

# Cultural Tourism Potential and its Development Challenges in Harari Region, Ethiopia



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## Abstract

The Harari Region offers a rich cultural experience, including well-known historical sites, vibrant festivals, traditional arts, and unique culinary offerings, attracting tourists worldwide. The objective of this study was to assess cultural tourism potential and development challenges in Harari Region. A descriptive research design employed both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to describe the existing phenomena. The study employed probability and non-probability sampling techniques to obtain a representative sample and targeted groups. The respondents to this study were culture and tourism office experts, tourist guides, Museum Staff guides, Souvenir Shop sellers, and local communities. Qualitative data is collected through semi-structured interviews and observation, while quantitative data is collected through questionnaires. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 20 using frequency, percentage, and charts, using both primary and secondary data sources. The study finding reveals that despite the region's rich cultural heritage, there are development challenges like inadequate infrastructure, insufficient promotional efforts, lack of awareness, poor handling systems, limited documentation, financial constraints, and urban pressures. The findings suggest that stakeholders should utilize cultural tourism properly while avoiding development challenges to support the Harari region and Ethiopia's development efforts.

**Keywords:** Tourism; Culture; Potential; Development challenges; Harari region; Ethiopia.

## 1. Introduction

Cultural tourism is any movement that involves people traveling to different places for pilgrimages, study tours, performing arts, festivals, site visits, and the study of nature, folklore, art, and other cultural subjects. Additionally, with a focus on community customs and way of life, cultural tourism investigates local arts, traditions, customs, and historical heritage. Knowledge, art, morals, beliefs, laws, customs, and social values are all parts of culture, which is a multifaceted entity that shapes social, religious, and cultural institutions (Kirom and Wayan, 2016).

International tourism is undoubtedly based on culture, which has also helped it flourish and enabled different societies and groups within societies to contribute to its advancement (Robinson and Picard, 2011). Cultural tourism is an important feature of the tourism industry, providing unique experiences that attract tourists involved in exploring the cultural heritage and traditions of one region. Culture widely comprehends the spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society, including art, literature, lifestyles, value systems, traditions, and beliefs, supporting sustainable local development and cultural revitalization (UNESCO, 2004; Zhang, 2011). Cultural tourism plays a crucial role in safeguarding cultural heritage and promoting economic development in numerous regions across the globe. It includes all the activities tourists can engage in to learn about what makes a place special its people, way of life, history, and arts as well as the tourism industry's interpretation and catering to that culture (Murzyn-Kupisz, 2012; Whyte et al., 2012). According to Cole et al. (2014) and (Zhang, 2011), cultural tourism involves visiting a country or region to learn about its culture through historical sites, museums, festivals, and customs. It involves exploring the potential of unique cultural resources to attract visitors and boost a region's economy by displaying these resources. Furthermore, Cultural tourism can facilitate cultural exchange, generate income, and preserve the area's heritage. However, it can also lead to issues like commercialization, cultural

commodification, crowding, loss of authenticity, and negative impacts on nearby communities and habitats (UNESCO, 2006).

In addition, cultural tourism is a type of tourism that involves experiencing a region's culture, history, traditions, arts, and lifestyle (Angelini *et al.*, 2021). Pearce and Pabel (2015), noted that travelers continue to promote global tourism, and advocating for a less harmful approach allays their responsibility. Furthermore, cultural tourism claims to be less harmful and more beneficial to culture, attracting people who are careful and sensitive in their behavior (Smiths, 2004).

Pleijte and Pedroli (2021), argue, cultural tourism creates understanding and promotes diverse customs and traditions. It also fosters job creation in local economies by attracting individuals from various sectors, such as hospitality, transportation, retail, and entertainment, contributing to economic growth. Davis (2020), confirmed that cultural tourism helps generate employment opportunities globally, contributing 40% of total tourism revenues. Currently, technological advancements have increased the demand for innovative cultural experiences, attracting more travelers to explore and appreciate cultural treasures. Therefore, by using advanced technology to preserve cultural heritage and safeguard historical sites, traditional arts, crafts, festivals, and indigenous knowledge systems, we can attract visitors to areas with reduced economic challenges (Bloom and Reenen, 2013; Gursoy, 2017).

The Harari Region, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Ethiopia, is a culturally rich area with an amalgam of traditions, architecture, and religious practices. It has main attractions include the ancient city of Harar, known for its unique houses, narrow alleyways, and vibrant markets. The region also hosts the annual Shuwaliid festival, registered with UNESCO in 2023 (Aberha, 2018; Ahmad, 2015). This study is important for identifying distinctive cultural assets that can draw visitors and bring in money for the neighborhood. Additionally, it draws attention to the development obstacles that the area must overcome to realize the potential of cultural tourism, including inadequate marketing plans, infrastructure, and constraints. Along with promoting responsible tourism practices, that benefit both visitors and host communities while protecting the area's natural and cultural heritage for future generations, it clarifies the social and environmental effects of tourism activities on nearby communities and natural resources. The development of sustainable tourism, economic expansion, cultural preservation, and community well-being are all significantly impacted by this study.

Ethiopia is a rich cultural hub, encompassing relics, palaces, obelisks, sacred places, and customs. The country has many churches and monasteries, medieval castles, obelisks, the ancient city of Axum, Harar, and diverse ethnic traditions that provide insight into Ethiopia's past and shape its national identity. These treasures are significant historical, aesthetic, and anthropological treasures (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2015). Moreover, Ethiopia has become the first African country to have sixteen world heritage sites inscribed by UNESCO, but there is no high attention on the conservation of cultural resources, and there is a lack of skills and initiatives to promote cultural tourism awareness (Ali, 2016; Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2015).

This research aims to explore the potential of cultural tourism in the Harari region and identify the challenges it faces in its development. The region has diverse attractions, including historical sites, traditional crafts, festivals, and performances, which can boost economic growth and create employment opportunities.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

In its broadest sense, culture offers a range of highly mobile, plentiful, and potentially unlimited symbolic and material resources. The rapid global change poses a significant threat to the preservation of our cultural heritage, as many aspects of our traditions and histories are at risk of being lost due to physical destruction or declining knowledge retention (Holtorf, 2018). Ethiopia possesses a wealth of cultural elements with great potential. Unfortunately, many of these remarkable and extensive cultural assets are not well maintained due to management issues (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2015).

The researchers have diverse perspectives on cultural tourism, which involves traveling to experience and engage with a destination's culture, heritage, arts, and traditions through activities that help to interact with local communities. According to Richards and Wilson (2007), the role of cultural tourism is to drive economic growth and foster creativity within communities, highlighting its substantial effect. Uslu *et al.* (2023), highlight the importance of cultural tourism in promoting sustainable development and preserving cultural heritage, emphasizing the need for authenticity and community involvement.

Cole *et al.* (2014), emphasize the significance of cultural tourism in fostering social and cultural comprehension among tourists and their host communities. The authors highlight the potential for transformative experiences through cultural encounters and assert that cultural tourism can play a role in promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual admiration. Shahzadal (2016), also noted the economic impact of cultural tourism, highlighting its potential to drive local economic growth and suggesting strategies to maximize positive outcomes.

However, Proschel (2012) criticizes cultural tourism for commodification and commercialization, causing a loss of authenticity and staged experiences. He advocates for responsible and sustainable approaches to cultural tourism development. Therefore, various challenges are faced utilizing the potential, such as inadequate marketing strategies, a lack of tourism professionals at the managerial level, weak regulatory frameworks, industry quality issues, and inadequate infrastructure for tourism and support services (Teshome, 2018; Thakur, 2016). Moreover, lack of promotion, skilled manpower, government attention, cultural diffusion, uneven distribution of benefits, and lack of awareness were its development challenges (Ali, 2016; Belay, 2022).

Ethiopia, despite its abundant natural and cultural tourism resources, lacks sufficient research to identify challenges and opportunities in the sector. The researchers believe that the utilization of these resources is challenging, and conservation management skills are lacking. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness and awareness creation activities about cultural tourism.

Cultural tourism potential in Harari Region includes traditional music, dance performances, culinary experiences, and religious celebrations. The region is known for skilled artisans and stunning architecture. Despite these potentials, the region faces several developmental challenges including low government attention, cultural instability, uneven benefits distribution, lack of awareness, and inadequate promotion (Asante, 2008; Lykowska, 2011).

The Harari National Regional State in Ethiopia has identified a significant gap in understanding the challenges and potentials of cultural tourism. Major issues include government neglect, cultural instability, unequal benefits distribution among stakeholders, and a lack of awareness about the city's cultural attractions. Therefore, this research was aimed at exploring cultural tourism potential and development Challenges in Harari Region, Ethiopia.

## 1.2. Research Questions

1. What are the major cultural tourism development potentials in the Harari Region?
2. What are the challenges that face the development of cultural tourism in the study area?

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Description of the Study Area

The Harari Region, located in Eastern Ethiopia, derives its name from the Harari people and is situated about 530 km away from Addis Ababa, the capital city of the country. Geographically, the region can be pinpointed between 9°11'49"N and 9°24'42"E coordinates. The Harari Region's economy predominantly revolves around agriculture, trade, and small-scale industries, which play a crucial role in supporting the livelihoods of numerous residents. With Islam being the dominant religion, the region's culture and society are greatly influenced by Islamic teachings and practices. The landscape of the Harari Region is adorned with numerous mosques and religious schools, serving as centers for Islamic education and worship. According to the 2007 Census, the Harari Region had a total population of 183,415, with 99,368 individuals (accounting for 54.18%) residing in urban areas. The high population density in the region, with approximately 589.05 individuals per square kilometer, indicates a significant concentration of inhabitants within the region's limited geographical area.

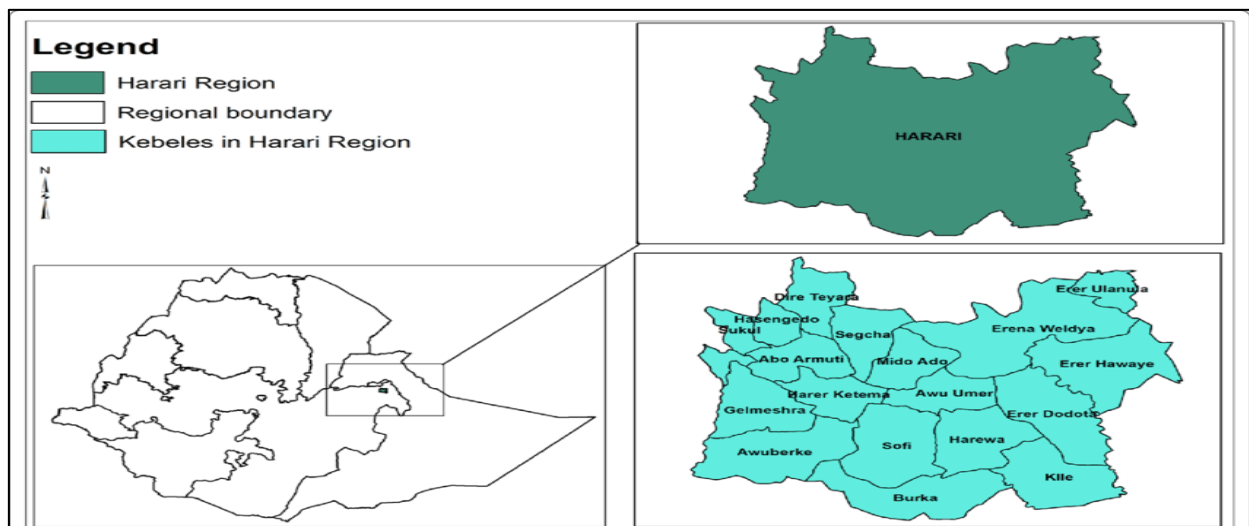


Figure-1. Map of Harari Region

Source: Endashaw Esayas, 2020

### 2.2. Research Design

The study used a cross-sectional descriptive research design to examine the potential and challenges to the development of cultural tourism. To determine the prevalence of certain characteristics or behaviors within a community, data are collected from that population at a specific point in time using a cross-sectional descriptive research design. In this case, the researchers used this methodology to examine the potential of a region or destination for cultural tourism and identify any challenges that could hinder its development.

### 2.3. Research Approach

A mixed research approach was used in this study, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data was gathered through a questionnaire survey, and qualitative data was gathered through field observations, interviews, and document analysis. Participants included a wide range of stakeholders, such as professionals, tourism experts, tour guides, local community leaders, and souvenir shops. Using a sequential explanatory mixed research design, qualitative data was analyzed after quantitative data was combined for a thorough analysis. This tactic attempted to lessen the drawbacks of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

### 2.4. Target Population

In the study, both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were utilized. A non-probability sampling method was employed to select 12 interviewees. Three interviewees were chosen from the Harari Region Culture and Tourism office, two from the Harar City Culture and Tourism office, two from the Tourist Guide Association, two from museum guides, two from community leaders, and one tourism professional from Haramaya University. These individuals were purposefully selected based on their proximity and experience to ensure qualitative data collection. On the other hand, a probability sampling method was used to select a respondent for quantitative data collection. The respondent was selected from various sources including the Harari Region Culture and Tourism Office, the Harar City Culture and Tourism Office, the tourist guide association, museum guides, and souvenir shops. To determine sample size, Yamane's (1967) formula was used:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

**Where: n:** The sample size

**N:** The population size

**e:** The level of precision or sampling error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} = \frac{150}{1 + 150(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{150}{1.375} = 109.090 \approx 109$$

Therefore, 109 samples for each target group were determined proportionally and 12 interviewees were selected as:

Table-1. Sample proportion

No	Sample Frame/Target Groups for Questionnaires	Total Population	Sample Size	
1.	Harari Region Culture and Tourism Office	25	18	
2.	Harar City Culture and Tourism Office	13	10	
3.	Tourist Guide Association	18	13	
4.	Museum Staff Guides	Harar National Museum	8	6
		Sherif Museum	6	4
		Artur Rambo Arthur Museum	6	4
		Harari Cultural Center Museum	4	3
5.	Souvenir Shops	30	22	
6.	Local community (purposely selected)	40	29	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>109</b>	
Sample Frame for Interviewees Selection			Selected for Interview	
1.	Harari region culture and tourism office		3	
2.	Harar City Culture and Tourism Office		2	
3.	Museum guides		2	
4.	Community leaders		2	
5.	Tourism professional from Haramaya University		1	
6.	Tourist Guide		2	
	<b>Total</b>		<b>12</b>	

Source: Author, 2024

### 2.5. Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data was obtained by utilizing self-administered structured questionnaires as the primary method of data collection. These questionnaires were carefully crafted to extract precise information from the designated target groups. Furthermore, qualitative data was acquired through in-depth open-ended, and semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for thorough exploration and clarification, allowing participants to articulate their personal thoughts, ambitions, and emotions comprehensively (Fichter and Beucker, 2012). Closed-ended questions were employed to investigate individuals' reactions regarding specific pre-determined factors, whereas open-ended questions proved particularly valuable in elucidating the rationale behind a respondent's perspective on a particular matter (Fichter and Beucker, 2012). The study gathered secondary data from various sources, including books, articles, reports, brochures, folders, magazines, and plans, to examine cultural tourism and development. It used personal observation, document analysis, and comparison of findings from different sources to ensure validity and reliability. Observations were conducted using checklists, while document analysis included both published and unpublished documents. The study's validity was further strengthened by comparing findings from various sources, including web pages, academic journals, articles, commercial publications, and annual action plans.

### 2.6. Data Analysis Method

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather and analyze data. The qualitative approach involved non-numerical data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The quantitative approach involved collecting numerical data and analyzing it using statistical methods. The data was coded and entered into SPSS version 20, and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Thematic analysis was used to examine the qualitative data, with detailed notes taken during interviews translated into English and

coded to identify recurring themes and patterns related to tourism potential and development challenges. The quantitative data was integrated based on similarity and alignment with research objectives and questions. The study aimed to verify, describe, analyze, and interpret the data using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

### 3. Analysis and Discussion

#### 3.1. Demographic Characteristics

Table-2. Demographic characteristics

Demographic Variable		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	75	68.8
	Female	34	31.2
	Total	109	100
Age	18-23	20	18.3
	24-29	45	41.3
	30-35	30	27.5
	36-40	14	12.8
	Above 41	-	-
	Total	109	100
Educational Background	Primary Education	6	5.5
	Secondary Education	18	16.5
	Diploma	30	27.5
	Bachelor Degree	55	50.5
	Others	-	-
	Total	109	100

Source: Author, 2024

The gender distribution of the study's participants is 68.8% male and 31.2 percent female, indicating a higher proportion of male respondents than female respondents. Cultural or societal barriers that prevent women from engaging in outdoor activities could explain this difference in response. The participants' age distribution has been divided into four age groups: those between the ages of 24 and 29, those between the ages of 30 and 35, those between the ages of 18 and 23, and those between the ages of 36 and 40. This suggests that younger adults participate at a higher rate. Furthermore, 50.5% of the respondents, or more than half of the total, had a bachelor's degree. With 27.5 percent of respondents having a diploma, this group was well represented. Participants with a primary education made up at least 5 points5 percent of the sample, while those with a secondary education qualification made up 18 points5 percent.

#### 3.2. Primary Data Gathered from the Culture and Tourism Office

Table-3. Conservation and management of cultural attraction

Do you think cultural tourism attractions of the city are conserved and well managed?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	22	78.6
	No	6	21.4
	Total	28	100.0

Source: Own survey, 2024

According to Table 3, 78.6% of respondents concur that cultural attractions have the potential to be preserved and improved, while 21.6% believe that additional conservation and management efforts are necessary to bring these attractions even closer to their potential.

Table-4. Offices' role in managing and preserving cultural attractions

Do you think the city's culture and tourism office plays an active role in managing and preserving cultural tourism attractions?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	17	60.7
	No	11	39.3
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own Survey, 2024

According to Table 4, although some positive efforts have been made, efforts, there is still room for improvement in the effective preservation conservation, and management of cultural tourist attractions. Of the respondents, surveyed, 60.7% agreed with the conservation preservation, and management of these attractions, while 39.3% disagreed.

**Table-5.** Training and awareness for tourism organizations

Do you give any awareness and training to tourism organizations?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	23	82.1
	No	5	17.9
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own survey, 2024

Table 5 shows that 82.1% of participants rated the culture and tourism office's efforts positively, indicating a significant impact on the development of cultural tourist attractions. However, 17.9% responded negatively. Therefore, it's recommended to maintain and strengthen these efforts to further enhance the status of cultural attractions.

**Table-6.** The team that works on the conservation of cultural tourism attractions

Does the office have a specific team that works on the conservation of cultural tourism attractions?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	9	32.1
	No	19	67.9
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own survey, 2024

The data shows that 67.9% of respondents did not have a dedicated team for the conservation and preservation of cultural tourism attractions, while 32.1% did. This highlights the importance of having a dedicated team for the effective evaluation assessment and maintenance of these attractions, as this is crucial for vital to their preservation conservation, and management.

**Table-6.** Culture and tourism office employees' field of study

Are you certified in culture and tourism management and related fields?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	27	96.4
	No	1	3.6
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own survey, 2024

The table shows that 96.4% of respondents have certifications in culture and tourism management, indicating a significant opportunity for effective management and active participation in the field's development, with development of the field, while the remaining 3.6% do not possess such certifications.

**Table-6.** The place to display the community's culture

Is there any place in the city that displays the local community's culture?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	22	78.6
	No	6	21.4
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own survey, 2024

Table 6 shows that 78.6% of respondents believe that the city has a place to showcase local culture, with cultural nightclubs and souvenir shops being the most suitable venues. However, 21.4% said no, "no," indicating a potential challenge in finding suitable places like venues such as museums to showcase these cultures.

### 3.3. Primary Data Collected from Primary Data Gathered from Harar City and Its Surrounding Guides Association Tourist Information Centre

**Table-7.** The office is providing support to the culture and tourism department

Do you get any support from the culture and tourism office?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	21	75.0
	No	7	25.0
	Total	28	100.0

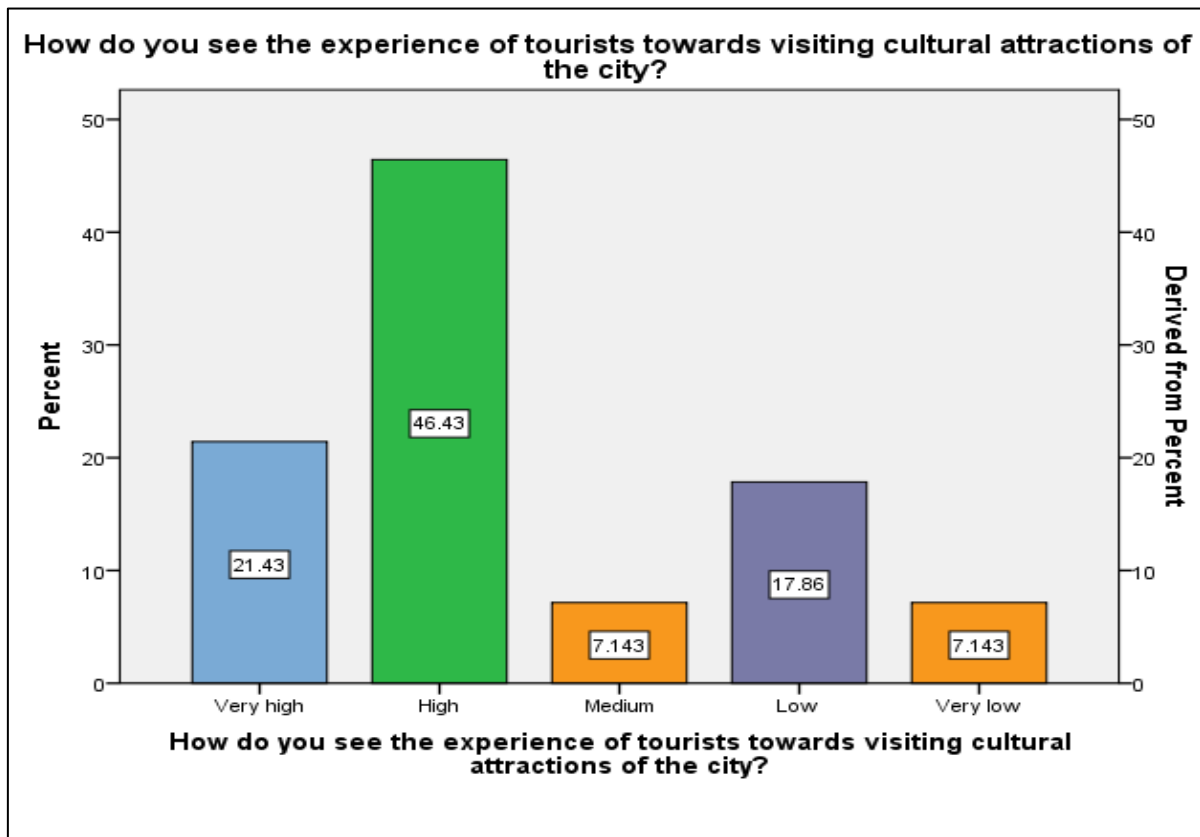
Source: own survey, 2024

The table reveals significant disparity differences in government support for tourism organizations. 75% of respondents received support from the culture and tourism office, Tourism Office, suggesting a more active involvement from this office. However, 25% of respondents reported receiving no government support, indicating a lack of government involvement in commitment to supporting tourism organizations. This suggests a need for increased government involvement in supporting tourism initiatives.

**Table-8.** Experience of Tourists towards Visiting Cultural Attractions of the City

How do you see the experience of tourists towards visiting cultural attractions of the city?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very high	6	21.4
	High	13	46.4
	Medium	2	7.1
	Low	5	17.9
	Very low	2	7.1
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own survey, 2024



**Chart-1.** Experience of tourists towards visiting cultural attractions of the city

Source: own survey, 2024

The data shows that the majority of respondents in Harar city have positive perceptions of tourists' experiences when visiting cultural attractions. 46.4% reported a high experience, while 21.4% rated it as very high. However, 17.8% reported low poor experiences, indicating room for improvement. The study also shows a significantly high level of interest among tourists in Harar city's cultural attractions, presenting attractions of Harar city, which represents an opportunity for promotion and enhancement. However, 7.1% rated the experience as medium, and 7.1% as very low, indicating the need for more strong suggesting that stronger promotional efforts are needed to raise awareness about the city's cultural offerings.

**Table-9.** Purpose of Tourist Visit

What are the most common reasons why tourists visit the city?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Religious Purpose	12	42.9
	Visiting cultural events	8	28.6
	Business	4	14.3
	Entertainment and recreation	4	14.3
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own survey, 2024

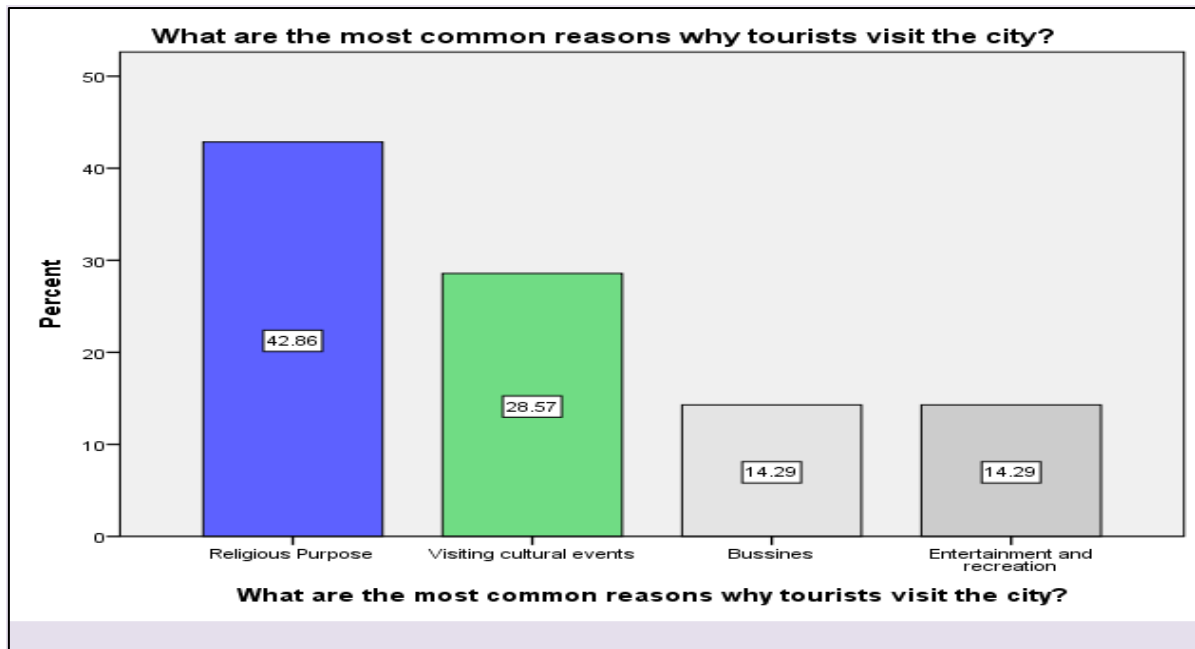


Chart-2. Purpose of Tourist Visit

Source: own survey, 2024

The data shows that 42.9% of tourists visit Harar for religious purposes, reasons, with numerous mosques and shrine sites. 28.6% visit to attend cultural events and attractions, 14.3% for business purposes, purposes and 14.3% for entertainment and recreation. The diverse tourist attractions in the city of Harar city attract visitors for various reasons, indicating the city's diverse appeal of the city. The data suggests that visitors come to Harar for a variety of reasons, showcasing the city's diverse attractions.

Table-10. After Visit Feedback

What kind of feedback do tourists give after visiting the city's cultural attractions?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Positive	20	71.4
	Negative	8	28.6
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own Survey, 2024

Despite some negative replies from some respondents, the table indicates that visitors' overall impression of Harar City is positive following their visit to its cultural attractions, indicating that this impression can be used to boost tourism through positive word-of-mouth.

### 3.4. Primary Data Gathered from Souvenir Shop Sellers

Table-11. Souvenir shop seller's cultural tourism concept

Do you have the concept of cultural tourism?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	23	82.1
	No	5	17.9
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own survey, 2024

According to the survey results, 82.1% of participants comprehend cultural tourism, while 17.9% do not, suggesting that local communities have a generally positive perception of this industry. It does, however, indicate that there is still an opportunity for improvement and that more government initiatives are required to change public perceptions of cultural tourism.

Table-12. Experience of tourists towards buying cultural tourism products

What seems the experience of tourists towards buying cultural clothes and souvenirs?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very high	8	28.6
	High	10	35.7
	Medium	2	7.1
	Low	4	14.3
	Very low	4	14.3
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own survey, 2024





Chart-3. Experience of tourists towards buying cultural tourism products

Source: own survey, 2024

The information reveals that the majority of respondents had favorable opinions about the experiences of tourists purchasing traditional clothing and trinkets. The results show that local communities are profiting from cultural tourism: 35.7% rate the experience as "Very High," 26.57% rate it as "High," 7.143% rate it as "Medium," 14.29% rate it as "Low," and 14.29% rate it as "Very Low.". This suggests that most respondents find the experience enjoyable.

Table-13. Experience of local communities towards buying cultural tourism products

What seems the experience of local communities towards buying cultural clothes and souvenirs?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very high	5	17.9
	High	4	14.3
	Medium	3	10.7
	Low	15	53.6
	Very low	1	3.6
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own survey, 2024

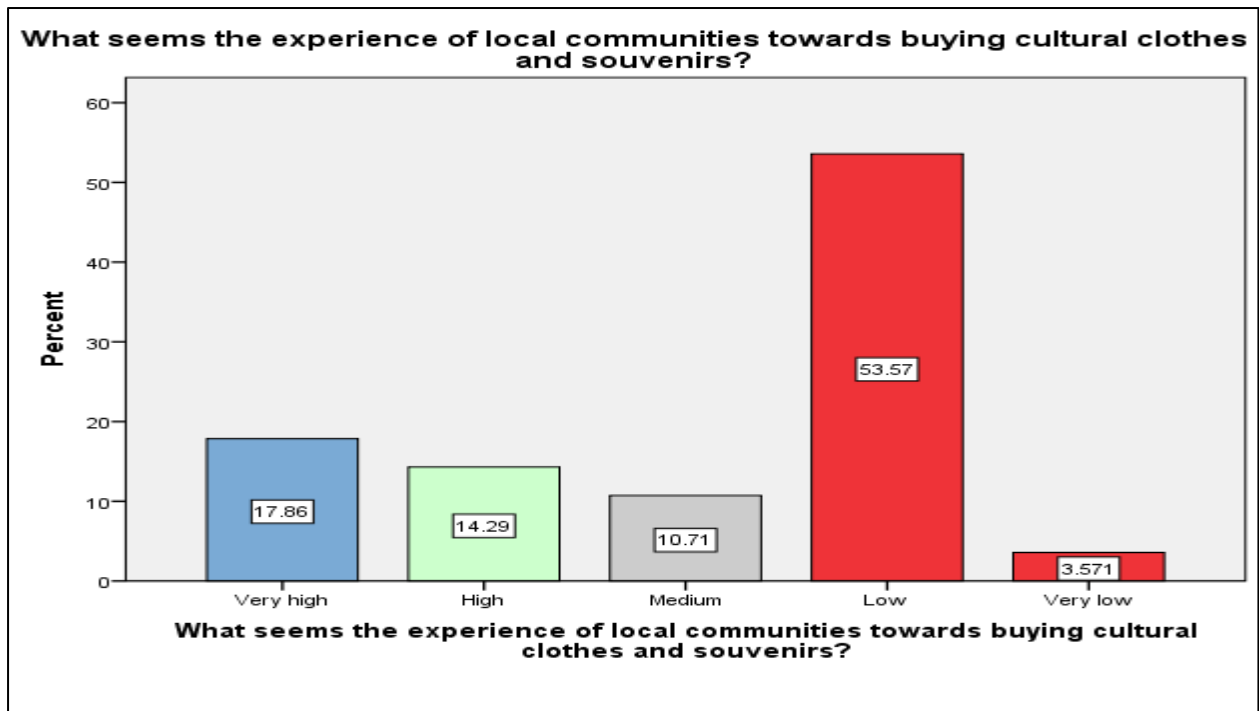


Chart-4. Experience of local communities towards buying cultural tourism products

Source: own survey, 2024

According to a survey, 53.57% of the local population has had a bad experience purchasing cultural goods and souvenirs from local businesses. This suggests that the benefits of cultural tourism may not be fully realized by vendors in souvenir shops. According to the data, to maximize their benefits, a strong marketing mix plan is required. The survey emphasizes how critical it is to recognize and address the factors that lead to poor purchasing experiences at stores selling souvenirs and cultural goods. A strong marketing mix strategy can be put into practice to improve the overall purchasing experience and to benefit local communities as well as vendors of trinket shops.

Table-14. Price of buying cultural tourism products

Did the buying price of the souvenir products affect your work?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	23	82.1
	No	5	17.9
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own survey, 2024

Based on the study, 82.1 percent of participants think that prices have a big impact on their ability to purchase and how well they deliver goods to customers, particularly in souvenir shops. This shows that cost has a big influence on how materials are acquired and delivered, which could hinder the promotion of local cultural elements and force many sellers to close.

Table-15. Training or similar support

Did you get any training or similar support for your work from the culture and tourism office?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	9	32.1
	No	19	67.9
	Total	28	100.0

Source: Own survey, 2024

According to the survey, 67.9% of respondents have not received any government training, while only 32.1% of respondents have. Because it indicates a lack of support in this area, the disparity in access to training has important implications for cultural tourism. The statement underscores the possible disparity between the commercial elements and the wider significance of advancing cultures in the tourism industry. Because of the government's limited capacity to provide training, organizations that support cultural tourism may face difficulties in understanding and effectively showcasing cultural products due to a lack of knowledge and skills. This could impede the growth and promotion of cultural tourism experiences, which would have an effect on nearby communities as well as the tourism sector as a whole. Closing this disparity could improve the awareness, conservation, and marketing of various cultural goods in the context of tourism.

**Table-17.** Importance of events in promoting the local community’s culture

Do you think that different events (like exhibitions, meetings, festivals, and so on) held in the region have played an important role in promoting the community’s culture?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	21	75.0
	No	7	25.0
	Total	28	100.0

Source: own survey, 2024

In a survey, 75% of participants said they thought events were vital for advancing culture, while 25% disagreed. A positive understanding of occasions such as festivals, meetings, and exhibitions is suggested by this positive perception. Though some people might not think events are significant, this opinion is not shared by everyone, and promoting cultural heritage requires a more inclusive strategy.

**Table-18.** Level of agreement on cultural tourism Potential

	What is your agreement on cultural tourism potential?	Level of agreement	Frequency	Percent
1.	The presence of diversified cultural resources	Strongly Agree	16	14.7
		Agree	51	46.8
		Neutral	6	5.5
		Disagree	25	22.9
		Strongly Disagree	11	10.1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>
2.	There is a unique architectural style	Strongly Agree	20	18.3
		Agree	68	62.4
		Neutral	9	8.3
		Disagree	11	10.9
		Strongly Disagree	1	0.9
		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>
3.	The way of living style is unique	Strongly Agree	19	17.4
		Agree	68	62.4
		Neutral	6	5.5
		Disagree	13	11.9
		Strongly Disagree	3	2.8
		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>
4.	Some festivals attract tourists	Strongly Agree	23	21.1
		Agree	67	61.5
		Neutral	6	5.5
		Disagree	11	10.1
		Strongly Disagree	2	1.8

		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>
5.	Artistic works are unique	Strongly Agree	24	22
		Agree	62	56.9
		Neutral	10	9.2
		Disagree	12	11
		Strongly Disagree	1	0.9
		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>
6.	Social Practices and Events	Strongly Agree	15	13.8
		Agree	70	64.2
		Neutral	9	8.3
		Disagree	14	12.8
		Strongly Disagree	1	0.9
		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: own survey, 2024

According to the survey results, 46.7 percent of participants agree with the idea of diversified cultural resources, and 14.7% strongly support it. Less than 6% of respondents are neutral, and 22.9 percent disagree. Ten percent of the remaining people strongly disagree. With a low percentage of neutral responses, the majority of people support a variety of cultural resources. Nonetheless, 33 percent of respondents disagree or strongly disagree, suggesting that a sizeable portion of the populace does not value or support a diversity of cultural resources. This emphasizes how important it is to investigate and comprehend these points of view further. There is strong agreement among respondents as Table 18 above demonstrates that there is a distinct architectural style. Eighty-three percent agree, ten point nine percent disagree, eighty-three percent are neutral, and zero point nine percent strongly disagree. Of the respondents, eighty-three percent strongly agree. This information offers insightful information about the views and opinions of the people surveyed. There appears to be a widespread belief in the existence of a distinct architectural style, as evidenced by the high percentage of respondents (80.7%) who agree or strongly agree. A minority of respondents either has no strong opinion or actively disagrees with the assertion, as evidenced by the combined percentage of neutral and disagree responses (19.2%). A small percentage of respondents appear to categorically reject the idea of a distinctive architectural style, as indicated by the low percentage of strongly disagree responses (0.9%).

### 3.5. Cultural Heritage Sites

**Harar Jugol:** also known as the Old City Walls of Harar, was a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2006 and is one of the region's major cultural attractions. The walled city is home to numerous mosques, shrines, traditional houses, and markets that reflect the architectural and cultural heritage of the Harari people. Visitors can explore the narrow streets, experience the vibrant street life, and witness traditional practices such as coffee ceremonies and weaving demonstrations. The Harar Jugol Wall originally had five historic gates providing five entries into five different districts of the city. The wall was built as a defense in medieval times, an imposing 5m high and 3.5km long. This fascinating wall with the famous gates, Shoa Gate, Buda Gate, Erer Gate, Sanga Gate, and Fallana Gate surrounds the old town. In 1889, Ras Makonnen, the first Duke of Harar (Ahmad, 2015), added a sixth gate, Harar Gate

**Harari Cultural Center:** The Harari Cultural Centre in eastern Ethiopia offers a comprehensive exploration of the Harari people's culture, customs, and way of life through interactive exhibits and performances. The center's main attraction is the historic Harar Jugol, an ancient city with over 80 mosques and an intricate network of alleys. Visitors can engage with traditional music, dance, crafts, and cuisine. The center is divided into parts, each focusing on different aspects of Harari culture. It houses a museum, library, workshops, seminars, and conferences, and guides visitors to explore exhibits and learn more about the Harari people's unique culture.

**Harar National Museum:** The Harar National Museum, commonly known as the Museum of Harar or the Ethnological Museum of Harar, is an important cultural institution in Ethiopia that celebrates the region's rich history and cultural legacy. The museum opened in 1938 and holds a significant collection of antiquities, including archeological remains, traditional crafts, and historical documents. The museum is an invaluable resource for local and international academics, students, and visitors, offering a unique perspective on the Harari people's history and

culture. Key displays include archeological artifacts from the first millennium BC, traditional crafts, historical documents, ethnographic items, and a large photography collection. These resources provide a full picture of the Harari people and the Ethiopian area.

**Jami Mosque:** The Jami Mosque in Harar, Ethiopia, is a significant religious and historical monument dating back to the 10th century. Its iconic symbol and architectural design have attracted tourists worldwide, making it a must-visit destination for exploring Harar's wonders. The mosque's architecture incorporates various styles, including minarets, domes, and geometric patterns, and is beautifully decorated with woodwork, calligraphy, and mosaics. The mosque is crucial to the local community in terms of culture and religion, drawing people interested in its history and architecture. It also plays a significant role in religious and cultural activities. The mosque has a rich history and architectural designs.

**Arthur Rambud Museum:** The Arthur Rambud Museum in Harar Jugol, Ethiopia, is a cultural hub that attracts tourists from all walks of life. Originally home to French poet Arthur Rimbaud, the museum commemorates his life and significant contributions to literature. It showcases the impact of one individual on a community and the enduring power of literature to transcend time and geographical boundaries. The museum preserves Harar's multicultural heritage and its connections to iconic literary figures, offering visitors the opportunity to explore the rooms once inhabited by Rimbaud. The museum also promotes Ethiopian art and culture globally by presenting local and foreign artists' work and providing insights into Ethiopian art's history and evolution.

**Markets and Craftsmanship:** Harar is renowned for its lively traditional markets, which offer a fascinating insight into the local culture and way of life. One of the most well-known markets in Harar is the Jugal Market, bustling with locals engaging in the trade of various goods such as aromatic spices, exquisite textiles, beautifully crafted pottery, and traditional handicrafts. By exploring these vibrant markets, visitors can fully immerse themselves in the lively atmosphere of Harari's daily life and gain a firsthand experience of the local customs and traditions. The bustling markets in Harar cater to a wide range of interests, displaying an extensive variety of goods including intricately made traditional crafts, elaborate textiles, fragrant spices, and exquisite jewelry. These markets not only provide an avenue for visitors to indulge in retail therapy but also offer a unique opportunity to engage with local artisans and witness the time-honored craftsmanship techniques that have been handed down through generations.

**Hyena Feeding:** Harar is renowned for its lively traditional markets, which offer a fascinating insight into the local culture and way of life. One of the most well-known markets in Harar is the Jugal Market, bustling with locals engaging in the trade of various goods such as aromatic spices, exquisite textiles, beautifully crafted pottery, and traditional handicrafts. By exploring these vibrant markets, visitors can fully immerse themselves in the lively atmosphere of Harari's daily life and gain firsthand experience of the local customs and traditions.

**Harari Traditional Houses:** Harari traditional houses are a significant part of the Harari people's cultural heritage in eastern Ethiopia. These houses have unique architectural designs reflecting the region's climate, social structure, and religious beliefs. They are rectangular, and divided into living and sleeping areas, with an open courtyard for social gatherings. Conical-shaped roofs made from woven grass or palm fronds are believed to be the dwelling place of spirits and ancestors. Harari traditional houses are integral to the region's religious practices, combining elements of Islam, Christianity, and traditional African religions. Visitors can be captivated by the charming streets of Harar, showcasing the unique architectural style of the region.

**Table-19.** Level of agreement on cultural tourism development challenges

	What is your agreement on cultural tourism development challenges?	Level of agreement	Frequency	Percent
1.	Lack of infrastructure	Strongly Agree	12	11
		Agree	70	64.2
		Neutral	5	4.6
		Disagree	20	18.3
		Strongly Disagree	2	1.8
		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>
2.	Lack of sufficient promotional efforts	Strongly Agree	33	30.7
		Agree	52	47.7
		Neutral	7	6.4
		Disagree	13	11.9
		Strongly Disagree	4	3.7
		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>
3.	Poor handling system	Strongly Agree	28	25.7
		Agree	70	64.2
		Neutral	1	0.9
		Disagree	10	9.2
		Strongly Disagree	-	-
		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>
4.	Lack of financial resources	Strongly Agree	21	19.3
		Agree	68	62.4
		Neutral	4	3.7
		Disagree	16	14.7

		Strongly Disagree	-	-
		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>
5.	Lack of documentation	Strongly Agree	17	15.6
		Agree	78	71.6
		Neutral	5	4.6
		Disagree	8	7.3
		Strongly Disagree	1	0.9
		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>
6.	Unclear boundaries to immoveable heritages	Strongly Agree	15	13.8
		Agree	71	65.1
		Neutral	3	2.8
		Disagree	19	17.4
		Strongly Disagree	1	0.9
		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>
7.	Urban pressures and encroachment	Strongly Agree	32	29.4
		Agree	49	45
		Neutral	7	6.4
		Disagree	17	15.6
		Strongly Disagree	4	3.7
		<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: own survey, 2024

The majority of respondents, 79.9%, agreed with the statement about unclear boundaries to immovable heritages, while 18.3% disagreed. The remaining 2.8% remained neutral. This suggests that the region faces challenges related to unclear boundaries, which is a significant problem for cultural tourism development. Based on a survey, it was revealed that 78% of respondents agreed with the statement that there is a lack of adequate promotional efforts, while 15.6% disagreed and 6.4% expressed neutrality. This indicates a significant deficiency in promotional efforts, which poses a significant challenge to the development of cultural tourism in the region. The study shows that 89.9% of respondents agreed with the statement about a poor handling system, while 9.2% disagreed and 0.9% remained neutral. This suggests that the region's poor handling system poses a developmental challenge for cultural tourism. Table 19 indicates that 87.2% of respondents agreed with the statement about the lack of documentation in the region, while 8.2% disagreed and 4.6% remained neutral. This indicates that a lack of documentation is a developmental challenge for cultural tourism. The study found that 74.4% of respondents agreed with the statement about urban pressures and encroachment, while 19.3% disagreed and 6.4% expressed neutrality. These findings suggest that the region faces significant challenges in developing cultural tourism due to these urban pressures. The above table, Table 19, outlines the various challenges encountered in the development of cultural tourism. According to the table, 75.2% of respondents agreed with the statement regarding the lack of tourism-related infrastructure, while 20.1% disagreed. The remaining respondents remained neutral, indicating that the region lacks sufficient tourism infrastructure, which poses a developmental challenge for cultural tourism. According to survey results, 81.7% of respondents agreed with the statement about the lack of financial resources, while 14.7% disagreed. The remaining 3.7% expressed neutrality. These findings suggest that the region faces challenges related to insufficient financial resources, which could hinder the development of cultural tourism.

### 3.6. Primary Data Gathered from the Interview

#### 3.6.1. What are the Major Cultural Tourism Attractions of the Harari region? And What Benefits Did These Attractions Bring to the Region and Local Community?

The Harari Region in Ethiopia is widely celebrated for its extensive cultural legacy and historical eminence. It is home to several prominent landmarks, such as the Harar Jugol, an iconic UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Rimbaud House, which used to be the dwelling place of the acclaimed French poet Arthur Rimbaud. Additionally, an intriguing and distinctive tradition of feeding hyenas outside the city walls adds to the allure of the region. Furthermore, the Harari Region flourishes with a myriad of cultural festivals, traditional ceremonies, and bustling marketplaces like the renowned Asmaddin Market, acting as pivotal centers of economic activity and cultural fascination. Promoting cultural tourism in the Harari Region, not only contributes to the region's economic growth, but it also plays a significant role in the preservation of its rich heritage and the fostering of a sense of pride and belonging within the community.

#### 3.6.2. What would be the Tourism Offices' Responsibility Regarding Cultural Tourism?

The Harari Region, renowned for its extensive cultural legacy, is under the management of tourism offices, which are responsible for advocating and overseeing cultural tourism. These offices actively encourage visitors to immerse themselves in the local culture, arts, and way of life. In fulfilling their duties, they engage in activities like promoting significant cultural sites, safeguarding heritage, providing educational materials, and fostering partnerships with the local community. Moreover, they offer services such as interpretation assistance, conservation efforts, and support for traditional crafts. By collaborating closely with the local communities, they ensure that cultural tourism not only benefits the residents but also upholds their time-honored traditions. To safeguard the

region's cultural heritage and environment, sustainable development practices are implemented, including the adoption of responsible tourism behaviors and the establishment of eco-friendly infrastructure, all aimed at minimizing any adverse effects on local cultures and ecosystems.

### **3.6.3. How Has Cultural Tourism Contributed to the Development of the Harari Region?**

Beyond its economic and cultural impacts, cultural tourism has also made significant strides in community development within the Harari region. It has empowered local communities to actively participate in and benefit from the tourism sector. This inclusivity has allowed the region's residents to preserve their cultural identity while simultaneously enjoying the advantages that tourism has brought to their communities. Cultural tourism has had a significant impact on the Harari region, located in eastern Ethiopia, which is renowned for its rich cultural heritage. This industry has played a crucial role in driving economic growth by attracting tourists who are fascinated by the unique architecture, traditions, and history of the region. As a result, there has been a surge in the development of essential infrastructure such as hotels, restaurants, and transportation services, which has not only created numerous employment opportunities for residents but has also stimulated various business activities. Another significant aspect of cultural tourism in the Harari region is the sale of traditional crafts, textiles, and other cultural products. This has provided a reliable source of income for local artisans and entrepreneurs, allowing them to showcase their remarkable skills and talents to a wider audience. Moreover, cultural tourism has played a pivotal role in the preservation of the Harari region's cultural heritage. By promoting local arts and performances, preserving traditional art forms, and providing opportunities for artists to generate income, the industry has actively contributed to safeguarding the unique cultural identity of the region. In conclusion, cultural tourism has brought about numerous positive changes to the Harari region in eastern Ethiopia. From driving economic growth to preserving cultural heritage and promoting community development, this industry has proven to be a catalyst for positive change in the region.

### **3.6.4. What are the Challenges Faced by the Harari Region in Developing Cultural Tourism?**

The development of cultural tourism is a complex and multifaceted process that involves various aspects. These include the preservation of cultural heritage sites and traditions, the improvement of infrastructure, the reduction of socioeconomic disparities, the maintenance of political stability and security, and the promotion of environmental conservation efforts. Preserving cultural heritage sites requires the implementation of conservation measures, restoration projects, and the adoption of sustainable tourism practices. Improving infrastructure, such as transportation systems and visitor facilities, not only enhances the overall tourist experience but also ensures greater accessibility to these sites. However, addressing the socioeconomic disparities within communities that host cultural heritage sites can sometimes lead to tensions and conflicts, making it vital to ensure that tourism benefits are distributed fairly and equitably. Furthermore, political stability and security play a crucial role in the successful development of cultural tourism, as a stable environment inspires confidence among tourists and investors alike. Lastly, achieving a balance between environmental conservation and tourism requires the implementation of sustainable practices that minimize the negative impact on the environment while simultaneously safeguarding cultural and natural resources. To navigate through these challenges, careful planning and efficient administration are essential to preserve the cultural integrity of these sites.

## **4. Discussion**

The study explores the cultural tourism potential of the Harari Region in Ethiopia, focusing on its rich cultural heritage, historical sites, and traditional practices. It aims to identify challenges hindering its development and provide insights into sustainable tourism development while preserving the unique cultural identity of the Harari people. The research aims to attract tourists from around the world while preserving the region's unique identity.

Cultural tourism in the Harari Region is crucial for economic growth, cultural preservation, and cross-cultural understanding. It can generate employment, generate revenue, and contribute to the region's development. However, challenges need to be addressed to ensure the successful growth of cultural tourism in the region. Inadequate infrastructure and facilities are a major obstacle to the growth of cultural tourism in the area.

The lack of adequate hotel options, transportation systems, and tourist amenities deters travelers from fully enjoying their stay and restricts the expansion of tourism in the region. Further impediments to the development of cultural tourism in the Harari Region include problems with marketing and promotion, legal frameworks, community involvement, and sustainable practices.

By implementing a comprehensive strategy that involves cooperation between governmental organizations, local communities, stakeholders in the private sector, and international organizations, Ethiopia's Harari Region has the potential to become a top destination for cultural tourism. Strategies for sustainable tourism should place a high priority on environmental protection, community empowerment, cultural preservation, and financial gains for all parties involved.

## **5. Findings**

Exploring the cultural tourism potential and development challenges in the Harari region of Ethiopia reveals a region rich in cultural heritage and historical significance. However, despite its great cultural tourism potential, the region faces several challenges that hinder its development as a tourist destination. These challenges include unclear

borders, inadequate promotion, poor processing systems, lack of documentation, urban pressure, and inadequate tourism infrastructure. The unclear boundaries in the Harari region can lead to difficulties in defining and preserving cultural sites and attractions. Without clear demarcation, there is a risk of encroachment or destruction of culturally significant areas. Furthermore, inadequate promotional efforts contribute to the region's cultural assets being underrepresented on the global tourism stage. Effective marketing strategies are essential to attract visitors and display the unique cultural offerings of the Harari region.

Poor handling systems further exacerbate the challenges for cultural tourism in the region. Inadequate management practices can result in damage to historical sites, artifacts and traditions. Proper handling systems are crucial to preserving the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage in the Harari region. Furthermore, the lack of documentation represents a significant obstacle to understanding and promoting the region's cultural assets. Comprehensive documentation is essential for research, conservation, and educational purposes.

In addition, Urban pressure represents another obstacle to the development of cultural tourism in the Harari region. Rapid urbanization and population growth can lead to the decline of cultural sites and traditions. The balance between urban development and monument protection is crucial for the sustainable growth of cultural tourism.

Furthermore, the lack of tourism infrastructure such as transportation, accommodation options, and visitor services affects the overall visitor experience in the region.

## **6. Conclusion**

The Harari region of Ethiopia is a rich cultural destination with significant potential for cultural tourism. Its historical significance as the former capital of the Harari Kingdom provides insights into Ethiopia's past and its role in Ethiopian history. The region is known for its cultural diversity, with a mix of traditions, languages, and customs reflecting the region's unique mix of influences. Tourists can experience this diversity through interactions with local communities and participation in cultural activities. The region also has a rich architectural heritage, including traditional Harari houses and mosques, reflecting the region's distinctive architectural style. A highlight is Harari cuisine, which offers a taste of traditional dishes and unique flavors of the region. The region hosts various cultural festivals throughout the year, celebrating local traditions, music, dance, and art forms. Visitors can also explore crafts such as weaving, pottery, and jewelry making, which form an essential part of the region's cultural identity. Having this cultural tourism resource, the region has a development potential. On the other hand, the region faces significant challenges in developing cultural tourism, including unclear boundaries, inadequate promotional efforts, poor handling systems, lack of documentation, urban pressures, and lack of tourism-related infrastructure. The majority of respondents agree that these issues pose a significant problem for cultural tourism development. The region also lacks sufficient tourism infrastructure and financial resources. The study also highlights the lack of documentation in the region and the need for the region to address these challenges and work towards enhancing its cultural tourism potential.

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