Germany	39,563,000	12449000	-27114000	-68.5
Greece	34,005,000	7406000	-26599000	-78.2
Austria	31,884,000	15091000	-16793000	-52.7
Portugal	17,283,000	4208000	-13075000	-75.7
UK	40,857,000	11101000	-29756000	-72.8
Netherlands	20,129,000	7265000	-12864000	-63.9
France	217,877,000	117109000	-100768000	-46.3

Source: Collated from World Bank Development Indicators (2023)

The year 2020 witnessed a global shut down in economic and business activities due to COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 restricted people from traveling for leisure, business and other activities of interest. When comparing the international tourist arrivals in 2019 and 2020, countries in Europe including Greece, Portugal, United Kingdom (UK) and Spain witnessed a significant decline of Tourist arrivals by 78.2%, 75.7%, 72.8% and 71.1% respectively. However, France has the lowest volume of the decline representing 46%. Also, the decline of tourist arrivals in Austria and Italy was moderate with 52.7% and 59.7% respectively. Netherlands (63.9%), Germany (68.5%) and Turkey (69.1%) witnessed a significant decrease in tourist arrivals.

4.2 Overview of African Tourism Development

History of African tourism cannot easily be traced to the past. However, the recent development of tourism began in the 1960s through 1970s. The investment into the industry in Africa has been at varying degrees. Hence, Africa started investing in the tourism markets since the late 1960s and 1970s which are at different levels of tourism development. What has been assisting these countries is the Butler's 1980 Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) model (Jones, 2012). The TALC model demonstrates a cycle-recycle pattern of tourism development which exhibits six stages of investment in tourism (Gore, Borde, & Desai, 2023; Iliev, 2019). The six stages comprise exploration, involvement, development, consolidation and stagnation. The sixth shows that, at the point of saturation, there could be rejuvenation or decline. According to Iliev (2019), the adapted TALC model to Butler (1980) which African countries are adapting is presented in Figure 2.

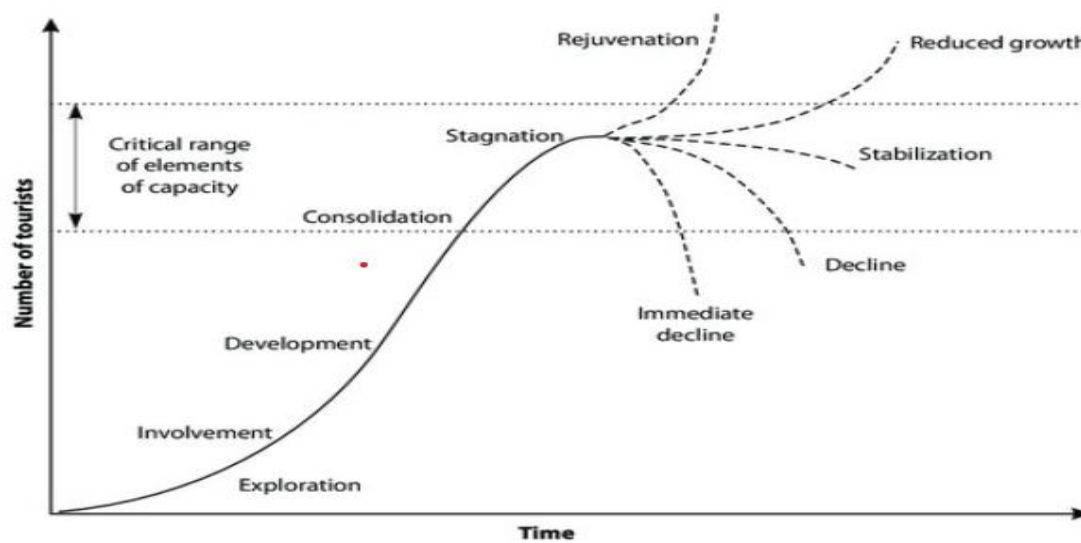


Figure 2: Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) Cited in Iliev (2019) model as adapted according to Butler (1980).

The Iliev (2019) explains further how reduced growth and immediate decline occur in the circle.

Thus, according to World Development Indicators (2023), the list of ten (10) selected countries in Africa on international arrivals between 2019 and 2020 is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: 2019-2020 Tourism Development: Some Selected African Countries on International Arrivals in Volume, Change and % Change

Country	International tourist arrivals (2019)	International tourist arrivals (2020)	Volume of Decrease (Change)	% Change
	(in million)	(in million)		
Burkina Faso	143,000	67000	-76000	-53.1
Cote D'voire	2,070,000	668000	-1402000	-67.7
Ethiopia	812,000	518000	-294000	-36.2
Gambia	620,000	246000	-374000	-60.3
Mauritius	1,418,000	316000	-1102000	-77.7151
Namibia	1,651,000	187100	-1463900	-88.7
Togo	876,000	482000	-394000	-45.0
South Africa	14,797,000	3886600	-10910400	-73.7
Zambia	1,266,000	502000	-764000	-60.4
Zimbabwe	2,294,000	639000	-1655000	-72.2

Source: Collated from World Bank Development Indicators (2023)

In the case of the African continent, COVID-19 pandemic equally and negatively impacted on tourism development. When comparing the international tourist arrivals in 2019 and 2020 in ten selected African countries, Namibia (88.7%), Mauritius (77.7%), South Africa (73.7%) and Zimbabwe (72.2%) witnessed the most significant decrease in international tourist arrivals. However, Ethiopia and Togo have the volume of decrease below the median class representing 36.2% and 45.0% respectively. Also, the decline of tourist arrivals in Burkina Faso is moderate with a 53.7% decrease while Cote D'ivoire, Zambia and Gambia experienced significant fall of international tourist arrivals with 67.7%, 60.4% and 60.3% respectively. Although Nigeria is not part of the selected countries for Africa due to unavailable data for 2019 and 2020, the Statista (2022) database showed that Nigeria has India and Niger most inbound tourists in 2021. This was followed by China, United States and Benin that have 4%, 3% and 2% respectively of inbound tourists in 2021.

4.3 Overview of Asian Tourism Development

Asia, as the largest world's continent, roughly covers one-third of the land surface of Earth. Specifically, the total area of Asia, with an exclusion of the island of New Guinea, amounts to about 44,614,000 square km, which is equivalent to 17,226,200 square miles. Asia is the world's most populous continent, with roughly 60% of the world population (Britannica, 2024; National Geographic, 2024). In recent times, Asian countries are coming up to be impactful in the world of tourism as reflected in Malaysia and Dubai.

Using the World Development Indicators (2023) data, the list of ten (10) selected countries in Asia on international arrivals in 2019 and 2020 is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Tourism Development: Some Selected Asian Countries on International Arrivals in Volume, Change and % Change

Country	International tourist arrivals (2019) (in million)	International tourist arrivals (2020) (in million)	Volume of Decrease (Change)	% Change
China	162,538,000	30,402,000	-132136000	-81.3
Singapore	19,116,000	2742000	-16374000	-85.7
Japan	31,881,000	4115799.8	-27765200	-87.1
Indonesia	16,107,000	4053000	-12054000	-74.8
Malaysia	26,101,000	4333000	-21768000	-83.4
Philippines	8,261,000	1483000	-6778000	-82.1
Cambodia	6,611,000	1306000	-5305000	-80.3
Russia	24,419,000	6359000	-18060000	-74.0
Sri Lanka	2,027,000	540000	-1487000	-73.4
United Arab Emirates	25,282,000	8084000	-17,198,000	-68.0

Source: Collated from World Bank Development Indicators (2023)

The selected Asian countries have a large percentage decrease in international tourist arrivals compared to Europe and Africa. The cause could be dropped down to COVID-19 pandemic that originated from the continent. Out of the three continents; China alone had 162,538,000 international tourist arrivals in 2019 but decreased to 30,402,000 in 2020 representing 81.3% decrease. Other Asian countries that have above 80% decrease in international tourist arrivals in 2020 include Singapore (85.7%), Japan (87.1%), Malaysia (83.4%), Philippines (82.1%) and Cambodia (80.3%). Others include Indonesia (74.8%), Russia (74.0%) and Sri Lanka (73.4%). Nevertheless, the United Arab Emirates with 25,282,000 inbound tourist arrivals in 2019 decreased by 68.0% in 2020 which would have arisen from the notable control of COVID-19 policy during the startup of the pandemic.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This paper, for clarification purposes, does not provide empirical analysis on tourism development in the eco-politically disadvantaged societies. Instead, the paper provides literature perspectives on some basic concepts of tourism development including neurotourism. It further presents the descriptive data analysis of the 2019-2020 international tourism arrivals in three fundamental regions – Europe, Africa and Asia. The countries of these regions were selected based on data availability obtained from the World Bank Development Indicators (WBDI, 2023). The descriptive outcomes show that all the countries selected in the three regions had a sharp decrease of international arrivals in 2020. Among all, Asia countries were mostly vulnerable to the decrease of tourist arrivals in 2020. For example, China has the largest international tourist arrivals in Asia, particularly having 162 million international arrivals in 2019 but decreased to 30.41 million in 2020 (WBDI, 2023). This was due to the origination of COVID-19 pandemic in China which had significant on inbound tourist arrivals. Going by the percentage, about 60% of the countries sampled in Asia have an above 80% decline of international tourist arrivals.

As for Europe, Greece, the ancient city, had the highest decline of inbound tourism among the sampled European countries while France has the lowest volume of decline in inbound tourism 46%. Although African countries are vulnerable to absolute poverty, the percentage decrease is lower than Europe and Asia. However, it is not suitable for the growth of the economy of these selected African countries. Besides the issue of COVID-19 effect, the African countries have little attraction of tourist destinations due to poor development in the sub-Saharan Africa countries.

Generally, the implication for the sampled countries is the decline in their economic growth as reflected in Table 4. Thus, the affected countries should, indeed, use push and pull methods to establish tourist industries in eco-political disadvantaged communities to raise the international tourist arrivals. Communities' participation is the key to stimulate tourism development, particularly in the developing countries, by investing in physical infrastructure (Beeton, 2006).

Consequently, it is scientifically necessary to empirically investigate the countries selected in this paper. The investigation should delve into the impact of tourism development on growth, employment, and consumption. A case study of a community without a tourism industry should

be investigated to understand the extent at which a community is eco-political disadvantaged through neurotourism analysis.

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