

# LAND-USE PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN LIBYA

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Libya possesses vast supplies of undeveloped land with enormous potential for various sectors' development. Recently Libya has decided to develop the tourism sector to enhance the national economy, which for so many years has been bolstered by the oil industry. The huge space of undeveloped land can be exploited in broadening the base of tourism development in terms of new construction work and new or refurbishment of facilities to meet the requirements of the international tourism markets. The paper is going to discuss two major issues: First, the state's role in facilitating the regulations both in terms of land use, financial support and other related aspects as well as the essential implications needed to encourage both local and foreign investors to invest in tourism-related services. Second, a SWOT analysis for Libya as a tourist destination and development proposals for the essential prerequisites needed for the development of the Libya's tourism resources will be presented.

Keywords: Construction, Land-use, Tourism, Development, Libya.

## INTRODUCTION

Libya is a country is bordered to the north by the Mediterranean, with a coast-line of approximately 2,000 kilometres. It has a total area of some 1,760,000 square kilometres, to the east is Egypt, to the south is Sudan, Chad and Niger and to the west is Algeria and Tunisia.

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

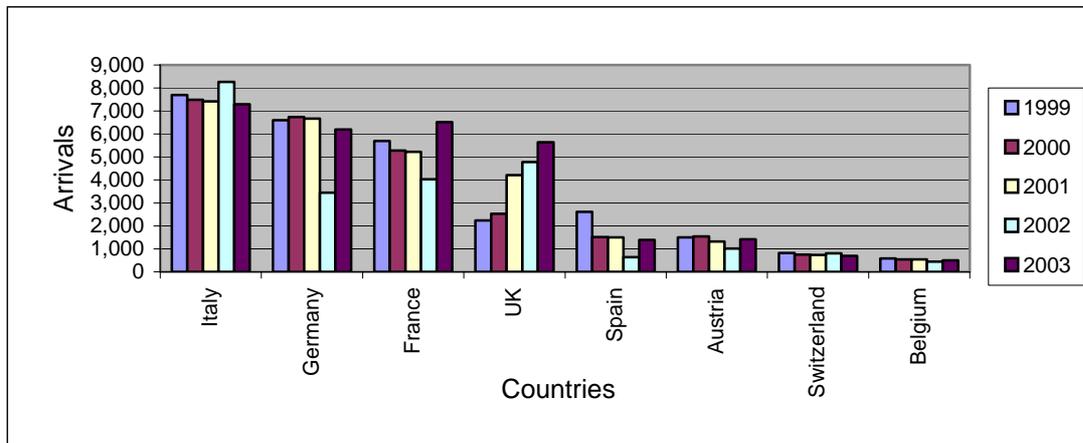
Despite the UN embargo on international flights, Libya has witnessed a large influx of visitors, especially from neighboring countries in particular Tunisia and Egypt. In addition, a number of overseas visitors come into the country through the Tunisia – Libya land border from different countries.

Figure 1 illustrates numbers for Libya as a tourist destination from the top-generating tourist markets during the same period. It can be noted that, most international tourists visiting Libya are generated from Italy, Germany, France and the UK respectively. A small number of international arrivals represent the other countries. The Libyan tourism authority is trying to boost the number of tourists generated from

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these markets and aiming to target new tourist markets from various countries around the world, such as the USA, Japan, China and South Korea etc.



Source: (WTO, 2004)

**Figure 1:** Libya’s visitor numbers from the top-generating tourist markets (1999-2003)

For all of this to be put forward, careful planning had to be considered in order to conserve and prolong tourism assets. Planning implies the need for an orderly arrangement of activities and practices in order to minimize the uncertainty, which arises in any future position. Land-use planning regulations play a significant role in creating a distinctive Libyan ambience and environmentally sustainable tourist product. Tourism as an activity is based on interactions of particular destinations and so requires coordination and the cooperation of both public and private sectors. The importance of tourism has brought about the realisation in Libya that this industry deserves special attention.

## LAND-USE PLANNING OF TOURISM RESOURCES IN LIBYA

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

According to the WTO (1998), physical development in Libya is subject to an Urban and Rural Planning Law No. 5 (1969), which obliges every municipality to prepare a detailed plan for future urban development in towns and settlements within their boundaries.

**Table 1:** Incremental New Hotel Accommodation Required in Libya (2003-2018)

Region	<b>BEDROOMS</b>			
	2003	2008	2013	2018
	2770	2470	3180	5160
Southern	500	560	680	1160
Central	250	260	310	620
Eastern	1100	1160	1510	2660
Total	4620	4450	5680	9600

Source: (WTO, 1998)

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

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

### **Destination planning**

The major benefits to be gained from developing a tourism product are both economic and social. In order to succeed, the development needs to be carefully planned, so as to extend or harness its life cycle. On the one hand, there is local development, but on the other hand there is environmental impact caused by non-organised land use (Parizzi et al, 2001). Typically, problems may arise when tourism development is rushed, taking little or no consideration of the product's life cycle or the environment. In order to sustain product development in the future there needs to be collaboration between both the public and private sectors.

Medlike, (1993:148), defines a tourism destination as:

“countries, regions, towns or other areas visited by tourists. Throughout the year, their amenities serve their resident and working populations, but at some or all times of the year they also have temporary users – tourists. How important any geographical unit is as a tourist destination, is determined by three prime factors: attraction, amenities and accessibility, which are sometimes called tourism qualities of the destination (cited by Hall, 2000, p. 161).

A global approach to land management depends on appropriate structures of governance. Therefore, decentralisation may be seen as a significant key of significant development. Land-use planning plays a crucial role in applying sustainable principles at all government levels. These principles relate to sustainable

development in its broadest sense including economic, social and environmental aspects. In addition, decentralisation of land-use planning and decision-making raises the question of suitable local institutions and organisations for managing these tasks. For example, it is understood politically that environmental problems can only be solved by involving/mobilising the local people (Enemark, 2001).

Libya is the World's newest and most exciting tourist destination. It has a long coastline along the Mediterranean, which makes it a productive area for sea sports, diving and all kinds of beach activities. There are ancient archaeological cities and monuments from Roman, Phoenician, Greek and Islamic civilisations. There are also historical mosques and churches, as well as museums with their splendid and fine antiquarian possessions.

Moreover, there is a variety of natural views along the coast line, such as sandy beaches, wild palm trees and rocky shores. The beaches extend from Tripoli towards the East about 200 kilometres and are characterized by their sandy nature, which is very popular with local residents. The major tourist attractions of Libya as a destination are illustrated in Figure 2.



Source: <http://www.shati-zuara.de/english/Libya/libya.html>

**Figure 2:** Map of Libya's principle tourist attractions

Destination planning should be integrated with community planning. Officially community plans traditionally focus on physical public needs, especially for updating and enlarging public structures and systems. These needs are often for resident transportation, water supply (potable and gas) fire protection, and for police and

public safety (Gunn, 2000). Regulations for land-use and structures such as zoning ordinances and building codes, are included in most city plans.

Steiner (1991) states that any land-use planning process must begin with understanding landscapes and then make changes only in ways that protect and conserve these important foundations (cited by Gunn, 2000). Goodwin (1993), added that building of an urban landscape is not just physical and economic. It is also social, cultural and political, and changes in these process can play a significant role in easing economic transformation and helping to form new a round of coherence (cited by Hull, 2000).

The prevailing view is that good economic opportunities exist if more money would be spent on building the infrastructure of the destination as well as devoting more efforts to attracting tourists from local and regional markets.

### **Site Planning**

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

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

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

Investigations need to be carried out to ascertain whether any archaeological or historic remains are located in the area. Developers should enter into discussion with the Tourism and Antiquities Department at the earliest opportunity to allow time for any detailed surveys or excavations. In addition, new tourism related development should seek to reflect and build upon the country's heritage in order to create a uniquely Libyan ambience and environmentally sustainable product. There is a crucial need to recognise cultural traditions and regional characteristics.

There should be enough space around all tourism sites except those in dense urban areas. Buffer zones should be either landscaped with appropriate plants and trees or any existing vegetation preserved. In addition, beaches should be left in as natural a

state as possible. It is important to leave adequate space on the beach entirely free of all permanent or temporary structures.

As parking requires a large user of land, therefore, it needs to be fully integrated into the landscape design of the scheme in order to avoid the negative visual impact of large paved surfaces. Turner (1998) states that parks and greenways have little chance of success if they are badly located. Therefore, parking location should be carefully considered as close to the area to be served and the developer should make sure that it is consistent with the overall site design. Libyan architectural design and styles should reflect the country's response to climatic constraints, cultural and historical processes. For example, the use of locally available materials in areas where construction was traditionally in local stone and olive wood as in the mountain areas, mud bricks and palm tree wood in desert areas.

## **S.W.O.T OF LIBYA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION**

According to surveys conducted by the authors with international tourists visiting Libya and key tourism administrators in Libya, the SWOT of Libya as a tourist destination can be stated as follows:

Climatic conditions of Libya vary from one part to another part of the country. The mean daily temperature does not fall below 5°C. This kind of climate has the ability to offer Libya as whole year around destination. The country has an extensive and mixed range of tourism resources that are spread widely throughout the land area of the country. These tourist attractions are located in different regions throughout the country. Libyan people are characterised by pleasant hospitality. According to the survey conducted by the author with international tourists visiting Libya, the attitude of local people towards international tourists and personal security, which represent critical factors in some other destinations achieved a satisfactory response from international tourists. Therefore, tourists will be encouraged to repeat visits as well as prolong their length of stay. This will play an important role in sustaining tourism growth.

Although the country is bestowed with natural and man-made attractions, the degree of awareness and knowledge of such attractions amongst the international tourist market is poor. There is a lack of investment in infrastructure as well as the substandard facilities and services offered being inadequate. In addition, some of these attractions are not fully exploited, due to the lack of tourism facilities and services in these areas. There is a lack of available accommodation in terms of both quantity and quality of service in or close by the principal attractions. In addition, there is a need to improve the existing information centres at the site areas and establish more information centres in the main cities, which can be of great help to international visitors. Ultimately, the shortage of these facilities will definitely have its negative impact on the level of tourist demand.

The lifting of the UN air embargo recently is an important factor in the future development of tourism in Libya as in air-flight terms it is situated close to the tourism generating markets in Europe. Moreover, in the future, Libya has the opportunity to develop the general interest touring-circuit markets in different parts of the world such as North America, East Asia (specially Japan and Korea) and Australia. The potential of the Libyan tourism product exists in various areas.

Opportunities exist to utilise facilities in the country, organised efforts to conduct conferences, meetings, conventions exhibitions and some others leave much more room for development.

There is no proper well-defined principle to develop tourism on systematic and orderly lines, which may be considered to be a major threat. Also, the personnel in the tourism sector keeps changing, which results in different policy ideas for the development of tourism. It is a severe threat to ongoing projects to stop funding or delay the execution of tourism plans. Sometimes inadequate capital does not allow the completion of a project. The need to improve the level of security becomes essential as tourists increase. In addition, internal marketing to educate local people about the benefits of tourism to the community and how they should interact with tourists through is poor.

## **TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICY**

Conserving the natural and built tourist resources for future generations against any environmental damage will lead to long-term tourism development. Management of the natural and built resources and tourism planning should be directed towards quality as well as growth. The development of tourism should be linked to other sectors of the economy, if it is to stimulate production in agriculture and industry that will contribute to the development of a more balanced economy and reduce the percentage of foreign exchange leakage.

As a result, for Libya to attain sustainable tourism development, it is crucial to consider environmental issues as a key factor in the overall development of the tourism sector. Distinctive investment incentives to local and foreign investors could help to conserve the natural and built environment. The involvement of government is a necessity in the modern world including Libya. Governments can attract both domestic and foreign investment, which will stimulate the economy. Investment in fixed assets cannot be removed from the country. Hotels especially, can be a real utility to the country. For example, in the period 1989-92 in Australia total Japanese investment in tourism related services, accounted for about 70 per cent of the total Japanese investors are renowned in different areas, such as Hawaii (Elliott, 1997). Governments have the power to provide the political stability, security and the financial framework which tourism requires. They provide essential services and basic infrastructure (Jeffries, 2001). Governments can foster a process that includes research, great land-use plans, develop standards, create educational awareness, collaborate with the private sector and integrate plans of governmental agencies (Gunn, 2002). As cited by Hall (2000), regional tourism development plans throughout many parts of the world are a common government initiative, particularly where such regions are seeking to utilise tourism in response to problems of economic restructuring (Jenkins et al, 1998)

In order to achieve a tourist product that is economically, socially, environmentally, and culturally viable, the involvement of the community in tourism planning has become essential. Participation by all tourism stakeholders in tourism planning, including local communities and indigenous people, during all phases of planning and management is essential, leading to the empowerment of locals, greater transparency and facilitating conflict management (Coltman, 1989 and Wall, 2005).

Sustainable expansion for tourism requires proper land development, which involves people becoming part of the planning process. Therefore, Gill and Williams (1994) and Gill (1998), indicate that growth management has emerged to include both the promotion of development and the protection of land against development. It is up to the individual communities to determine how they want to balance the status quo with the benefits of growth, and how effective they are going to be in mitigating the negative effects they want to avoid. Moreover, as cited by Hall (2000) growth management is a systematic impact management strategy, which calls for an integrated sharing of ideas between citizens and managers (Stein, 1993).

In Libya, residents should be aware of the economic benefits of tourism development to their community and should perceive the positive changes in their communities from tourism with aspects such as changes in the living standards, investment, level of income, employment opportunities, recreational facilities for residents, tourism as a source of valuable experience, and preservation of antiquities and public facilities etc.

This all could lead to good tourist-host interrelationships, which results in better interaction between local people and tourists. This would encourage both parties to care more about the community's tourist assets, which in return may lead to a sustainable tourism product.

## **CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CURRENT RESEARCH**

Libya has an extensive and varied range of tourism resources that are spread widely throughout the country. These include attractive natural features and many different landscapes of the vast Libyan desert, human achievements in the form of buildings, town, art history as well as modern man-made attractions etc. These unique attractions need the provision of additional facilities to improve the presentation and interpretation at the major sites as well as leisure facilities to improve visitor comfort.

For Libya's government to accelerate tourism development and exploit tourism resources for sustaining the national economy, a number of important issues need to be considered further.

Initially, more funding and support from the government is needed to encourage local and foreign investment in tourism by treating tourism investment legislation as a special and more distinctive case in order to be more attractive. The development of more tourist accommodation such as small to medium sized-hotels, beach resorts, roadside travel-lodges and guest houses to meet the demand of prospective international and domestic tourists at competitive prices could lead to sustainable tourism development and fast promotion of the country as a tourist destination. All kinds of construction should follow up the formulated regulations in terms of land-use, design, safety and security

In order to achieve a tourist product that is economically, socially, environmentally, and culturally viable, the involvement of residents in the planning process is essential.

### **Current research**

#### *Research problems*

This research project being currently undertaken is concerned with the development of the tourist industry in Libya, which has splendid tourist assets. These assets in the shape of scenery, culture and history need to be projected through policy and planning measures to sustain tourist growth in the country.

There is a need to conduct research in order to find out the root of problems hindering the development of tourism in Libya.

Strenuous efforts are therefore being made to improve the tourism sector in Libya. Nevertheless, in spite of the considerable care, which is being taken to put the policies of the Libya's GBT (General Board of Tourism) into effect, the absence of both foreign investment and financial support from the Libyan private sector is delaying the process.

### *Research aims and methodology*

The research aims to identify implications for improving planning and policy making within the tourist industry in Libya. A triangulation approach method was adopted in the study using both qualitative (interview) and quantitative (questionnaires) techniques. Postal questionnaires were sent out to 36 tour operators/travel agents in the UK. Of these questionnaires, 15 were returned. Only 5 of them were answered by tour operating companies who sell Libya as a tourist destination, whilst 10 of these questionnaires were answered by tour-operating companies who do not sell Libya as a tourist destination. The purpose was to identify the major reasons for the observed small share that Libya possesses of the UK's tourist market. The websites of both the UK's tour operators featuring Libya and other countries as a tourist destinations, and tour operating companies' administrators in Libya were a major source to find out the names and addresses of tour operating companies in the UK engaged in package tours to promote Libya as a tourist destination, as well as the ones, which have never sold Libya as a tourist destination.

The delivery and collection questionnaire was directed at international tourists visiting Libya. Finally, a total of 282 usable questionnaires were entered into the analysis. Its aim was to research what image and expectations international tourists have about Libya and to find out the degree of satisfaction with Libya as a tourist destination.

A set of interview questions, was directed to key tourism administrators in Libya in order to conduct face-to-face interviews. These included the Libyan General Board of Tourism (GBT) and other provincial tourism boards, local tour operating companies and local hotels. The majority of those key tourism administrators were representatives on the board level of their associations. The sample included five tourist boards, five local tour-operating companies and seven local hotels. The objectives were to understand how they perceive international tourism and evaluate the tourism related problems and potential. In addition, an objective was to assess the level of marketing activities and promotional strategy undertaken by those various tourism bodies.

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