
**TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY POLICY STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES
AND EFFECTIVENESS – LESSONS FOR MALAWI**

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Abstract

This paper discusses tourism and hospitality policy strengths and weaknesses in Malawi and the efforts taken to address and enhance its effectiveness to contribute to the successful growth of the industry in the country. It is argued that to realise the maximum benefits from tourism, scholars advocate for a robust and practical approach to tourism and hospitality policy development and implementation embracing the support of all stakeholders. The findings may help policy-makers and other stakeholders in Malawi to appreciate the importance of embracing strategies that can inform the process of tourism and hospitality policy development and implementation and be well equipped to successfully develop and implement such policies and strategies towards a vibrant tourism and hospitality industry in Malawi. This paper utilised a document analytical approach and reviewed relevant literature on various national policies governing tourism and hospitality has been undertaken, gaining insights into how they are formulated and implemented in various parts of the world and the challenges met in the process. The information gathered has informed the status of the Malawi National Policy formulation and implementation since the period the sector was elevated as one of the key economic priority areas in alleviating poverty. The paper, however, recommends further research to a thoroughly investigate the tourism policies in the country in order to gain insights into how core challenges facing the tourism and hospitality are being tackled across all levels.

Keywords: Tourism and Hospitality Policy; Stakeholders; Policy Development and Implementation, Policy Objectives

Introduction

The past few decades have witnessed a dramatic growing attention to tourism as one of the most important avenues for socio-economic growth and environmental development for many countries world over (Africa Tourism Monitor, 2018; Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2016). Several countries have switched into a development drive to nurture the industry as it has demonstrated to be a panacea for job creation, delivering economic and social benefits to the communities (Africa Tourism Monitor, 2018; World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2017). However, the question boggling many minds is not about the number of activities supporting socio-economic or environmental development, rather, what kind of policies are in place to support the industry and how the policy implementation frameworks are embraced by each country (Adu-Ampong, 2018b; Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2016). Many African countries including Malawi, have

generally a poor policy implementation disposition, and therefore tourism “faces real trouble of becoming a fashionable phrase that everyone hails and adores, but nobody cares to actualize its ideals” (Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2016, p.171).

To realise the maximum benefits accruing from tourism, many scholars advocate for a robust and practical approach to tourism policy development and implementation that has the support of all stakeholders (Adu-Ampong, 2017; Bello, Lovelock & Carr, 2016; Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2016; Dodds, 2007; Sharpley, 2009; Whitford & Ruhanen, 2010). Since the advent of the twenty-first century, many researchers have decried the poor implementation of tourism policies in Africa and other parts of the world (Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2016; Truong, 2013; Singh, 2002; Yüksel, Yüksel, & Culha, 2012). In this regard, Sharpley (2009) encourage that whatever the case, tourism needs to be an integral aspect of development policy especially in the least developed countries, for example in Africa. On the other hand, a wide range of extant studies on tourism policy vastly take their comfort in the context of tourism industry, masking the visibility of hospitality as a unique field of research almost outside this realm. This is because hospitality has traditionally been treated as a component of tourism under which it flourishes. Secondly, most of the research and debate on tourism policy have tilted heavily towards sustainability, sustainable development and sustainable tourism (Adu-Ampong & Kimbu, 2019; Black & Cobbinah, 2016; Dodds, 2007; Degarege & Lovelock, 2018; Maxim, 2015; Sharpley, 2009; Whitford & Ruhanen, 2010; Zahra, 2010). This apparent bias towards such concepts does not give much latitude to examine deeply other important areas of tourism and hospitality policy development and implementation in many countries including Malawi.

Notwithstanding several challenges, including the growing and volatile shocks from terrorism such as the recent DustD2 Hotel attack in Kenya, political instability in some African countries, to health pandemics such as, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014, the recent Ethiopian Airlines plane crash and natural disasters, such as devastating water floods caused by Tropical Cyclone IDAI that swept across some parts of the Southern Africa including Malawi, Africa continues to receive more tourist arrivals (Africa Tourism Monitor, 2015; Africa News, 2019a; 2019b; BBC News, 2019; WTTC, 2017). For instance, in 2016 tourist arrivals hit a record of 62.9 million representing 5.1% of the 1.239 billion global tourist arrivals (Africa Tourism Monitor, 2018). International tourism receipts totalled US\$ 1,225 billion in 2016. With US\$ 36.2 billion in receipts, the continent registered 3.0% of the global market share. However, this was a decrease of 7.7% registered in 2015 (Africa Tourism Monitor, 2018). Nevertheless, there is an upsurge of new arrivals from developing economies in Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, all in search of the cultural heritage, astonishing wildlife and scenic landscapes exclusive to Africa (Africa Tourism Monitor, 2015). Despite the positive developments witnessed in the last few years, the continent still faces several bottlenecks to the industry’s growth and development. One of the key constraints limiting the effectiveness of the industry to play a greater role in the national economies and hence, the development and transformation of the continent, is lack of effective tourism and hospitality policies governing the sector (Africa Tourism Monitor, 2015).

This paper discusses tourism and hospitality policy strengths and weaknesses in Malawi and the efforts that have been taken to address and enhance its effectiveness to contribute to the successful growth of the industry in the country. The findings of this study could therefore help policy-makers and other stakeholders in Malawi to appreciate the importance of embracing strategies that can inform the process of hospitality policy development and implementation and be well equipped to successfully develop and implement such policies and strategies towards a vibrant tourism and hospitality industry in Malawi. This analysis is organized in five sections focusing on the importance of hospitality industry in general, tourism and hospitality development in Malawi; the definition and objectives of tourism and hospitality policy and its benefits; tourism and hospitality policy development and implementation in Malawi; the role of various stakeholders, effectiveness and implementation challenges. It also presents the study methodology, findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Tourism and Hospitality Policy

To-date, there is lack of a universally accepted definition of the term policy, mainly due to its wider conceptual dimensions (Whitford & Ruhanen, 2010; Yüksel, Yüksel, & Culha, 2012; Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2016). However, Cobbinah and Darkwah (2016, p.174;) and Yüksel *et al.* (2012, p.515), define the tourism policy as:

“... a set of regulations, rules, guidelines, directives, and development/promotion objectives and strategies that provide a framework within which the collective and individual decisions directly affecting long-term tourism development and the daily activities within a destination are taken.”

Relatively, Yüksel *et al.* (2012) clarify that government remains the main custodian of the tourism policy, which outlines its vision, goals and objectives, and describes what it is trying to achieve, how it wants to achieve it and how it is integrated with other disciplines. In this case, government fully owns the policy and acts as an operator/entrepreneur, regulator, planner, promoter, coordinator, and educator (Truong, 2013). Truong cautions that this approach can stifle the growth of the industry in the long run if some of the roles are not delegated to other bodies or institutions in the country to support the industry.

Tourism and Hospitality Policy Objectives

Scott (2011) explains that tourism and hospitality policy objectives reflect government's responsibilities and ideology. Yüksel *et al.* (2012) and Cobbinah & Darkwah (2016) look at the holistic picture and argue that the overall objective of the policy is to allow integration of the economic, political, cultural, intellectual and environmental benefits of tourism cohesively with people, destinations and countries in order to improve the universal quality of life and to engender peace and prosperity. More importantly, Yüksel *et al.* (2012) submit that this is a long-term purpose aimed at achieving 'sound development of the tourism sector; create new capacity; increase service quality; diversify marketing channels; protect cultural assets; make natural capital sustainable; and bring forth varieties of tourism in compliance with comparative

advantages' (p.518). On the other hand, Zahra (2010) looks at the regulatory and supportive functionality of a policy. Above all, the tourism and hospitality policy act as a platform for ensuring that there is benefits to host communities, while minimizing the negative consequences from tourist activities taking place in the destination (Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2016).

Tourism and Hospitality Policy Formulation and Implementation - Successes and Challenges

Cobbinah and Darkwah (2016) and (Scott (2011) suggest that the impetus of continuous and future success in the tourism and hospitality industry lies in the level of commitment by various stakeholders toward effective policy and the accompanying strategic planning processes. Maxim (2015) lists stakeholder cooperation and partnership; strategies and plans for tourism development; good public transport accessibility; funding and other resources; political will; strong community support to develop tourism in their area; knowledge and understanding of the tourism industry; and examples of best practices as some of the success factors. Furthermore, Scott (2011) summarized the roles of the policy aims and roles in the country in the success of the policy (See also: Bello *et al.*, 2016; Black & Cobbinah, 2016; Dodds, 2007; Maxim, 2015; Truong, 2013; Yüksel *et al.*, 2012; Whitford & Ruhanen, 2010; Zahra, 2010).

Drawing a policy requires excellent leadership acumen from government, in order to design policies that will satisfy all beneficiaries (Singh, 2002). Scott (2011) believes that since government carries out many responsibilities, different players within the government machinery must be involved in the policy development and implementation. Adu-Ampong (2017) advocates for proper collaboration at the institutional level in tourism planning and development. Yüksel *et al.* (2012) advocates for greater levels of political commitment and communication by the succeeding government officials. In addition, Dodds (2007) calls for an integrated and collaborative approach to implementing a tourism and hospitality policy and examining all institutional and political frameworks of local government and how they impact on the policy implementation process. For this to work effectively, Adu-Ampong explores three key issues central to a robust tourism and hospitality policy. These key issues include the vision of tourism development shared among all stakeholders, collaboration and coordination within the public sector and between the public and private sectors, and finally examination of factors that either facilitate or derail collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders.

A number of studies reveal several challenges associated with tourism and hospitality policy implementation and delivery. Yüksel *et al.* (2012) cite inadequate technology, low finances, limited human resources, poor public environmental awareness, lack of information and lack of skills to collect data and lack of consistency in the tourism policy, with continuing changes of policy as successive governments are ushered into power. Dodds (2007) criticise the prioritization of economic focus over long term social and environmental concerns as the major challenge in policy implementation. Furthermore, Maxim (2015) mentions that in practice there is still a huge inconsistency between policy endorsements and the actual implementation especially because tourism and hospitality policies are more multifaceted than other industries.

Cobbinah and Darkwah (2016) lament weak policy implementation direction, corruption and poor governance especially in Africa. Additionally, Sharpley (2009) argues that the absence of appropriate tourism planning and policy derails the industry's development. He adds that tourism is only viewed as a valuable stream of government revenue without corresponding re-investment in the sector, while its infrastructural developments are heaped on international aid and high levels of taxation limiting the ability or incentive for local operators to invest.

Enhancement of Policy Effectiveness

In order to enhance tourism and hospitality policy effectiveness, Yüksel *et al.* (2012) call for appropriate communication integrated into all policy or program phases to garner strong public support for long-term priorities and make it almost impossible for politicians to abandon them. Whitford and Ruhanen (2010) state that policy formulation and implementation need to consider diversity and provide the mechanisms and capacity-building to facilitate long-term sustainable tourism and hospitality. Truong (2013) further advises that the local tourism and hospitality policies should move out of the neoliberal paradigm that supports industry's growth and benefits for the already privileged and established service providers at the expense of the poor communities. This is perhaps one reason why Bello *et al.* (2016) recommends the need for both greater advocacy of community participation, and incorporation of specific strategies to facilitate community participation suited to developing country contexts as far as implementable policies are concerned. Cobbinah and Darkwah (2016) also underscore that in order to make Africa's future tourism more robust and vibrant; the direction of any tourism and hospitality policy should be built on the planning function and political goals. Dodds (2007) further suggests that there should be proper integration and cooperation with all government sectors to garner support at different levels and must be integrated within and permeate all policy frameworks.

Tourism and Hospitality Policy Formulation and Implementation Stakeholders

Some scholars (Bello, *et al.*, 2016; Black & Cobbinah, 2016; Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2016; Whitford & Ruhanen, 2010; Zahra, 2010) mention the involvement of a number of stakeholders in tourism and policy delivery. A well categorized summary of stakeholders was drawn by Cañizares, Canalejo and Tabales (2016). They classified stakeholders into local population or host community; tourists, who are the users of the tourism and hospitality experience; tourism promoters, business owners, or providers comprising a heterogeneous set of providers such as accommodation, catering, transport, intermediation, cultural and leisure activities, that can operate either in collaboration or independently; and finally, public agencies and bodies which include local governments, government ministries, foundations or associations, academia, and others. Whitford and Ruhanen (2010) observe that since the public sector represents the entire population, it has the requisite legislative framework for action; it is impartial and should be able to take a longer-term view. Truong (2013) concludes that the role of governments is an outcome of their tourism policy formulation and implementation, set in a wider policy agenda with individual and institutional arrangements, values, powers, and ideologies influencing tourism policies.

Methodology

This paper was qualitative in nature adopting a document analytical approach (Adu-Ampong, 2018a, 2018b; Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2016). A review of relevant and related literature on tourism and hospitality and corresponding national policies was undertaken. The study utilised secondary data for it was easy to link it to theory about the concept of tourism and hospitality policy, gaining insights into how it is formulated and implemented in various parts of the world and the challenges met in the process. The review of the documents was helpful to establish the trends of tourism and hospitality development in Malawi and appreciate the rate of success of tourism policies and plans, as well as providing a context for identifying key stakeholders involved in tourism planning and management in the country. The secondary data sources included historical archived government documents, such as publicly available government and regional reports, national tourism development plans and growth and development strategic plans, used in guiding and managing the tourism and hospitality industry in Malawi. The plan, used in this study, is described as a future course of action, while a policy is broadly a set of rules and regulations of ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ regarding a particular sector or industry or firm (Cobbinah & Darkwah, 2016).

Malawi in Brief

Malawi, one of the potential destinations in Africa, is dubbed as “The Warm Heart of Africa” in the tourism circles, because of her perceived gentle, warm and friendly people (Visit Malawi, 2016). The total population officially stands at 17.5 million according to the 2018 population and housing census report (GoM, 2018). The country is landlocked with a surface area of 118,484 km² (land: 94,080 km², water: 24,404 km) (Briggs, 2016; Department of Tourism [DoT], 2015). Geographically, the country is situated in the south-eastern Africa, neatly squeezed between *Zambia* to the north-west (the border stretches over 837 km), *Tanzania* to the north-east (475 km) and *Mozambique* to the south, south-west and south-east (1,569 km) (Briggs, 2016; DoT, 2017). The country is divided into three administrative regions, North, Central and South, and has a total of 28 administrative districts (Briggs, 2016).

Malawi is one of the least developed countries in the world with a GDP of USD 6.404 billion in 2015 (World Bank, 2017). Agriculture is the main source of revenue. Malawi sits amid a vibrant travel and tourism region that is growing rapidly and increasing its world market share (Visit Malawi, 2016). Sharing boundaries with countries that already have vibrant and thriving tourism sectors,

Malawi possesses a relatively underdeveloped diversity of natural, cultural, and man-made attractions. The country has the challenge to embrace effective policies that would enable public and private sector alignment to achieve a viable niche as an economically productive, multi-experience destination (World Bank, 2010). Christie, Fernandes, Messerli, and Twining-Ward (2013) projected that the tourism sector would likely grow at a rate of 6 -7% per annum over the next decade. However, currently Malawi receives no more than 1% of the tourism arrivals to Africa and is only just beginning to witness increased investment in quality hotels. In fact,

WTTC (2015) and World Bank (2017) statistics show that there has been a steady increase of international tourist arrivals to Malawi from almost 438, 000 in 2005 to an estimated 849,000 in 2015.

From the tourism economic impact analysis by WTTC (2017), the direct contribution of travel & tourism to Malawi's GDP was found to be MWK138,039.0 million (USD194.9 million) in 2016 representing 3.4% of total GDP). The amount is projected to rise by 4.9% pa, from 2017-2027, to MWK231,772.0 million (USD327.2 million), 3.4% of total GDP in 2027. The tourism industry depends on natural resources for its development and sustainability. Indigenous Malawians are of Bantu origin, which includes the Nyanja, Yao, Lomwe and Ngonde as the major tribes. The Chewa are the most recognised tribal community and Chichewa is an official national language along with English, both which are part of the national education system and are spoken in many parts of the country (DoT, 2015).

Development of Tourism and Hospitality in Malawi

In Malawi, a sub-Saharan country, tourism is a relatively new phenomenon in the national economic development planning. The country has been a predominantly agriculture-based economy since independence in 1964. Five decades later, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II (MGDS II) 2011 - 2016 became the central operational medium-term strategy for the country, and its major thrust was to create wealth through sustainable economic growth and infrastructure development as a means of achieving poverty reduction (GoM, 2012). The main objective of the strategy was to maximise the contribution to economic growth through the potential sectors of growth, among them tourism. Upon the expiry of the MGDS II, the Malawi Government recently formulated and launched another blueprint, dubbed MDGS III (GoM, 2017). Both strategy white papers have highlighted the Malawi Government's vision in which tourism development was given a priority status as another potential alternative industry to boost the country's economy. The recent version is emphasizing on the theme of "*Building a Productive, Competitive and Resilient Nation*" (GoM, 2017, p.10), following a number of socio-economic challenges that eroded the effective implementation of the MDGS II.

Historically, after independence in 1964, Malawi included tourism in its development plans mainly because other African countries in the region were aggressively promoting tourism (Industrial Development Corporation [IDC], 2012; Magombo, Rogerson, & Rogerson, 2017). Within the first five years, the country's hotel position improved albeit lack of long-term development, mainly due to poor standards of existing hotel accommodation, which were below acceptable international standards at that time (Magombo *et al.*, 2017).

Department of Information (1970) reports that government drew up a 3-pronged approach to develop the hotel sector. First, it established the Malawi Development Corporation (MDC) mandated to carry out an extensive hotel development programme and encourage private investors to enter the industry. Secondly, government created the Division of Tourism in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Hotels Board and the Tourism Board (Department of

Information, 1970). Each of these bodies had different mandates (Magombo *et al.*, 2017). However, at this point, no star grading or rating system was yet adopted. Although, the amended Hotel and Tourism Act (Chapter 50:1) (2005) attempted to describe the first hotels minimum star grading requirements, it is not clear if enforcement of these requirements was done until 2010. The third trajectory was government's effort to encourage private investment in the hotel industry. Consequently, more private investors successfully negotiated with government for the establishment of more hotels in different parts of the country (Department of Information, 1970; Star, 1977).

Magombo *et al.* (2017) narrate that the dawn of democracy in the 1990s saw positive changes in the nature of hotel and accommodation developments in the country. Focus moved from larger units to small-scale accommodation developments. By 2010, about 1000 units were licensed (World Bank, 2010), with many others unaccounted for due to limited capacity at the ministry. Some accommodation units scattered along the lakeshore, which became a source of conflict between the government and the local entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, these appealed to the budget tourists and became very popular in the mid-1990s. recently, there has been significant interest from foreign investors in the hotel industry from within and beyond Africa (Magombo *et al.*, 2017). This indicates an emergence of a competitive hotel environment in the Malawi and African at large.

The importance of tourism to Malawi cannot be underestimated (Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II [MGDS II], 2011-2016; National Export Strategy [NES], 2013-2018; Tourism Strategic Plan Revision, 2008; World Bank, 2010). However, Malawi continues to struggle in its efforts to position tourism as a sector that can contribute more to economic growth (IDC, 2012; GoM, 2008; 2012b; World Bank, 2010). Malawi is endowed with natural resources, which form the backbone of its tourist product. Most of its tourism attractions, and activities are centered around rural areas where the majority of the country's poor are based. This suggests that the sector can make significant contribution towards uplifting the socio-economic status of the rural communities, through local tourism policies (Truong, 2013). The MGDS II 2011-2016 for Malawi, recognizes that much as tourism is more linked to integrated rural development, it is also directly dependent on other priority areas. These include agriculture and food Security; irrigation and water development; transport and infrastructure development; energy generation and supply and management of nutritional disorders and HIV/AIDS in the country (GoM, 2012a). These observations signify the need for a clear tourism and hospitality policy agenda in order to inform the growth of tourism as a tool for sustainable economic growth (Dodds, 2007).

Notwithstanding, the Department of Tourism within the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism in Malawi, has been given the responsibility to develop and promote tourism in a manner that would yield significant economic benefits to the people of the country. It is pleasing to note that the department is working to improve the business environment for new and established businesses, address infrastructure development and strengthen public-private sector dialogue. There are several major investment opportunities in the tourism and hospitality sector in the pipeline meant to bolster the industry's image and economic status of the country (Malawi

Investment and Trade Centre [MITC], 2016). Some of the notable hotel projects in the offing are: two hotels to be constructed to the tune of US\$10 million in Blantyre City and along the Shores of Lake Malawi by a locally based investor, Countrywide Group of Companies; and a US\$2.6 billion Cape Maclear Resort, a 3-in-1 project comprising a resort, an international airport and a business hub promoted by the Cape Maclear Hotel and Golf Resort Limited. This projected will be located at Cape Maclear along Lake Malawi, offering the most prime beaches and crystal-clear waters on Lake Malawi (MITC, 2016). This historical analysis, as echoed by Adu-Ampong (2018a, 2018b), brings to light how both the pre- and post-democratic contexts in Malawi have moulded the present and future agenda of the tourism and hospitality development in the country.

Analysis of the Malawi National Tourism Policy (NTP)

Dubbed as a Zero-Draft policy document awaiting cabinet approval, the Malawi National Tourism Policy (NTP) presents the direction of the Government of Malawi towards transforming the tourism sector into a major source of foreign exchange, economic growth, job creation and tool for poverty reduction. The policy has outlined the key challenges that hinder the full exploitation of the sector's potential and provides possible remedies for addressing them. It presents a number of outcomes to be achieved through six policy priority areas and specifies the institutional arrangements for its successful implementation. The policy has clear linkages to several policies but the coverage of the other policies in this policy document is restricted to those that depict gaps and pose challenges to the development of the tourism sector (GoM, 2015).

The policy incorporates mechanisms for effective coordination and close collaboration among stakeholders, similar to Cañizares' *et al.* (2016) views. It also highlights key priority areas and strategies for developing the sector and provide a common platform and direction to all international, national and local players on how to effectively develop and implement tourism programs and activities, in line with Cobbinah and Darkwah (2016). However, the main objective of the NTP is to optimize contribution of tourism to national income, employment and foreign exchange earnings as already echoed in this discourse above (GoM, 2015). Consistent with Truong (2013), the policy encourages the creation of an enabling environment for private sector involvement in the industry, community participation and enhancing the role of the public sector in facilitating sustainable tourism development.

Despite this growth potential, the Zero-draft NTP says that a number of challenges hinder the full exploitation of the Tourism sector's potential (GoM, 2015).

First, there is inadequate and relatively uncoordinated marketing of Malawi's tourism products and services: There is low international visibility due to limited destination marketing, ineffective institutional arrangement and poor packaging and presentation. Malawians also lack awareness of local attractions. *Poor service quality:* This is due to limited supply of skilled labour, lack of high-quality training institutions and outdated curriculum, low literacy levels, limited number of specialist investors and low absorption of trained personnel which adversely

affects the competitiveness of the destination. *Secondly, there is inadequate supporting infrastructure and services.* Some local and international access roads are below standard. Accommodation facilities and purpose-built cultural infrastructure are inadequate. Air transport and access to major tourist areas and utility supply is costly and poor. There is lack of direct long-haul flights and regional and domestic air connectivity is poor and costly. In addition, ground facilities for transfers including shuttles, taxis, luxury coaches, ships/ water vessels are costly and unreliable.

Thirdly, there is underdeveloped product: Malawi's diversity of natural, cultural and man-made attractions is generally underdeveloped. Further, wildlife population is also low due to poaching, encroachment, weak law enforcement and environmental degradation of areas with outstanding natural beauty. Finally, most tourist structures/facilities are of sub-standard level. *Fourth is Low investment:* Zoning of land in strategic sites for tourism investment is insufficient due to weak co-ordination and information flow as well as conflicting interests amongst stakeholders. There also exist risks of community-investor conflicts. In addition, fluctuating, inconsistent, unclear and uncompetitive investment incentives also discourage local and foreign direct investment. Moreover, the current incentives structure is quantitative rather than qualitative and disadvantages the SMEs that represent the majority operators in Malawi.

Fifthly, is weak Tourism Regulatory and Institutional Framework: The tourism sector has had no policy until 2015; hence, the tourism law has been weak in regulating the industry? Further, the law has not been comprehensive enough to bring all tourism related services and facilities under the statutory power of a semi-autonomous regulatory body. The institutional arrangement has also been weak and ineffective, with the government undertaking operational activities such as licensing, grading and destination marketing. These activities ought to be rather housed in a joint public-private tourism body responsible for regulation and promotion. Moreover, the sector lacks an effective stakeholder dialogue platform. *Sixth is Weak Tourism Information Base:* This includes limitations in data gathering, analytical and storage capacity to support and inform decision-making in the sector. Apparently, existing staff also lack dedication to tourism statistics. Tourism issues have also not been integrated at all planning levels across sectors. The situation has been exacerbated by the lack of an effective cross-sect oral public-private dialogue platform.

The NTP has highlighted a number of efforts have been made and some of these are currently on-going to address these challenges above. Malawi Government, through the Ministry of Trade Industry and Tourism, is in the process of finalizing the Malawi 2020 Tourism development strategy which is being supported by the Flemish Government. The five-year strategic plan aims to provide relevant recommendations for addressing the challenges. Further, the Ministry is also developing the domestic Tourism Marketing Strategy which aims at boosting domestic tourism in Malawi. The government is also constructing access roads to tourist sites, improving airports and airstrips.

The draft policy has incorporated several strong areas setting the right tone for driving and guiding the development of the industry (GoM, 2015). Among the strong areas of focus that the NTP has included are following:

- Policy priority areas and policy statements guiding these areas:
 1. Improving and Strengthening the Institutional and Regulatory Framework
 2. Developing, Building and Strengthening Capacities
 3. Product Development and Improvement
 4. Destination Awareness and Brand Positioning
 5. Accessibility to Malawi as a destination
 6. Mainstreaming/integrating crosscutting issues in sectorial strategies and activities
- Linkages with other relevant policies, legislations and international instruments
- Implementation arrangements
- Institutional arrangements
- Involvement of various stakeholders such government
- Monitoring and evaluation

As noted earlier on by several scholars, challenges in policy formulation and implementation as raised by both Cobbinah and Darkwah (2016) and (Scott (2011), number of success factors that lead to proper development and implementation of tourism are suggested by Maxim (2015), ought to be addressed. It is yet to be seen if Malawi will likely put such aspects in place in order to make the Zero-Draft NTP a reality once the Cabinet has finally approved the blueprint. Sharpley (2009) emphasizes that poor or inappropriate governance acts as a major barrier to tourism and its financial exploitation by government, which needs to appropriately check for the NTP to be successful. Interestingly, the NTP has suggested an institutional platform which will act as a mechanism for the actual implementation of the policy to be carried out by different stakeholders at national, district and local levels, and its coordination will be done centrally. The institutional set-up and coordination structure will be as depicted in Figure 2. It yet remains to be seen how these policy statements will be operational zed in order to yield the results that will enable the industry to grow and bring the much-needed economic benefit for the entire country.

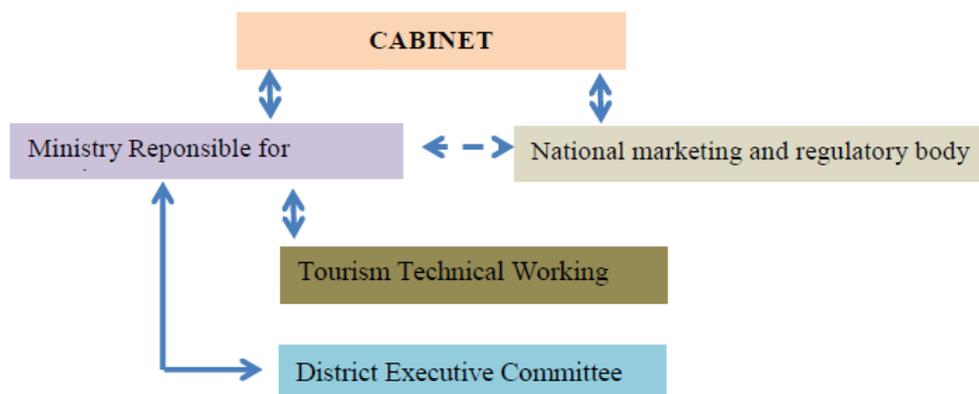


Figure 1.0: - Proposed institutional set-up and coordination structure in the NTP of Malawi. (Source: GoM, 2015)

Conclusion

This paper has explored that tourism in Malawi, like many African countries, has been operating within a weak or no policy implementation framework from independence days to post-democracy in the 1990s, up to date. Although Malawi's tourism plans have been well-crafted focusing on sustainable aspects of tourism, and directed towards achieving local development, destination marketing and improvement of accessibility, tourism product development and improvement, their implementation has been marred by a number of challenges including lack of stakeholder engagement in the previous attempts. Given the limited community involvement in tourism, weak distribution of economic benefits and high levels of international arrivals, a reassessment of current policy implementation strategies towards an improved programme that involves local communities and other stakeholders such as the private sector to deal with these issues, and deliver sustainable outcomes is tenable.

Because of the obvious obscurity of hospitality area within the discourse of tourism policy development and implementation, it is clear that issues affecting directly the hospitality sector may not be fully appreciated in any tourism policy debate. This paper therefore proposes deliberate efforts that should be put in place to ensure that there is a clear policy direction that will deal with hospitality matters in their own right. However, there are limitations associated with this study. Firstly, since this paper was purely based on document analysis, there is need to further explore the views and opinions of stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industry verification of the findings by, via in-depth interviews or focus group discussions in order to uncover more validate the researcher's perceptions associated with the strengths, weaknesses, effectiveness of the development and implementation of the NTP in Malawi.

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