

**POTENTIALS AND LIMITATIONS OF MOUNTAINOUS AREAS  
FOR TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT: EVIDENCE FROM  
CHOKE MOUNTAIN AND ITS ENVIRONS IN AMHARA REGION**



**MA THESIS**

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**Potentials and Limitations of Mountainous Area for Tourism Product Development: Evidence from Choke Mountain and Its Environs, Amhara National Regional State**

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## DECLARATION

I, Atsede Tadele declare that this study entitled **“Potentials and Limitations of Mountainous area for tourism product development: evidence from choke mountain and its environs, Amhara national regional state”** is my own work. I have undertaken the research work independently with the guidance and support of my principal advisor Dr. Shiferaw Muleta. This study has not been submitted for any Degree or Diploma in this or any other institutions.

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We, the undersigned, members of the Board of Examiners of the final thesis defense by Atsede Tadele have read and evaluated her thesis entitled **“Potentials and Limitations of Mountainous area for tourism product development: evidence from choke mountain and its environs, A mhara national regional state”**, and examined the candidate. This is, therefore, to certify that the thesis research has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Tourism Development and Management.

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Tourism product development is part of aims to diversify and increase the benefits of tourism government and local communities in addition to satisfying and meeting the needs of tourists. The current study is about assessing the potentials and limitations of tourism product development evidence from Choke Mountains and its environment. Qualitative research approach has been adopted in the study. Purposive sampling techniques were employed to select key informants. 5 participants were interviewed, and one focus group was held. The researcher conducted face to face interview by using both structured and semi structured interview questions. With respect to data sources, both primary and secondary data sources were utilized. Interview, focus group discussion and field observation were main data gathering instruments used to collect data for this study. As far as data analysis is concerned, structured narrative analysis techniques were applied. With respect to the result researcher found that Choke Mountain is rich in natural tourism potential. This study proved that the potentials for tourism product development is need the involvement of all respective stockholders. The other finding of this study indicts that overgrazing, deforestation, illegal community settlement, unlimited use of lands for farming purpose and lack of educated human resource are the major challenges that bottlenecked for practices of tourism product development in the area. The current study is expected to benefit local communities, local & regional government and tourism service providers finally it provides a contribution in the field of research and researcher can use this work as reference.*

**Key words:** *Potentials, limitations, Tourism Product Development, Coke Mountain, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia.*

## **List of Acronyms/Abbreviations**

**ETC:** European Travel Commission

**GDP:** Gross Domestic Product

**MoCT:** Ministry of Culture and Tourism

**USD:** United States Dollar

**USA:** United States America

**UNWTO:** United Nations World Tourism Organization

**NGO:** None Governmental Organization

**WTTC:** World Tourism and Travel Council

**ETO:** Ethiopian Tourism Organization

**FGD:** Focus Group Discussion

**GHG:** Global Greenhouse Gas

**IUCN:** International Union of Conserving Nature

**MOCT:** Minister of Culture and Tourism

**UNWTO:** United Nation World Tourism Organization

**WTO:** World Tourism Organization

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

According to UNWTO (2010) now days, tourism industry has become one of the most important sectors that contribute for Gross Domestic Product (GDP) worldwide. It plays a significant role in socio-economic development of nations. Likewise, most of the developing countries are striving to generate economic benefits through tourism development. In the past, governments have been unwiring to invest in tourism development, but in this modern age the situation has changed (World Bank, 2019). One of the areas that need a due attention to benefit the maximum from the tourism sectors is the development of tourism products.

Tourism in Africa is in the right circumstances; contribute effectively to economic development (Nurhssen, 2016). Many African countries are known for their natural attractions like national parks, sanctuaries and mountainous areas. Even though Ethiopia has many natural attractions, the country is not benefiting from these sites; the competition in the natural segment of the market is high from the neighboring and other more remote African countries. Nature based tourism is well developed and promoted in the other countries tourism markets, and more than in the case of Ethiopia, for instance, countries such as Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa have well developed tourism destinations (Tafesse, 2016).

When come to tourism product development, it can be defined in many ways. According to UNWTO, it can be seen as embracing all elements with which the visitor to a destination comes into contact, including infrastructure (e.g. transport, utilities), the service personnel, places of lodging, attractions and activities, facilities and amenities; while, at the other extreme, Tourism Product Development can be defined as comprising only those attractions, activities and facilities that are specifically provided for the visitors. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) describes tourism product development as the creation of products with new or different characteristics that offer new or additional benefits to the customer (WTO 2011). Tourism product development involves either the modification of an existing product on its presentation, or formulation of an entirely new product that satisfies a newly defined customer wants or market niche. Hence, the objective of tourism product development is to

cultivate, maintain and increase the local tourism suppliers' market share by satisfying a consumer demand. (UNWTO 2010)

Therefore, the purpose of this study, tourism product development is defined as the process by which the natural tourism resources a destination are formed to meet the requirements of international and domestic customers and to enhance visitors' experience in the destination.

In Ethiopia, tourism up to recent year has not been seriously considered as one of the strategies to foster economic developments and thereby improving the life of the people across the nations. Tourism development has often been focused at the macro level, on international promotion, attracting inward investment, major hotel and resort developments and on national and regional master planning. Currently, the government of Ethiopia has given due emphasis for tourism development since the sector has become one of the major sectors contributing for foreign income generation and job creation in the country. For instance, the WTTC (2019) report indicates that Ethiopia's tourism sector grew by 48.6% in 2018, and worth USD 7.4 billion. This makes up 9.4 percent of the economy and created 2.2 million jobs (over 8 % of Ethiopia's total workforce now works in tourism) in 2018 (WTTC, 2019). However the country needs more work to the development of products to the amount and quality that fits the existing demand. In addition to the existing tourism destination Ethiopia needs to use its potential by exploring the potential resources across a country and needs to change the resources in to meaningful tourist products and attraction.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

In Ethiopia there are a lot of natural, cultural, historical and religious based potential tourism resources that can increase the contribution of tourism for a country in many ways. For instance, Choke Mountain and its environs have huge tourism potentials and identified potential tourism resources which consisting of natural, cultural, and historical tourism attractions that can significantly attract tourists and to change the life of the local community around. However there is no significant tourism practice. For this purpose, the tourism products in areas with scenic features such as Choke Mountain have to be developed and promoted in a better way. One way of tourism product development in local destinations is through conducting a thorough study.

There is also scarce body of literature in the area of tourism product development and the existing body of literatures mainly focused on relates with cultural and historical resources, for instance a recent research conducted by Geremew (2015) focuses on the existing cultural and historical tourism resources in Tigray and Amhara regions, he failed to address natural tourism product development potentials as well as challenges/limitations.

It is only a study of Sintayehu. (2015), which has referred to Choke mountain to the best knowledge of the research with regard to prior studies in Choke and its environs for tourism development. Sintayehu argues that the major problem of Ethiopian tourism is lack of clear identification of new potential tourism sites in the country rather than highly depend on existing destinations. He also revealed that, Choke Mountain is endowed with potential tourism resources but the local communities and the region in general are not benefited from the tourism activities due to potential tourism resources were not clearly assessed, identified, recorded, mapped and developed.

Therefore, Choke Mountain can contribute for ecotourism development of the country like Semen and Bale Mountains National Parks. The other most remarkable feature of this mountain is the virtual existence of wetland ecosystems ranging from sedge swamps to seasonally flooded grasslands which covered more than 3386km<sup>2</sup>. Out of this figure, seasonal wetlands with high moisture, seasonal wetlands with low moisture, and open water constitutes 3000km<sup>2</sup>, 340km<sup>2</sup> and 46km<sup>2</sup> respectively (Teferi et al., 2010).

This study investigated tourism product development from the perspective of contribution of stakeholders to tourism literature in Ethiopia in three ways. First, unlike the prior studies which have examined tourism product development only by focusing on local communities (farmers, pastoralists and other residents), this study was also investigates tourism product development from the perspective of other potential suppliers. Second, unlike the previous studies which have focused on historical tourism product development (like Axum, Lalibela and Fasiledes) or cultural tourism resources (for example the peoples near Omo valley area in south Ethiopia, Harer and the life styles, traditional music, dance, ceremonies and dress of the people in all over the country), the study was examined tourism product development from a natural tourism resources development aspect. Third, Choke Mountain and surrounding have not a well-developed tourist facility and the integration of the stakeholders such as governments, local communities, private sectors and tourism professionals also fragmented, as no clear data in this regard the researcher was assessed the actual potentials and limitations to develop tourism products in Choke Mountain and its Environments.

### **1.3. Objectives of the study**

The main purpose of the study was to examine the potential and challenges of mountainous areas for tourism product development with a focus on Choke Mountain and its environs in Amhara region.

#### **Specific Objectives of the study include;**

1. To assess the potentials for tourism product development.
2. To identify the challenges for tourism product development.
3. To examine the awareness of local communities on tourism practices in the area
4. To identify the role of stakeholders in tourism product development in the area.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

Generally, the researcher tried to address the following questions:

1. What are the potentials for tourism product development in Choke Mountain and its environs?
2. What have been accomplished by concerned bodies in diversifying tourism products?
3. What are the challenges and difficulties to develop tourism products in the area?
4. How much does the local communities awareness on tourism practices in the area?

#### **1.5. Significance of the study**

The study addresses the knowledge gap on the theme of the implications of potential and challenges of tourism product development. By doing so, the study adds new knowledge and insights to tourism literature. Besides, the study will be used as a reference by other researchers who will undertake a similar study in the future. This study will also provide inputs to policy makers, academic institutions, tour companies, and destination managers and marketers in the study area, which are Choke Mountain and its environs. Additionally, the local tourism related business organizations get the hint how incorporate the area in their business plan.

#### **1.6. Scope of the Study**

The study mainly focused on assesses the potentials and challenges of tourism product development in Choke Mountain and its environs. The degree of diversification of tourism products, the stockholder collaboration in tourism product development and the challenges of tourism product development was assessed. Pertinent data to the study was collected by interview question, which was conducted between July and August 2020.

#### **1.7. Organization of the Study**

This study contains five chapters. About the first chapter gives background information about the study, statement of the problem, research objective and questions, significance of the study, scope of the study. Chapter two provides a review of related literature on the topic of study. Chapter three focuses on research methodology and presents the research design, target population and study area, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection instrument. In chapter four the collected data from key informants and FGD are presented and analyzed. In chapter five conclusion and recommendations are presented.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW LITERATURE

#### 2.1. Tourism Product development: A conceptual overview

A product is any offering that can satisfy a need or want of consumers. It may consist of one or a combination of components, including Physical goods, services, experiences, events, persons, places, properties, organizations, information and ideas (Kotler, 2001).

According to UNWTO, (2010) there are two aspects to define tourism product development the first is explain as it is not an activity undertaken in a vacuum, but it is part of an extensive and inter-linked process and the second is Market research, product development and marketing represent a continuum. The failure to deliver any of these key components was resulted in the destination under-realizing its potential.

The tourist product means customers value, which is the perceived benefits provided to meet the Customers' needs and wants, quality of service received, and the value for money. The tourist product is basically a complex human experience (Gunn 1988), which is an output of a production process, where the tourist utilizes the facilities and services to generate the final output, experience. Value is added in each step of the production process and also the consumer is an integral part of the process (Smith1994). The experience is a customer outcome, which, in the eyes of the customer, is associated with added value and quality. This outcome is created and interpreted during the customer process, which have been developed and organized by the service company Middleton & Clarke (2001).

A tourism product includes a combination of those components that contribute to the satisfaction of travelers. Brass (1997) suggests that tourism products can be classified into two major components: attractions and facilities. Attractions are those natural and human-made features and events that stimulate people to visit a destination. Facilities, on the other hand, provide necessities to both residents and tourists, and include roads, railway, airports, parking areas, hospitals, police, water and power services and accommodation.

From the point of a potential customer considering any form of tourist visit, the product may be defined as a bundle or package of tangible and intangible components, based on activity at a destination. The product is perceived by the tourist as an experience, available at a price. This tourist product can be divided in two levels: the total level referring to the complete experience of the tourist from the time one leaves home to the time one returns, being

synonymous with the components model. The other level is the specific level, which is that of a discrete product offered by a single business. The tourism product therefore can be seen as an amalgam component which is combination of services, commodities and other material and immaterial items including the whole tourist experience: from leaving home to return individual experience, impressions and things learned at a destination (Middleton 1989, Middleton & Clarke 2001).

### **2.1.1. Components of the Specific Tourist Product**

From customers benefit point of view what businesses of all types offer for sale, Levitt 's classic statement is concise: People do not buy products, they buy the expectation of benefits. It is the benefits that are the product '(Levitt, 1969). Developing this point, Kotler noted the customer is looking for particular utilities. Existing products are only a current way of packaging those utilities. The company must be aware of all the ways in which customers can gain the sought satisfaction (Kotler, 1976).

The tourist product is fundamentally a complex human experience, which is an output of a production process, where the tourist utilizes the facilities and services to generate the final output, experience (Smith, 1994, p. 590-591). Value is added in each stage of the production process and the consumer is an integral part of the process (Smith, 1994). The experience is a customer outcome, which, in the eyes of the customer, is associated with added value and quality. This outcome is created and interpreted during the customer process, which have been developed and organized by the service company (Edvardsson & Olsson, 1999)

The four levels of a tourist product are the core product, the formal (or tangible) product and the augmented product and the potential product (Middleton & Clarke, 2001; Levitt, 1981). The core product, the idea, the key message, is the essential service or benefit designed to satisfy the identified needs of target customer segments. The formal product means the specific offer for sale stating what a customer was receive for the money. This tangible product is a marketing interpretation that turns the core into a specific offer. It contains the facilitating products, the services and goods that must be present for the guest to use the core product as well as some extra supporting products. The brochure description of the formal product forms the basis for the sale. The terms product design or —physical evidencell are identified as one way to differentiate the formal product (Middleton & Clarke, 2001).

The augmented product comprises all the forms of added value producers build into their formal product offers to make them more attractive. It comprises the difference between the

contractual essentials of the formal product and the totality of all the benefits experienced in relation to the delivery of the product. The brand or the image of the product is always part of augmentation. The augmented product may contain supporting products which are extra offered to add value to the core product and help to differentiate it from the competition (Middleton & Clarke 2001). In this study accessibility, atmosphere customer interaction with the service organization and customer participation are all considered as components of the augmented product as they are used by Kotler et.al. (1999).

The model of a generic tourism product presented by Smith (1994) poses a product concept that consists of the elements of the tourism product and the process by which those elements are assembled. The relative importance of each element varies, depending on the specific type of product, but all tourist products incorporate all five. While visitors are coming from their area of origin across many areas they consume different tangible and intangible products though values differ across the ways and from place to place. Smith's model explicitly acknowledges the role of human experience in the tourist product. The generic product may take a wide variety of real forms, but each form of same generic product was providing the same function, which in the case of tourism is the facilitation of travel and activity of individuals away from their usual environment (Smith, 1994).

According to Smith the core of any tourism product is the physical plant, which refers to the place and the conditions of the physical environment, such as weather, water, infrastructure etc. The physical plant requires the input of the services to make it useful for tourists. By the services Smith refers to the performance of specific tasks required to meet the needs of tourists (e.g. front desk operations at a hotel, food and beverages provisions etc).

The third component of the tourist product is hospitality, which is —the something extra, the fulfilled expectation of the tourist The fourth component is the tourist's freedom of choice, which refers to the necessity that the traveler has some acceptable range of options in order for experience to be satisfactory.

The fifth is the customer involvement, which refers to the fact that the customer participation is a relevant part of a service process. The basis for successful participation by consumers in producing tourist products is the combination of an acceptable physical plant, good service, hospitality and freedom of choice. Involvement is not only a physical participation, but a sense of engagement, of focusing on the activity.

The progression of elements from the core to the shell is correlated with declining direct management control, increasing consumer involvement, increasing intangibility and decreasing potential for empirical measurement.

## **2.2. Nature based tourism product development**

Nature-based tourism is a new tourism arena which has seen significant development in recent years. Nature-based tourism offers significant profitable opportunities that support both conservation and employment across a geographical area. Potts and Rourke (2000) critically examine the factors that contribute to the success of nature based- tourism enterprises. They stated that the most important characteristic of nature based- tourism is that it is directly affected by the quality of the environment, which are both the product and the place where the tourism operations are carried out.

McNeely (2007) focus on the risks associated with nature-based tourism. The study states that nature-based tourism poses risks to the natural environment, to local communities (especially indigenous peoples, who may be especially vulnerable in the more remote areas), to the tourism industry itself which suffers from fiscal fluctuations and, consequently, to the regional and national economy. Also, tourists themselves may face health and safety hazards as an indirect consequence of nature-based tourism.

The authors identified four elements that are desirable for the successful management of risks associated with nature-based tourism. a favorable regulatory framework and futuristic government policies; adequate financial support for conservation and nature protection; edification of all the stakeholders; and intelligent and adaptive management at the site level management.

## **2.3. New product development–a product formulation view**

To stay ahead of the competition, proactive tourism enterprises must constantly look for new product innovations. The traditional product life cycle theory indicates that typically products were having stages of growth, maturity, saturation and decline in sales and profits. This theoretical model seems to hold true also for tourist products, which means that the question of product development and new- product innovations is important in tourism companies.

It is sometimes difficult to define what is meant by a new product. Improvements to an existing product can render that product so new as to make it seen by prospective purchasers

as a genuinely new product, and if an existing product is launched to a new market or to other purposes, that product is also new for the customer.

The need for new-product development arises from the customer needs: in most of the cases the existing customers need new experiences. The marketing strategy and the promotion budgets should be modest: EOMs should concentrate in answering inquires rather than looking for new clients. The word-of-mouth promotion as well as the loyalty of existing customers can direct strategies to service development (introduce new products to present customers) and market penetration (modification of existing products for present customers). Market development (repositioning present products to attract new markets) can be considered and later practiced in way it is directed to target customers (Kotler, 2003).

In most cases the tourist products are advances on and modifications of existing products. According to Zeithaml and Bitner (1996) the types of new product options vary from major innovations to minor style changes. Major innovations are new services for markets as yet undefined. Start-up businesses consist of new products for a market that is already served by existing products that meet the same generic needs. New services for the currently served market represent attempts to offer existing customers a service not previously available from the company, although it may be available from other companies. Product line extensions represent augmentations of the existing product line; product improvements represent the most common type of service innovation. Style changes represent the most modest product innovations, although they are often highly visible and can have significant effects on customer perceptions.

An underlying assumption of new-product development process models is that new-product ideas can be dropped at any stage of the process if they do not satisfy the criteria for success at the particular stage. The process can be divided into two sections: front end planning and implementation. The front end determines what product concepts will be developed. The organization is assumed to have an overall strategic vision and mission, which determine the new-product strategies of the organization (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996).

The first actual step in the new product development is the idea generation, which can be systematic search of new ideas. Typical sources of ideas may be formal brainstorming, solicitation of ideas from employees and customers, lead-user research, learning about competitors 'offerings etc. It is from within the company where more than half of the new product ideas come from and one quarter comes from customers and the remaining idea may

be gained from competitors (Kotler et.al, 1999). The new-product ideas are in most cases can be based on the opportunities or other products or Mattraction available. The idea generation is can be either derived from the capabilities of the owners or managers, or from experiences of other places.

The idea generation is tourism companies can be based on again client requirements. The core products are created as mobile as possible, as user friendly as possible and for as many persons as possible. The modifications of the core product are then developed following the resources of the customer. The service concept is dependent on the company resources (staff, equipment) as well as availability of suitable partners and their resources. The entrepreneurs can use different kinds of sources for idea generation. Most of the product concepts require very little investments in equipment or physical plant, but the most difficult thing is to invent little core idea of the product (Murphy, 1999).

During the idea generation a large number of ideas can often be often created. The purpose of screening the ideas is to reduce the number of ideas. The idea screening is the appropriate time to review carefully the question of product line compatibility (Kotler *et.al.*; 1999). The key questions to ask when screening product ideas is, if there is a market for the product, if the product is a right one for the company product strategy and if the product can be produced profit (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996).

A clear definition of the product concept should be the outcome of the product development and evaluation stage. The new product concept would then to be evaluated by employees and customers. The next step is to determine the feasibility and potential profit implications. Demand analysis, revenue projections, cost analyses, and operational feasibility are assessed at this stage. The stage were involve preliminary assumptions about the costs of hiring and training personnel, delivery system enhancements, facility changes and any other projected costs (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996).

Once the new product concept has passed all the front-end planning stages, the concept is ready for the implementation stages. During this phase, the concept is refined to the point where a detailed product blueprint representing the implementation plan for the product can be produced and tested by the personnel.

The market testing phase is in tourism industry often implemented by introducing the new tourist product to a certain group of customers or representatives of intermediary

stakeholders. If the product has passed all the former stages the product goes live and is introduced to the market place (commercialization).

A very important phase is the post-introduction evaluation. At this point, the information gathered during commercialization can be reviewed and changes made to the delivery process, staffing or marketing-mix variables (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996).

The market testing and commercialization phases cannot be separated. When a new product has got its formal form, it is offered for the customers. Some products sell as such, most of the offerings have to be modified, modules have to be changed etc. The core product may live and the modifications of it, the formal products, may form a new product line. But in most cases the cores as well as the formal products sell only a couple of times and the company keeps on the basic old products. The entrepreneurs do not pay much attention to the reasons of these failures but keep on generating new ideas.

#### **2.4. The role of stakeholder in tourism development**

The stakeholder approach was born in 1984 for serving business management. However, with its effectiveness, Stakeholder approach has been applied in many areas such as rural development (Simmons 1994), public management (Litvin 2005), and tourism development (Aas et al. 2005).

Critically, no matter the area, the stakeholders must be identified carefully, every group has its own interest and duty, so the plan could not be achieved without any of them (Byrd 2007). The stakeholders have to insist on planning and management process as the whole (Gunn 1994).

Sassenberg (2009) took case study of Golden bay in sustainable tourism development, New Zealand to enhance the role of stakeholder. The study indicated that the sustainable tourism development is contributed by four stakeholders: local community, business organization, authorized governance, and research institute.

The case of Selman, USA shows that Byrd (2007) shared the same idea of collaboration between community, government, and business organizations. Especially, the research highlighted the public sector's role; the authors mentioned that the process should firstly start from governance people, who are advised by research institutes. They were proposing the plan and connect all the parts to work together. Furthermore, this approach was also applied in developing regions.

Aas et al. (2005) also worked on three stakeholders for the case study in Luang Prabang (Laos). The authors described the role of many stakeholders and found out that three major stakeholders who have greatest impact were tour operator, government, and community. However, the study also showed that maintaining the collaboration of those three parts in a developing region was a real challenge, because their interests and benefits are hardly met at the same point.

According to Darko (2011) stakeholders approach brings qualitative and quantitative improvement in tourism supply. It improves tourism consumption and visitor experience practices and the wellbeing of protected areas. The practice of smooth interaction among communities, tourism operators and policy makers would be necessary to achieve sustainable tourism development. It enhances the protection of heritages and other natural and cultural tourism products in the destination. Besides, coordination among stakeholders contributes a lot to promote sustainable tourism development in the destinations. (Caffyn&Jobbins, 2003).

Mahdayani (2011) conducted a study at Khaoyai National Park in Thailand and asserted that stakeholders are engines in sustainable tourism developments. They are expected to create conducive environment for the visitors.

Furthermore, UNWTO (2005), the term stakeholders in tourism development includes the following key players:

Local governments, Tourism business operators, Tourism employees, tourism professionals and tourism consultants, Tourism education and training centers, Host communities at tourism destinations

#### **2.4.1.1 Government**

The necessity for government involvement in tourism development is widely recognized (Zhao & Timothy, 2015). As Dredge (2010) points out, the key function of government is to protect and enhance public interest.

A key motivator behind such involvement is the responsibility for controlling and monitoring the scope and pace of tourism development. In addition, tourism is a highly fragmented sector where issues and conflict emerge and intertwine, often unsolvable by the private sector, thus calling for government involvement (Bramwell & Alletorp, 2001; Qin, Wall, & Liu, 2011; Zhao & Timothy, 2015).

The ultimate goal of government is to create employment opportunities and hence contribute to the overall economic and social development of a nation (Baum & Szivas, 2008). It can be said that all governments have some sort of policy for tourism development (Baum & Szivas, 2008).

As Smith (1989) pointed out, 'government agencies ... have adopted a progressively more active role in the use of tourism as a development tool' Government involvement in tourism is usually done through formal ministries and other institutions (Nunkoo, 2015). However, the level of involvement was vary based on the importance of tourism within the national/local economy and political philosophies and can range from a very active one to deliberate distancing or incompetent neglect (Baum & Szivas, 2008). Initially, government involvement in tourism can be described as 'infrastructure and facility provider', concentrating on roads and utilities.

(Ruhanen, 2013). Progressively, the government takes on a more leading role and adopts the role of entrepreneur, formulating policies, developing and initiating plans, and operating and providing tourism and hospitality services. Since tourism is more susceptible to distortion and failure than other industries, government intervention is generally linked to some form of market failure or market imperfection.

It is for these reasons that government involvement is generally considered the most suitable locus in terms of destination management, such as planning, financing, promotion, and regulation among others (Bramwell, 2011; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Shone, Simmons, & Dalziel, 2016; Tang & Jang, 2009).

Government intervention is particularly necessary in situations that provide large net gains or where everyone benefits, maximizing social welfare (Hall, 2005). As Shone et al. (2016) point out, 'government involvement in, and/or co-ordination of, strategic tourism planning is necessary because the development of tourism was not optimal if left in the hands of profit-motivated private sector entrepreneurs' (p. 1676).

This is especially true for developing economies, where tourism planning and promotion is directly controlled by the government (Kubickova, 2017; Yang, Wall, & Smith, 2006). As highlighted in a study conducted by the World Travel and Tourism Council, 'economies that adopt a whole government approach to tourism development and management are among the most successful in terms of tourism performance'. However, poorly designed and executed policies may have damaging effects to a country's tourism (Manuela & de Vera, 2015).

#### **2.4.1.2. Private sector involvement and engagement in tourism development**

From the private sector perspective, some sort of government involvement in tourism, were always exist, influencing the performance of firms (Wang & Xu, 2014). This is since tourism is often embodied by free ‘rides’ and its performance largely depends on the success of other industries in the destination (Croes, 2011).

For example, one firm is unable to receive full benefits from providing reliable electricity system or destination marketing. Therefore, government involvement is a pre-requisite to achieve tourism competitiveness, being particularly at risk if government policy fails. However, as some argue, tourism development dominated by the public sector is unlikely to achieve an optimal economic return (Shone et al., 2016). Therefore, as destinations develop and mature in terms of tourism, some functions of the government are taken over by the private sector and are commercialized in order to reduce public debt and encourage competitiveness (Hall, 1999; Zhao & Timothy, 2015).

A suitable balance between public and private sector is vital in ensuring optimal tourism outcomes for destination areas (Shone et al., 2016). The implication is that tourism policy and planning now occur by incorporating state and non-state organizations (Mosedale, 2014). Rather, an increase in partnerships between governments and businesses is created through which tourism flourish (or stagnate and decline) (Dredge & Jenkins, 2009; Shone et al., 2016).

As Zhao and Timothy point out (2015), ‘tourism is always a mix of government and private operations. Although, the general trends today are less government and more industry self-regulation (p.491). This has been a challenge for many governments in developing economies where strong industry self-regulation is minimal.

In addition, collaboration and cooperation among tourism operators have arisen from the need to provide a superior product/service and to achieve broad-based support for policies permitting to compete (Vernon, Essex, Pinder, & Curry, 2005). Unlike in developed countries, such an idea of collaboration and cooperation is fairly new to developing economies (Adu-Ampong, 2017).

Unfortunately, the reality shows that the success of stakeholder collaboration is very limited as over half of all collaborative relationships result in failure (McComb et al., 2017).

Often, collaborative process can overcome power imbalances or as Tosun (2000) states, it may not be appropriate in developing countries due to operational, structural and cultural limits (Adu- Ampong, 2017). However, if collaboration and cooperation are executed successfully, it allows countries to remain competitive in attracting investment, improving the inter-organizational relationship between stakeholders, and allowing to pool resources together for cost-effectiveness (Adu-Ampong, 2017; Pansiri, 2013).

Since tourism industry mandates for companies to work together in order to create the overall experience, leading to guest satisfaction and destination competitiveness, investigating the role of private sector and the impact they can have on government decision in terms of tourism development is particularly critical.

According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MOCT, 2009), the development of tourism and full benefits from the sector in the country has remained uncoordinated and unsustainable. This is due to lack of clear policy that directs cooperation and coordination among government, private sector and communities.

The government of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has realized the problems of the sector and giving special attention to the issue. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism under Proclamation Number 471/2005 redefine the powers and duties of the organs of the federal government with respect to tourism.

Although tourism is an activity carried out by private sector enterprises, governments have to play a crucial role in the development and management of tourism resources. The primary function of government is to enable the private sector to operate tourism activities smoothly. Government bodies in tourism also influence patterns of visitor flows and behaviors to optimize the benefits of tourism (UNWTO & UNEP, 2005).

Local government shall be responsible to ensure preparations and implementations of tourism development plans. Enforcement of standards for tourism is undertaken by government bodies in the sector. Besides, encouraging private tourism business investments and participation in tourism related activities is the concern of the local and national tourism bodies (Aser & Elazique, 2011).

#### **2.4.1.3 Tourism business operators**

Tourism incorporates service providing organizations which could encourage or support tourist activities. Local stakeholders often need to participate in small and medium sized tourism and travel enterprises like lodging, catering, travel agent business, tour operator

business, tour guiding services and transportation services that are vital for tourism development (Swarbrook, 1999). Pastiu *et al.* (2014) ascertained that tour operator and travel agencies working locally, nationally and internationally need to be supported. They should always be encouraged to improve their products to be offered to the visitors. It is necessary to improve cooperation among all those parties involved in the tourism activities within a given country. Thus, it enables tourism business operators to offer high quality travel products. Accordingly, travel agents and tour operators play decisive roles in visitor management and sustainable tourism development through:

- Creating better staff training in the field, both in terms of the accumulation of expertise as well as acquiring knowledge of more than one foreign language.
- Offering additional services and several leisure options to tourists.
- Improving level of visitor satisfaction with the chosen destinations.
- Creating high-potential tourism products specific to the regions of the county

Apart from tour operators and travel agents, tour guides are expected to take part in the process of visitor management. Therefore, tour guides are considered as educators to provide information which concerns the economic, environmental, social and cultural aspects of the tourist site. They often extend hospitality and present numerous features of the destination to the visitors (Zafer&Yavuz, 2016).

A guided tour is composed with different components which are organized to be offered to the visitors (Bowie & Chang, 2005). Thus, components of guided tour encompass pre-arrival services, accommodation, restaurants and transportation services (Xu & Chan, 2010). Group travelers often need to have tour leaders or tour guides during the on-tour process contrary to the independent travel which is performed by the traveler himself/herself (Wang *et al.*, 2000).

In a nutshell, Pond (1993) mentioned that tour guides occupy a very special position in the tourism system. So that, in terms of organization, they are an essential part of the supply side components. Tour guides are also regarded as service providers within a destination.

Besides, tour operators, travel agents and tour guides should work together with universities and other learning and teaching institutions. Hence, the following section describes the role of educational institutions in visitor management and sustainable tourism development scenarios.

#### **2.4.1.4 Educational institutions**

Education holds a special place in the hospitality and tourism sectors. In fact, the overall quality of hospitality and tourism sector depends on education. As a result, sustainable tourism demands an efficient national policy of education and professional development (Perman & Mikinac, 2014).

In Ethiopia, there are few universities and government vocational institutions providing training in tour guiding, hotel management and tourism management. These institutions are important in filling gaps observed in trained man power in the sector. Relevant research works which consolidate tourism sectors ability to mobilize the country's economy are produced from universities.

The starting of postgraduate program in hospitality management in Hawassa University and tourism development in Addis Ababa Universities contribute a lot in fostering tourism researches and activities in the country. Furthermore, the presence of universities and other learning and teaching institutions are critical in promoting and creating community awareness regarding visitor management and sustainable tourism. The following section provides community involvement in connection with visitor management and sustainable tourism development.

#### **2.4.1.5. Local community involvement**

According to Godfrey and Clarke (2000:3) communities form a basic element in modern tourism as: They are the focal point in supplying accommodation, catering, information and transport facilities and services. Their local natural environment, buildings and institutions, culture and history, all form core elements of what the tourists come to see. Every community has tourism at one level or the other and is affected by the growth and development of the industry.

Allowing communities to forward their own opinion in reference to visitor management could be necessary to advocate sustainable tourism activities. Obviously, community involvement facilitates the success of tourism development (Thochom, 2014).

Similarly, community led tourism practices entail sustainable tourism development dimensions

(Richards & Hall, 2000). They are regarded as legitimate and moral stakeholders in tourism development (Haukeland, 2011; Jamal & Stronza, 2009). The interests of communities are also affected by decisions of key policy makers (Cool, 2009).

Community involvement is not as simple as recording the number of community members who participated for tourism process. In practice, there is a typology of participation ranging from passive, active, interactive and self-mobilization (Pretty and Hine, 1999).

Thus, in many past tourism planning processes, local people were passive participants in tourism processes (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). For the most part, these have been replaced with more inclusive processes in which stakeholders participate in functional, interactive, or even selfmobilization levels, and locals are included in discussions, decision-making and even for facilitation process (Grybovych & Hafermann, 2010).

Therefore, to promote sustainable tourism development, a lot must be done from the grass root. Best practices in cultural heritage and tourism management approaches seek to involve local people in all stages. Local people participation is supported by government through training and financial support (Loulanski, 2011).

Sustainable tourism development programs need to be participatory, responsive, and transparent. Local communities must not be absolutely dependent on financial support from the government and other NGOs rather communities should support the local economies via executing various activities related to tourism (Kayat, 2014).

#### **2.4.2 Stakeholder collaboration**

Stakeholder collaboration embraces the participative processes recognized as a core principle of sustainable development, particularly when a wide and representative range of stakeholders from the destination community are able to play an active role and strive together to meet common objectives (Beritelli, 2010; Dredge, 2006). Achieving a reasonable degree of consensus on desired directions for tourism development is considered an important ingredient for the longterm success of a destination (mccomb et al., 2016), and as a tourism destination encompasses multiple, interdependent stakeholders who often hold divergent views on tourism development, collaboration theory is useful for managing tourism related issues at the destination level (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Reed, 1999).

Collaboration is defined as “working with partners to leverage existing resources to provide maximum strategic benefit” (Hardy, Phillips, & Lawrence, 2003, p. 325).

Stakeholder collaboration normally occurs “when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain” (Wood & Gray, 1991b, p. 146).

Here stakeholders can be defined as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p. 46).

They are “entities which can and are making their actual stakes known (sometimes called ‘voice’), and, on the other end, by those which are or might be influenced by, or are or potentially are influencers of, some organization or another, whether or not this influence is perceived or known” (Strarik, 1994, p. 90).

In a tourism destination, stakeholders can include: the government (international, national, regional and local); government departments with links to tourism; international, national, regional and local tourism organizations; tourism developers and entrepreneurs, tourism industry operators; non-tourism business practitioners, and the community including local community groups, Indigenous people's groups and local residents.

As destination areas grow and the associated problems with this increase, government leaders, resource planners and entrepreneurs were incapable of dealing with problems if each stockholder acts in isolation (Waayers et al., 2012). According to Getz and Jamal (1994), stakeholder collaboration can facilitate a dynamic and flexible process, which provides a framework for joint decision-making through multi-stakeholder involvement within a temporary or longer-term structure. The process requires direct dialogue among participating stakeholders and recognizing their interdependence, with the objective of generating a collective vision, shared decisionmaking and consensus-building about planning, goals and actions for tourist a destination (Richins, 2009; Waayers et al., 2012).

Indeed, it is claimed that the ‘go-it-alone’ policies of the past are giving way, as government and public agencies in many developed countries endorse stronger cooperation and collaboration in tourism planning (Bramwell& Lane, 2000; Getz & Jamal, 1994; Jamal & Getz, 1995). Yet the success of stakeholder collaborations is largely dependent on coordinating the voice of stakeholders and to do so it is necessary to understand their salience in a collaborative process (Kennedy &Augustyn, 2014; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005).

Identifying stakeholder salience helps effective stakeholder coordination, inclusion or exclusion of stakeholders in cooperative actions, and categorization of their roles in certain

projects (Boatright, 2002; Jamal & Getz, 2000; Medeiros de Araujo & Bramwell, 1999). Mitchell et al. (1997) developed a stakeholder salience model.

In this model, the authors suggest that one of the attributes to effectively identify stakeholder salience is the notion of power, which certain stakeholders were possessing and use to influence others in a collaborative process.

## **2.5 Challenges of tourism product development in the destinations**

Fabian Weber & Barbara Tauter (2017) on the research conducts on the challenges of developing sustainable tourism product on the destination in Switzerland and summaries the main challenges as flow

1. High coordination effort Form a board consisting of the stakeholders that meets regularly.
2. Time pressure Calculate enough time for the development and implementation of sustainable tourism products.
3. Lack of resources Strategic planning and prioritization of tasks is needed in order to address the lack of resources.
4. Insufficient quality of the product Sustainability alone is not sufficient for a good product. In order to develop attractive sustainable products, the integration of innovative aspects is crucial.
5. Lack of staff expertise Raising staff awareness and training is important to establish a corporate culture that considers sustainability.
6. Systematic approach Systematic processes, checklists and templates help to enable an organized and standardized approach and can ensure quality assurance.
7. Dependence on stakeholders and service providers Inclusion and motivation of the service providers is crucial, since they are needed for the development of new attractive tourism products.
8. Lack of expertise of the tourism service providers Raising awareness and qualifications of service providers is needed. Additionally, professional assistance through auxiliary tools and checklists can be useful.
9. Insufficient communication with visitors Honest and transparent communication with visitors is important. Interested visitors should have ready access to information regarding (sustainable) tourism products and sustainable activities of the destination.

10. Efficient controlling in order to measure the effect of the measures and new products, clear objectives and a few but relevant indicators are required.

## **2.6 Conceptual Framework**

As the graph below shows that to have a sustainable tourism product in the destination there should be resource like natural, cultural and historical, then to use and develop the resources in to product there need the active involvement and coordination of different stakeholders, those stakeholders may face different challenges and exert different effort to do them products. Finally, the expected sustainable tourism product will be developed

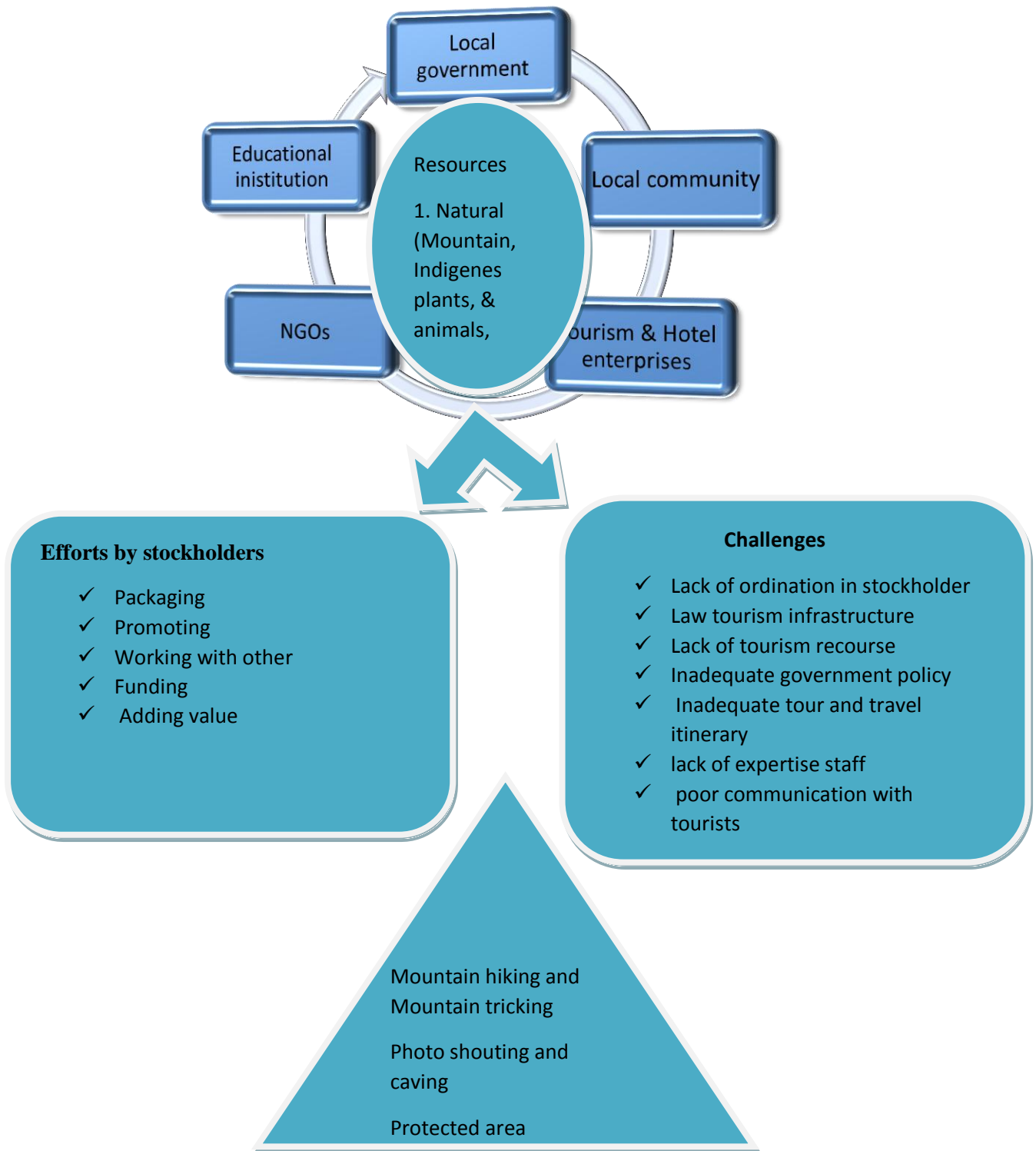


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework Source: (own work, 2020)

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Description of Study Area

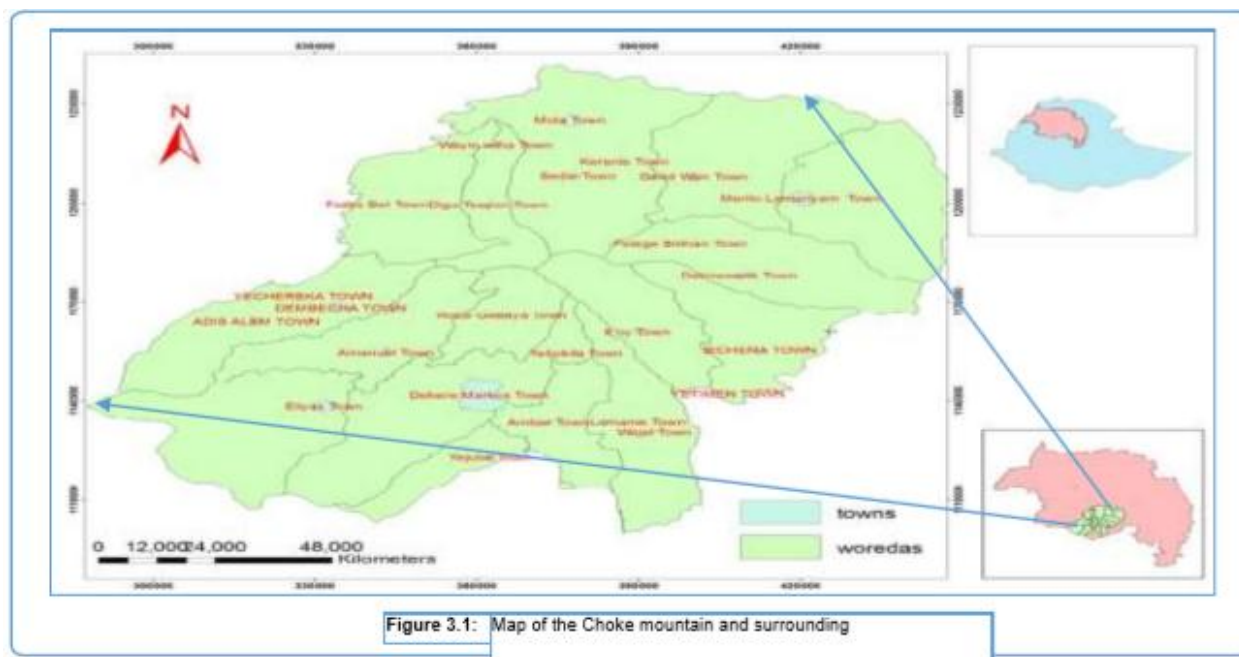


Figure 3.1: Map of the Choke mountain and surrounding

#### Map 3.1 Map of Choke Mountain, map from east Gojjam culture and tourism office, 2019

Choke Mountain range, center of attention of this study, is found in East Gojjam Zone, Amhara region, Ethiopia. It is located with Lake Tana and Bahir Dar in the north and DebreMarkos in the south. The mountain lies between the altitudes of 810 m and 4070 m above sea level. Choke Mountain range is considered as the water tower of the upper Blue Nile river system in Ethiopia. It is the source of more than 59 rivers, and 273 small springs which are the main tributaries of Upper Blue Nile (Teferi et al., 2010).

Among the major rivers that are originated from this mountain, Gulla, Chemoga, Temecha, Gedeb, Tijan, Tefe, Teme, Azewari, Sede, EnatMuga, GilgelMuga, Zimbl, Komed, Oromo Meshageriya, TilikuAbeya, TinishuAbeya, Ayabab and Gudela are few of them. In addition to this Choke Mountain have many potential resources that can be used as a destination for many local and foreign tourists just like other sites of the country. Among the potential resources, the existence of marvelous landscape, the four stepped mountains (AratMekeraker in Amharic), Molalecave (molaleWasha), Leba cave (Lebawasha) and many unique and common biological diversity like Gibra (Giant Lobelia rhynchopetalum) and Key Kebero

(Ethiopian Wolf), and the cool temperate agro-ecological (Wurch in Amharic) zone are the few. (Sintayehu, 2015)

Choke mountain areas is easily accessible with excellent national road network system and it is found in nearby Debre Markos City capital of Eastern Gojjam. Accessibility could be possible via car.

### **3.2. Research design**

To achieve the research objective of this study, descriptive research design were utilized to assess and explore the potential and limitations of new tourism product development in Choke Mountain and its environs.

### **3.3. Research approach**

This study employed qualitative types of research, according to (Cameron, 2009); qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting and involves a process of building a complex and holistic picture of the phenomenon of interest. Since one of the major reasons for doing qualitative research is to become more experienced with the phenomenon under study and to investigate complex and sensitive issues. On the other hand, this can further be used to identify factors that affect employees job satisfaction were be contributed added value on the exploration of challenges of tourism product development.

### **3.4. Data sources and types**

This study was based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through focus group discussion, depth interview and participant observation. Secondary data were gathered from various documents like; related books, internet sources, previous researches related to the research problem.

### **3.5. Subjects of the study**

The target population of this study were local community, tourism experts, academicians and office holders at zonal and woreda level., hence, subjects of the study was selected from east Gojjam Zone cultural and tourism officers, Tourism experts in Debre Markos city, Debre Markos University's conservation center, Senan and Bubegn Woreda culture and tourism office and Senan woreda community.

### **3.6. Sample size and Sampling techniques**

In this study non-probability sampling technique was applied. Respondents are purposively selected based on their previous experience, position and educational background on the

issue, in order to get in depth information about the research problem at hand. To get the maximum theoretical data saturation 12 respondents in interview and one FGD with the member of 7 were held in Senan woreda (Rebu Gebya) based on the principle of data saturation and the respondents from the local communities also was selected purposely.

### **3.7. Data gathering tools and procedures**

For the sake of answering research questions and to meet objectives of the study, the researcher was pay attention to employ significant data gathering instruments. Due to this reason, the researcher was used the following data collection instruments, these are;

#### **Depth interview**

Individual discussions with key senior experts, and policy and decision makers from the east Gojjam Culture and Tourism offices, particularly in Senan woreda, Bubugn woreda and Debre Markos university were conducted in order to elaboration the challenges/limitations being faced and the tourism potentials of the area.

All interviews were be recorded by digital voice recorder after requesting their consent and notes were also take throughout the course of the interview.

#### **Focus group discussion (FGD)**

The FGD was conducted at Senan woreda local community. The group was organized based on the objectives of the study. All group discussions may be recorded by digital voice recorder and notes also were taking throughout the course of the group discussion. To assure generalize-ability, data were having collected from the maximum recommended number of samples based on the principle of data saturation and the heterogeneity/homogeneity of the participants was considered.

### **3.8. Data analysis procedure**

After the data was collected, it was done by proper way of analysis in order to interpret and draw conclusion from the mass of collected data. The qualitative data was generated from interview, focus group discussion; observation checklists and document consultations was categorized in accordance with the research objectives to triangulate quantitative information.

Indeed, in this study the data was analyzed through Narrative analysis and also researcher were used the direct quotation of respondents including the organization / where they came. This method involves the reformulation of stories presented by respondents taking into account context of each case and different experiences of each respondent.

### **3.9. Ethical issues**

The researcher of this thesis has been attempted to consider these issues in respect of each as follows. Voluntary participation and harmlessness: Subjects in a research project must be aware that their participation in the study is voluntary, that they have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any unfavorable consequences, and they are not harmed as a result of their participation or non-participation in the thesis. To this effect, the researcher was giving freedom to the respondents.

**Privacy and confidentiality:** to protect subjects' interests and future well-being, their identity must be protected in a scientific study.

**Briefing:** usually, the researcher has an obligation to provide some information about his/her study to potential subjects before data collection to help him/her decide whether or not they wish to participate in the study.

**Analysis and reporting:** it has been evident that the researcher also has ethical obligations to the scientific community on how data is analyzed and reported in the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. Result and Discussions

In this chapter data gathered from interviews, FGD and personal observation has been analyzed, discussed and presented in structured narrative way.

#### 4. 1. The potential tourism resources of Choke Mountain and its environments

The potential tourism attractions were viewed in terms of examining and identifying essential aspect of natural historical tourism resources. The area has unique biodiversity resources which include plant, animal, and bird species.

For instance, in the study of Sintayhu (2015), the rural communities of Choke Mountain and their surrounding have colorful cultural values which include both tangible and intangible cultural heritages like living styles, traditional systems, artifacts, built environment, social structure, architecture, paintings, and other historical values like historical buildings, palace, battle fields, story, and oral tradition. These resources have the indispensable values to develop community-based ecotourism in the area. In the words of one respondent (code 001), this is explained as follows”

*“...The tourism potential of the area is the agricultural activities. Due to this potential, agro tourism activities have to be developed in the rural area of Choke Mountain...” [R-001, interviewed on Agust28, 2020].*

And respondent (code 001) continued the speech, the way how they are farming is cultural, and it can be tourism potential, also tourists and visitors may have interest by the farming system that the farmer is practiced in Choke areas.

*“...The rural communities of Choke Mountain have practiced traditional farming system which can be very interesting especially for foreign tourists. The way how to farm by using Ox and Horse, the season of farming, and the type of farming activities and agricultural products are some of the elements that attract visitors in the area...”[R-001, interviewed on Agust28, 2020].*

And respondent (code 003) also adds that choke has a potential to compute with other destination in the regions.

*“There are a lot of natural, cultural and historical heritages in choke areas like forests, mountains, caves, carts, lakes, and attractive landscapes.....culturally also rich area choke*

*is known in old historical churches, monasteries, and festivals with cultural music and dancing style in addition to the community's way of life..."*[R-003, interviewed on Agust27, 2020].

The area can be a tourist destination and can attract tourist if its uniqueness, diversified in naturally, choke can be tourist destination and easy to develop tourism products.

The current study is supported by a book of Tomas and Mildton (Guidelines for management planning of protected areas 2003) and that were states that the area has a potential to be an attraction if it experienced with uniqueness and diversity of natural resources.

#### **4.1.1. Nature based tourism resources of Choke Mountain and its environs**

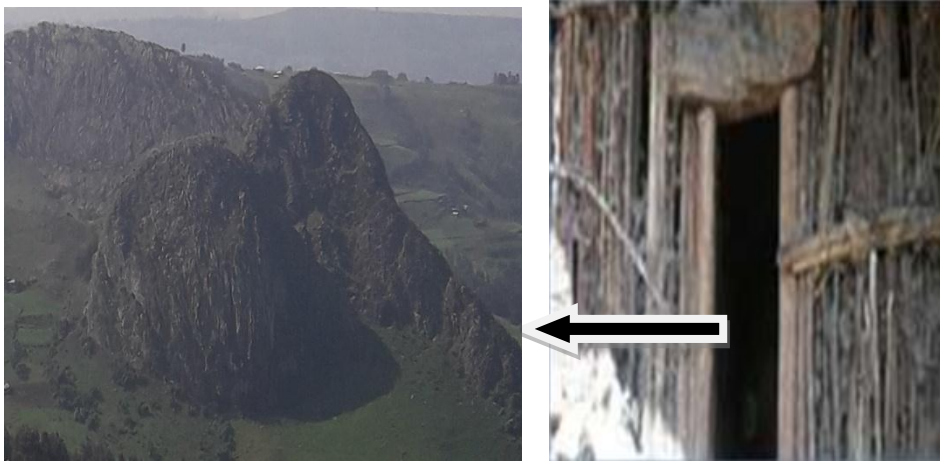
Based on the East Gojjam Zone culture and tourism officers and other respondents the nature based tourism resources of Choke Mountain is preferred as it has diverse range of geographical features like land forms, water basin, gorges, cliff, native biological diversity and other spectacular views. Comprehensively, the result indicated that the scenic beauty of landscapes is the big nature-based resources and wildlife resources, and variation of rainfall wind, temperature and humidity are the other nature based tourism resources.

And this is supported by the book by Tomas and Mildton, (Guidelines for management planning of protected areas 2003) identify the criteria of being unique and valuable or exceptional value of those manmade and natural tourism resources. So that, in this perspective resources in Choke mountains has potential for a tourism market as it has the above remarkable potential tourism resources.

The mountain geographical land escape is one of the major potentials for the Choke Mountain. So the accountable and responsible body should be organized to protect, and develop different parts of the mountain to make them ready for the tourists who are interested to visit the amazing mountain related tourism like mountain Hiking & Trekking and photo touring in addition to visiting the amazing nature and culture of the area.

Besides this Choke also known by the water tower of Africa because according to Senan woreda 2018 land administration and protection officials report, it is the source of more than 23 major rivers and 273 small streams flowing into the Blue Nile and Choke contribute more than 10% for Nile river, so the office is doing its own protection activities on the mountain and it were help the area to protect the nature of the environment. As the response of many interviewees from different respondents the researcher identified the following nature-based tourism resources in Choke and its environments.

## 1. Mollale Washa(Mollale cave)



**Picture 4.1 Mollale cave (Mollale Washa)-own survey 2020**

Mollale Cave is found in East Gojjam Bebugn woreda and it is located 61 kilometer from Debre Markos. The cave has an estimated height of 150 m and the height from the floor to the ceiling is 3 meter and 60 cm, its door entrance wide and height is 12 m and 3 m respectively. The unique feature of the cave besides its view is serving as human shelter since 1902 in the form of succession.

Respondent (code 007), is explained as follows”

*“... Once upon a time a woman migrated into this cave before 100 years ago to protect her cattle from epidemic disease. Then after, the local communities totally isolated her from their social ties. As a result of this, the woman had no option other than living within the cave. From that time onwards she made the cave as permanent house....”[R-007, interviewed on September 02, 2020].*

The other unique feature of the cave is the presence of lake inside the cave. The cave is covered by the lake in its half part is mysterious of God’s creature. But in relation to the size and deepest of the lake and formation, there is no information, and it needs further study. Currently, the fourth grandchild, Ato Likenaw Ademe and his wife Chekolech Molla together with their five children are living in the cave as a permanent residential. The inside part of the cave has an estimated width of 10-15m, and which is classified in three rooms for family, cattle, sheep and goats similar with other ordinary residential houses.

## 2. Arat Mekerakir (The four stepped mountain chains)



**Picture 4.2 Arat Mekerakir –picture from Senan woreda culture and tourism office (2020)**

This remarkable landscape is found in Senan woreda in the south west of the mountain which is called Arat Mekerakir. The four stepped mountain ranges are lined in south West to Northwest. Based on the local, the name Arat Mekerakir is given because the number of the mountain chains is four.

According to respondent (code 002), each level of mountain has a local name based on the mountain size and shape in addition to its height.

*“The first mountain range is “Enat Amba” which means a mother hill due to its big size from all of the hills. At the bottom of this mountain is surrounded by AgwuKab. According to his information, the cab was built by the Agos to fight Gojjam and to protect it from slings and various weapons. In addition, there are four quarries of medicine and caves at the base of the mountain that creep in and heal many patients. The local community testified that the helicopter landed on top of the mountain because it was so large. The second peak is “Gemsi Amba” As the name implies, it is naturally derived. It is the second nearest hill to the gravel road. This mountain is home to aquatic plants, lush grass, and grass. The third hill is called “Qulit Amba” which means a hill with the shape of a banqueting tool called ‘Qulit’. The fourth hill is “Lemat Amba” which means a hill with the shape of traditional meal presenting tool called “Lemat” and this is the furthest hill from the main gravel road” [R-002, interviewed on September 01, 2020]*

At the top of the hill, there are wonderful land features, plant and animal species, and in the bottom of the hill, there is a church named ‘Arat Mekerakir Medehanialem church. The mountain range is important as a view point for the spectacular land features of Senan and

Machakelworeda because of its high altitude and its closer to the gravel road between Bebugn woreda and Debre Marko city.

With relation to those stepped mountains Camping is possibly the perfect tourism activities to visit the four Stepped Mountain (AratMekerakir), and Molalit Cave. In this case, campers may pitch a tent to climb in and enjoy a good night's sleep.

Therefore, the availability of this attractive landscape in the can help to be a good tourist attraction and this finding significantly support by the research done by Medlton 2003, and meet the criteria of uniqueness.

The other remarkable expected potential tourism products in the mountain are mountain hiking, tricking and photo touring and similar studies has supported such activities in Semain mountains national parks.

The research by Sanjay K. Nepal & Raymond Chipeniuk (Mountain Tourism towards a conceptual framework 2006), also supports that Mountains, with their spectacular scenery, majestic beauty and unique amenity values, are one of the most popular destinations for tourists. The development of tourism in the mountains can be a key factor in the focal concern for overall improvement in people's quality of life through sustainable economic development initiatives and environmental conservation. In socioeconomic and environmental terms, tourism in mountain regions is a mixed blessing: it can be a source of problems, but it also offers many opportunities if wisely developed.

The research also adds that many mountain communities are looking for opportunities to develop their tourism industry and, given global trends in tourism and recreation; it were not be surprising if new mountain destinations are explored and developed. People are continually searching for new forms of recreation and settings for it, and mountains have often provided the 'pleasure grounds'.

### 3. Aba Jime Forest



**Picture 4.3 Aba Jime Forest-picture from own survey 2020**

The Mountain has different spectacular geographical settings which are very interesting for eye catching for visitors.

As the East Gojjam culture and tourism office report shows, after traveling 8 km from Rob Gebeya with a gravel road, there is a dense eye catching forest named Aba Jime forest which covers a large area. *Asta* (*Erica arborea*) is the dominant plant species. *Kosheshila* (*Acanthus sennii*), *Nechate* (*Helichrysum citrispinum*), *Gibra* (*Lobelia rhynchoptalum*) and *Amijja* (*Hypericum revolutum*) plant species are also found. Additionally, the forest is the habitat for many animal species like Bush Pig, Monkey, Jackal, and Hyena are the major.

Having this good forest with biodiversity potential will enhance the tourism activity of the area and it also help the ecosystem of the environment finally it encourages the stakeholder to develop different tourism related business in the area finally forests can facilitate the activities of developing in to protected area.

This finding is also supported by forestry researcher, Jeffrey D. Kline (2012); and he suggested that National forests likely were having an increasingly significant impact on tourism in communities located near them. As the population continues to grow and become more urban, so do ever increasing demands for outdoor recreation opportunities. Such increased demands were place growing pressure on National Forests and other public lands to provide the types of no timber amenities desired by many recreationists.

#### 4. Bird species



**Picture 4.4. Some of Choke Mountain Bird Species Senan Woreda Culture and Tourism Office(2020).**

According to the report from East Gojjam zone tourism office and Senan Woreda tourism offices; responses from FGD and interview session in different woreda tourism offices there are about 49 bird species found in afro tropical highland. From these, 16 species are found in Choke Mountain and among 31 globally threatened bird species, endemic Abyssinian Long claw (*Macronyx flavicollis*) is also found.

As a report from the Senan woreda culture and tourism office in the study area 41 bird species are identified in the area. And also the report indicates that some of the bird species are endemic for Ethiopia such as Abyssinian Long claw, Wattled Ibis, Tick-billed, Raven, White collared Pigeon, and Black-winged Love bird.

In different nature-based tourism birds and other natural beauties are the major tourism products that significantly attract the tourists. Due to its suitable environment for varieties of bird species, it has a great potential for the watcher to watch birds. Because the area has over 41 bird species, it could be also an ornithological paradise for bird watchers.

Therefore, in tourism having variety and endemic bird species can be one tourism attraction and help the area to diversify the destination products and also the can make the area very famous by bird watcher.

#### **Wildlife species**

The offices report also shows in addition to the birds this area is also rich in animal species, there are 16 animal species found in Choke Mountain and its Environments.

According to the respondent from east Gojjam zone culture and tourism office, tourism promotion experts, (code 005)

*“...The area is rich in animal species. Our report shows that there are more than 16 animal species in the area like Golden/Common Jackal (Canis aureus), Common Bush Back (Tragelaphus scriptus), Abyssinia Colobus, Common Duiker, Spotted Hyena (Crocuta crocuta), Anubis Baboon (Papio Anubis), Bush Pig (Potamochoerus porcus), and Common Duiker (Sylvicapra grimmia)...” [R-005, interviewed on August 26, 2020].*

The researcher found the area rich in both birds and animal species and those are a vital role in tourism development if they are protected, developed and promoted in to tourist products. In tourism destinations animals are considered as tourist products that can attract tourists significantly and the result supported by different empirical researches for instance,

For instance, in the study of Noel Scott (2014) Wild life tourism is tourism based on encounters with non-domesticated (non-human) animals. These encounters can occur in either the animals' natural environment or in captivity.

And he explained such activities in wild life tourism includes activities historically classified as 'non-consumptive', such as viewing, photography and feeding, as well as those that involve killing or capturing animals, particularly hunting (in the terrestrial environment) and recreational fishing (in the aquatic environment).

Photo tour is also another activity that can be developed in the vicinity of Choke Mountain. The geographical feature of Choke is broken by numerous spectacular landscapes which are marvelous. Along with the home of many bird, animal and plant species, it creates an opportunity for both domestic and international visitors who appreciate the beauty of nature to experience photo tours.

## 5. Lake Bahire Giyorgies (the Miracle Lake)



**Picture 4.5 Lake Bahire Giyorgies-source East Gojjam culture and tourism office (2020)**

This bountiful Lake is found in the area of Choke Mountains and as report from Amhara regional state water and irrigation bureau it covers about 112 hectares and it is the fourth largest lake in Amhara region next to Lake Tana, Lake Estifanos, and Lake Ardibo.

The unique feature of the lake is the so called “Meqa” grass which has islands structure on the surface of the lake. The grass is navigating on the surface of the lake in deferent time and direction by forming island structure and it may empres tourist.

According to the explanation of respondent (code 003),

*“...and The Lake has also an attractive looking due to its location in a deep Gorge and which is surrounded by natural forests. Within the forest there are three caves named as cave one, cave two, and cave three, and on the top of the hill to the south east of the Lake, Giyorgies church is found”[R-003,interviewed on August 27, 2020].*

Lake and tourism is interconnected and lakes has a positive effect on the development of tourist flow of an area because, there are many tourist’s activities in the lake and this finds directly affiliated with the research of Petric&Madic (2014), which relay that on water bodies and lakes tourism can be experienced. Most of the literature on tourism describes nature-based tourism as tourism activity generated by the existence of nature preserves, parks, and refuges. It is travel that primarily involves enjoyment of undisturbed natural environments (Valentine 1992, Weiler and Davis 1993).

Also the research shows that the range and opportunity of developing nature based tourism like eco-tourism, national parks, fauna and flora, landscapes, whether conditions and natural beauty including agro tourism.

From this perspective Choke -Mountain and its environments are riches with natural recourses which meet the criteria and the characteristics to be tourism products.

#### **6. Woleke Washa (Woleke cave)**



**Picture 4.6 woleke (Owen survey 2020)**

Woleke cave is located in Weleke Kebele Sinan Woreda, East Gojjam Zone. When the cave door is opened and we go in, we find a room as wide as a big house. When the roof of the cave reaches an average height of about 2 meters, the roof has its own natural beauty as if it were professionally carved. It is unknown at this time what he will do after leaving the post. There are seas on both sides of the cave, so it is not difficult to get close. The deeper we go into the cave, the more rooms, pillars, and seas, and the more complex it becomes. The cave is opened and consecrated on the 12th day of the month (Michael). He is being taken out of the cave and being baptized by outsiders who are being healed.

## 7. Tend Wat Washa (A pair of swallows cave)



**Picture 4.7 Tend Wat Washa (Owen survey 2020)**

The cave is located at the foot of Mount Choke and is located 76 km from Debre Markos.

Respondent (code 006) about the cave said,

*“...There is water in the cave and one up on a time there was a farmer plowing in front of the cave, so the oxen were thirsty and they saw the water, so they ran to drink, but the water in the cave was so deep that it swallowed both of the oxen; From then on, it was called a Tend Wat Washa “ [R-006,interviewed on September 02, 2020].* The respondent also said there are eleven windows in the cave, and it has inner path.

Woleqe and Tend Wat Cave are indeed unique and can be offered to the tourism industry in East Gojjam as well as Ethiopia in general. Woleke and Tend Wat caves landscape walls, and cave ceilings that are interesting to watch. Tourists can enjoy the atmosphere, water, with inner paths and the calls of various unique features. The potential of Woleke and Tend Wat Caves can also be expanded through the element of creation, especially using the aspects of opportunity that are available for creating new demands within the tourism industry. Creativity and innovation must be adapted in order to enrich caves in the form of products, services and presentation

### **4.2. The Diversification Practice of Tourism Products**

As previously indicated tourism product development can have expressed in a verity way from this perspective it can done by creating new or by adding a modification and value on existing products too.

As a researcher understanding from respondents in interview and FGDs a little is done to diversify products in the area.

According to respondent (code 003),

*“...The meaningful work is giving boundary demarcation for the destination, as Choke has covered majorly more than four Woredas this was difficulty to develop and protect the mountain so that the demarcation practice helps the destination to develop different tourism products under the control of regional governments”[R-003,interviewed on August 27, 2020].*

And she continues with the collaboration of Amhara region culture and tourism bureau, East Gojjam zone tourism office and Woreda level tourism office are working to register the choke mountain areas as community protected area at regional level.

*“... At regional, zonal and woreda level tourism office with the collaboration of community and other respective stockholders we are working to register choke as community protected area” (R-003, interviewed on August 27, 2020).*

A destination with clear boundary demarcation was facilitating the tourism activities in the area and it were facilitating the development of both new and existing tourism products.

The other meaningful work in the destination is an attempt of registering the destination as community protected area and it were facilitating the development of different infrastructural facilities and protection activities as well in addition to promoting the destination.

As says of all respondents from interview and FGD to use some manmade and natural resources in tourism sector the main thing is that to identify, protect and promote all the potentials of in the destination and make them sustainable. And almost all FGD participants including key informants from Zone and Woredas culture and tourism offices agreed as there is a limited activity of identifying, protecting and promoting all the tourism potentials of the Choke mountains area.

Debre Markos University has started conservation projects, Respondent (code 003) said;

*“...Debre Markos University has a plan to build Choke watershed conservation center in addition the University is doing different proposals for protecting and promoting activities, this also were help to diversify tourism in wetlands of Choke Mountains”[R-003,interviewed on August 27, 2020].*

The participation of the educational institution in the tourism product can be in research and conservation projects as well.

The study of Dabphet (Applying diffusion theory to destination stakeholders understanding of sustainable tourism development: a case from Thailand 2012), revealed that, Educational

involved in providing a better understanding of tourism and sustainable tourism development through communities. As such, educational institutions are involved in collective actions. The study also indicates that educational institution has the responsibility of research and community service activities for the local community.

### **4.3. The stockholder involvement in tourism product development process**

As UNWTO (2017) noted managing tourist destination achieve "through synergistic and coordinated efforts by governments, at different levels and in different capacities; civil society living in the inbound tourism communities; and the business sector connected with the operation of the tourism system." As a result, tourist destination management requires a variety of public and private actors that cooperate with each other in the process based on a commitment in order to shape a desirable tourist destination (Duran, 2013).

For instance, in the study of Freeman (2010), a stakeholder is 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives'. The UNWTO identified stakeholders in tourism destinations as tourism professionals, public authorities, as well as the press and other media. In addition, other interest groups and individuals and in particular local residents and indigenous groups, also need proper recognition as stakeholders in their own right (Macbeth, Burns, Chandler, Revitt, & Veitch, 2002).

As point of view in many respondents, Lack of an integrated tourism management from the participants' perspective, among the significant causes of noncooperation between tourism related organizations is "the lack of an integrated tourism management".

Respondent (code 004) said,

*".... In my opinion, the inter-organizational relationship is disorganized, disjointed and incoherent. Fragmented management is a significant impediment to cooperation in these organizations"[R-004, interviewed on September 03, 2020].*

Respondent (code 001) adds the reason for the disorganized of stakeholder in Choke mountain areas.

*" ..... Reasons for non-collaboration between organizations are due to partial planning, individual-based decisions; in a sense, this is a kind of division and disparity between organizations; the same as most of the administrative structures in the Zone and Woreda..... "[R-001, interviewed on August 28, 2020].*

In this regard, management prospective based on collaboration and cooperation plays an important role in the development of a destination as an innovative alternative to traditional destination management system.

Regarding the statement “weak stakeholders coordination and participation”, the majority of the respondents what they explained is as there is no a meaningful and effective tourism stakeholder coordination in Choke and the surrounding.

Even though different literatures have identified the potential stakeholders in tourism are so huge, the tourism stakeholders who are participating in Choke mountain is only deferent levels of government tourism office like zonal and woreda level, Debre Markos university, zonal and woreda land and natural resource protection and administration authorities and about some NGOs especially working on natural resource conservation activities including the local community.

#### **4.3.1. Tourism business enterprises**

Choke there is no single private tourism business organization found in Choke Mountains (there is no found like Hotels, lodges and tour operators and even a single tour guide working in Choke Mountain).

Respondent (code 003) said,

*“...we asked investors, colleges and Debre Markos University for build hotels, resorts and trained professionals, but except Debre Markos University refused and they told us Debre Markos University will soon start teaching students in tourism...”[R- 003, interviewed on August 27, 2020].*

#### **4.3.2. NGOs**

From the respondents and researcher observation in Choke Mountain and its environment there are about 22 licensed natural protection and tourism related NGO enterprises especially in Senan, Bebugn, Debaytilatgin and Machakelworedas.

These enterprises mainly funded by united nations and working on natural resources conservation and tourism development projects.

For instance, they are producing and distributing different flora species and recovering and protecting different endanger landscapes.

Cooperation among governments, businesses, labor, society and other possible stakeholders are required to promote sustainable enterprises and guarantee the quality of employment in a sustainable manner (Hiwasaki, 2006).

A constant dialogue between industry representatives and public authorities is needed to cope with the numerous of challenges in tourism (Weber, et al. 2017).

The other limitation in stockholder collaboration is between government and private tourism business enterprises in the area,

Respondent (code 003) said

*“... regarding the participation of private tourism business enterprise is at zero level, there is no a single accommodation and tourist facilities and services in there are mainly tourist reserve their accommodation in Debre Markos city”[R-003, interviewed on August 27, 2020].*

The respondent (code 003) continues,

*“...This was negatively affecting the tourist flow in the area, to utilize all the tourism potential and to increase the flow tourists in the area there need to have the participation of such types of enterprise in the area...”[R-003, interviewed on August 27, 2020].*

It is clear the involvement of private tourism business enterprise were facilitating the practice of good tourism product development in the area.

#### **4.3.3. Local community**

For instance, in the study of N. F. Velnisa Paimin and S. Modilih (2014). Local community participation in tourism can be viewed in two ways; from the decision making process perspective, and from benefits gained from tourism. Communities' participation in decision making process is important, however in many instances their participation is likely to be limited to voicing their opinions on matters related to tourism development at their destination. This process is what refers to as community tourism. A term used to describe an approach to tourism in which the needs and views of local residents are incorporated in the planning and development process.

According to the respondents in focus group and key informants from the local community, actually choke mountain and the local community are highly connected in various way and the life of the community is highly dependent on the natural resources of Choke Mountain.

But, the local communities in Choke Mountain are not recognizing a tourist and tourism in Choke Mountains. Local communities are not participating for the development of tourism in the area and they explained as follow;

*“... when we see the life of communities in choke are highly depend on agricultural activity and they are farmers, and there are many barriers for communities to get involved in the tourism industry. The first little knowledge about tourism, other significant barriers are lack of capital, unable to communicate well in English, limited incentives or support from the government, and having generally poor infrastructure and facilities...”[R-008, explain on September 02, 2020].*

Based on a research of tourism ventures in South Africa, Koch identifies the same and two other constraints to the participation, which are applicable to multiple settings. Communities often do not have ownership over the natural resources and land. Thus when land is owned by outsiders, locals are limited by the owners.

Another constraint is that most poor communities have difficulties with attracting capital or resources to build the facilities and infrastructure that is necessary for tourism development. In another study on community participation at Thailand, Breugel states that few barriers are identified why the community does not participate are lack of basic knowledge about tourism industry, they do not speak English thus making it difficult for the foreign visitors to understand, the remoteness of the location in combination with small size of village, no public transport to get into the village, miscommunication between the community and outsiders as well as lack of use and knowledge of using computer and internet to promote the tourism product.

#### **4.3.4. Educational Institutions**

The educational / research institution / working in choke areas is only Debre Markos University, choke mountain conservation project.

Respondent (code 001) clearly states that the university is working different projects works especially in natural resources and watershed conservation activities and he adds that,

*“...choke mountain called water tower of Africa because this mountain is the source of more than 23 rivers and 273 small springs which are the main tributaries of Upper Blue Nil. Some of the major rivers that are originated from this mountain are Chemoga, Temecha, Gedeb, Tijan, Tefe, Teme, Azewari, Sede, InatMuga, GilgelMuga, Zimbl, Komed, Oromo*

*Meshageriya, TilikuAbeya, TinishuAbeya, Ayabab, and Gudela ...” [R-001, interviewed on August 28, 2020].*

He adds the reason why there are doing these activities and how, he expresses as follow,

*“... the reason we are working here is that research is one pillar of our university and we have a responsibility on the development of the nature and community in the area, we think conserving the nature is protecting the community, and we are also working with the East Gojjam zone and administration office, water and energy office and culture and tourism office as well”[R-001, interviewed on August 28, 2020].*

Finally, respondent (code 001) conclude that,

*“...This project is also part of the community service project and mainly working in many ways like research on the area, promotion, conservation activity, awareness creation in the community by extensive training....” [R-001, interviewed on August28, 2020].*

The participation of the educational institution in the tourism product can be in research and conservation projects as well.

Similar studies prove that Educational institutions (academics and students) also play many important roles in sustainable tourism product development process. The academics are seen as the producers of the educational experience in that they are ultimately responsible for the planning, development and delivery of the tourism knowledge. The students are the direct consumers of tourism education as they are the primary recipients of tourism education. From the respondents’ perspective, these two groups are the most obvious and are central to tourism education. It was also found that a lack of specific academic and training resources is at the root of many problems with unsustainable tourism development for the destinations.

As Cortese (2003,) noted, ‘higher education institutions bear a profound, moral responsibility to increase awareness, knowledge, skills and values needed to create a just and sustainable future.

The findings also support the study of Dabphet (2010) that educational involved in providing a better understanding of tourism and sustainable tourism development through communities. As such, educational institutions are involved in collective actions. It can be seen that educational institutions were have the responsibility and considerable influence as their perceptions and preoccupations about tourism, intellectual history and social location were

determining the choice of personnel and reflect on the type of tourism developed (Tribe, 1999).

#### **4.4. Major Challenges of Tourism Product**

As the current study assessed the area is rich in natural tourism potential recourses, but still there are not the significant number of tourists and known tourism products in the area and the area has faced different challenges and difficulties to make the area famous in tourism and to develop all the tourism potential in to expected tourism products like to other destinations.

In FGD session after all the arguments of all the participants agrees and identify the following problems and challenges to develop tourism products from all the potential of Choke mountain and its environment.

Overgrazing, deforestation, illegal community settlement, unlimited use of lands for farming purpose and lack of educated human resource in this regard including climate change is the major challenges what a researcher found. As the local community representative said all the life of the communities is depending on the agricultural activities and Choke is the major area of income for the local communities as result there are a large needs of woods, lands and other resources from the mountain.

##### **4.4.1 Illegal community settlement and overgrazing**



**Picture 4.8 Farming and over grazing in choke mountain (Owen survey 2020)**

The communities in Choke and surrounding is well known agricultural activities like farming and rearing of animals and according to East Gojjam agricultural office, there are high number of animals like cattle, sheep, goats, horses and donkeys and as the data from agriculture office of East Gojjam the number of animal is estimated number of 400000 animals in and around Choke mountains. And this large number of animals is daily living there and Choke is the only source of food for the animals all round a year. In FGD the researcher found that there is unlimited illegal settlement in the area and the communities and their animals are bringing distraction and problem in the habitants of the mountain areas.

In the discussions, the other major problem is there are no other alternative economic are and the communities' wealth is expressed in terms of having those animals, this makes Choke Mountain very difficult to protect and develop product in full potential.

#### **4.4.2 Deforestation and illegal firing / Fire bush encroachment**

Deforestation and illegal firing is the other dangerous challenge in the area for instance the amazing and eye catching which is found in Senan woreda, and covers more than 68 hectares is victim with this major problem. And the other parts of the mountain which is found in Hulet Eju Enesse woreda and covers more than 5000 hectares also faced this challenges many times in recent years. As a result of deforestation and illegal firing in many parts of the mountain is coming for the case of endangering different fauna and floras in the mountains.

According to the respondents from local community representative, the local communities also frequently experienced deforestation to get farming lands and this is the reason for minimizing different water sources in the mountain. But some of the participants in FGD argue our life is depending on farming and there is shortage of land in the area, we haven't any alternative rather using the mountain area to support our life.

Indeed, Choke Mountains are very rich in fauna, flora and water bodies, but now because of the frequent activities of the local community the biodiversity and ecosystems of the mountain are in endanger conditions.

First of all, it requires knowing the importance's of forests, Forests are critical to the global climate system due to their ability to absorb and store carbon. Carbon loss due to deforestation is estimated to contribute about 17 to 20 % of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (IPCC, 2007). The loss of forest biomass and oxidation of soil organic carbon through slash-and-burn and subsequent land use releases approximately 5.8Gt CO<sub>2</sub> annually into the atmosphere (Nabuurs et al., 2007). Research shows that much of this deforestation

occurs in tropical forests found in many developing countries and this also affects the tourism development in the area.

But it is clear those community activities were adversely affect both natural and cultural resources of the mountain area. And also this may bring the difficulties of tourism product development practice in the area because the tourism product development is manly based on the potential tourism recourses in the area.

#### **4.4.3 Poor tourism infrastructural development**

The researcher understood that, there is a serious problem of shortage in number, type, and quality of tourism infrastructure development. The tourism infrastructure like accommodation establishment, road and transportation, destination facilities and services, and public and institutional supplies are very poor and limited in number. Absence air transport from Addis Ababa to Debre Markos for many business class tourists is aggravating the problem since the rout between is somewhat tiresome. However, tourists want remote and exotic experience.

As a says from both woreda and zone level tourism officials, there are inadequate destination facilities and services in choke mountain areas (inadequate shopping facilities and destination signage, limited commercial facilities, limited information communication, banking services and limited public and institution facilities) which are the big challenges for its development.

But, research by Madeline M.C. Significantly supports the positive relationship between the infrastructural activities and the development of tourism in the area; this may increase tourist flow, accessibility and as a result high tourist turnover in the area.

#### **4.4.4 Poor community awareness**

The data from interviews showed that the level of community awareness for conservation is very low.

Respondent (code 007) said;

*“The mindset of the rural community of Choke Mountain region is not ready for welcoming and accepting both the tourism activity and tourists. This is due to low level of community’s awareness, uninformed and old-fashioned”. [R-007, explained on September 02, 2020].*

Respondent (code 012) also adds;

*“Consequently, ecosystem of Choke Mountain has been being threatened because of illegal activities of local communities like clearing of forest for construction and fuel wood,*

*expansion of agricultural farming land, and hunting of wild animals”.[R-012, explained on September 02, 2020].*

Most of the rural communities in the area lead subsistent way of life because they are following traditional farming system along with traditional ways of raring of sheep, goat, horse, and cattle. These also have negative impact on the ecosystem and it may bring ecosystem degradation such as soil erosion, water pollution, deforestation, migration, and extinction of wild life, and at the end, Choke Mountain ecosystem is losing its natural beauty.

The view of the locals must be taken into consideration so that it was aid attain worthy decision making process and manage resource competently and effectively (WHO, 2002). The professionals in the other pointer has approved that involving the community might contribute to an enhanced decision making, in fact, community participation also has the probability to teach and escalate their responsiveness by being more receptive.

Hence, this finding in this study is in line with prior studies by Glass (1979) community participation in development were produce greater information exchange between the community and the planners, which can be a significant component to upkeep the government and the proposed development but it needs the extensive program for training and development.

For instance, the study conducted by Fagence (1977) has explained that community participation is a portion of the democratic system which were permit the locals to express their views on development matters which were affect their lives in the future. Based on another study by Chekki (1979, cited in James and Blamey, 1999) has elucidated that the participatory democratic is ‘all acts of citizen that are intended to influence the behavior of those empowered to make the decisions’. Most of the scholars has propose that community participation process which being a part of democratic system also comprises community’s decision making process.

#### **4.4.5 Less administration and co-ordination effort of government**

Government has the capacity and the legitimacy to facilitate and coordinate multiple stakeholders to minimize negative impacts (Zhao & Timothy, 2015). Therefore, effective tourism planning is a prerequisite for successful destination management, one that governments need to take into consideration, specifically when it comes to developing economies (Farmaki et al., 2015). Community based ecotourism, as a logical component of community development, requires effective co-ordination of the various stakeholders.

Governments, the private enterprise, local communities, and NGOs all have vital roles to play in the area of eco-tourism activities in Choke Mountain. Every country (especially the less developed ones) should set up clear guidelines to achieve effective participation of those stakeholders and to achieve the desired ecotourism goals.

Based on the data analyzed from interviews, the various governmental actors in Choke Mountain (at Zonal, Woreda, and Kebele level) have assumed less administration and coordination effort for the sustainable development of Choke Mountain and its surroundings. Naturally, Choke Mountain chains have no buffer zones. As a result, there is no clear boundary demarcation among the nearby woreda. But, boundary demarcation for such types of tourism destination is facilitating the development of tourism.

This indicates the gaps in administration work and the nearby woreda as no sense of ownership to protect Choke Mountain from its disruption that highly weakened and undermined the co-ordination and integration effort of the actors to ensure sustainable utilization of natural resources.

#### **4.4.6 Incapability of financial and human resources**

By its nature, tourism sector is more of labor intensive and requires huge investment to develop tourism infrastructure in the destinations (Meguid, no date). Similarly, to develop community-based ecotourism in Choke Mountain, it requires huge investment capital and human resources. But the result revealed in this study is that there is financial incapacity to undertake practical job in the site like tourism resource mapping and inventory, promotion, research and development.

Besides, it is difficult to develop tourism infrastructure to facilitate community-based tourism development. On the other hand, trained manpower in the field of tourism is highly needed to undergo the development projects effectively. However, as it is gained information from key informants and field observation, there are shortages of trained manpower resources in the area. Even though there are ecotourism society groups in different parts of Choke Mountain particularly in Senan and Bebugn woreda, they do not have ecotourism concepts. It is pointed out that these groups are not strong enough to develop ecotourism sites by compromising the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts.

#### **4.4.7 Destruction of natural and manmade heritage resources**

Although the area of Choke Mountain has bestowed with natural and manmade heritages, those heritages are now degrading because of poor conservation and protection of heritages

as it is discussed above. In light of the nature-based resources, the tangible and intangible cultural heritages are integral elements to develop community-based ecotourism in Choke Mountain and its environs. Nonetheless, in all possible sites, there is poor conservation habit to protect and double the values of the cultural resources. This problem is serious especially in many of churches and monasteries.

Challenge of destination product and service on the statement “destruction of natural resources in destination as challenge”, the majority of the respondents disagreed although other scholars have mentioned issues such as over-exploitation, deforestation from firewood harvesting, trampling/soil degradation of the camping sites, plant picking and uprooting by plant collectors, and construction and destruction of unique flora (Gichiah, 2004).

These respondents haven't fully realized that the use of nonrenewable energy, the weak protection of natural landscape and environmental resources, unacceptable and the waste disposal systems of the destination development sites are problematic for sustainability.

In general, there is no doubt that in the future a significant number of tourism destinations were face serious global challenges which may adversely affect their profitability, such as climate change.

#### **4.4.8 The climate change**

Respondent (code 006) said;

*“...In my age I observe many changes in Choke mountain, it was difficult at the top of the mountain because of its coldness and sometimes there was even the cold and also there was a wide coverage of wet land in the area, I remember if you walk on the wet lands you were feel like jumping on the foam but now it is also diminishing because of climate change and other conservation issues...” [R-006, explained on September 02, 2020].*

With its close connections to the environment and climate itself, tourism is considered to be a highly climate-sensitive economic sector similar to agriculture, insurance, energy, and transportation (Gössling& Hall 2006, Becken& Hay 2007, and Scott et al. 2008). Climate defines the length and quality of tourism seasons and plays a major role in destination choice and tourist spending. Climate affects a wide range of the environmental resources that are critical attractions for tourism in many destinations and has an important influence on environmental conditions that can deter tourists.

#### **4.4.9 Absence of tourist facility center**

Besides different natural and cultural tourist attractions a facility is the most important part of tourism development that may attract visitors from different countries. Regarding the dire lack of facilities and services at the destination sites, most of the respondents thought the same. The finding shows that there is lack of facilities and service in these study destination sites that include poor transport or accommodation capacities or a lack of infrastructure (e.g. parking, water facilities, cash withdrawal, restrooms, shade, shelter, sewage, etc.).

Similar results have been observed in previous study (Meskele et al. 2016). Regarding services and facilities expected in the tourist destination sites, including proper internal roads, foot tracks, signage, resting sights, tented camps and standard camping sites with the requisite facilities, these were some of the important facilities needed by tourists but were found to be poor. Lack of facilities (i.e. access, public transport, and accommodation) leads to bottlenecks the destination development (Waveir, et al. 2017).

The facilities poor quality, whether real or perceived, exert a negative impact on the reputation of host countries (Anonymous, 2010). Therefore, government and other stakeholders should give attention to the development of facilities in and around tourist destination sites.

Modern infrastructure is the most important factor to enhance the flow of visitors and benefits for all stakeholders. The development or upgrading of infrastructure such as roads, water, and electricity must be shared by both tourists and local people (Frey and George, 2010).

With respect the tourist facilities and other related service, almost there is no found any of them in Choke Mountain. Actually there are gravel roads which are cross Choke Mountain in four directions but as the respondents prove that the roads are built with no consideration of tourist attractions in choke areas.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusion

Internationally there are tourism destination with deferent unique characteristics, distinctive attraction, and /or with have naturally or manmade boundaries demarcation and buffer zone.

In Ethiopia there are natural, cultural and historical tourism potential that can attract more tourists and generate a fragile benefit for government, local communities, tourism business organization but it needs the practice and more work on tourism product development and diversification of tourism product.

This study ascertained that Choke Mountain and its environs have huge tourism potentials and identified potential tourism resources which consisting of several natural tourism attractions. Naturally, the area has endowed with spectacular features such as majestic stepped mountain scenery, caves, water bodies, climatic variation, dense forests, and endemic plant, animal and bird species and the like.

As deferent researches show that to make a country more beneficiary from the tourism sector the country should work the identification, mapping and developing the tourism potential in to tourism products. In case of Choke there are many expected diversity activities to use the existing tourism resources but still today choke is untouched destination and it needs the participation of all stakeholders.

Issues of coordination, collaboration and partnership are now at the forefront of much tourism research on finding new solutions to resource management, destination development in tourism product development problems (Madeline, 2010).

Stakeholder is a wide term which may contain the involvement of many interested and responsible bodies, but in case of Choke the supply side of tourism like facilities, accommodation, tour and travel agents, transportation services, tour guides, and even the local communities and promoters are not participating and zonal, woreda and Keble government offices are participated in tourism development.

Stakeholders within the tourism industry undertake various important roles in promoting tourism development for the country but, in case of Choke mountains area there is no a meaningful coordination and collaboration of tourism stakeholder.

Regarding the challenges with tourism product development in Choke mountain areas there are different critical problems which mainly affect the development of tourism products in particular and tourism development in general.

As the Coke mountains area are located in rural area and the communities are growing and demanding more lands for agricultural uses due to those and other reasons the main challenge is related with, Overgrazing, deforestation, illegal community settlement, unlimited use of lands for farming purpose and lack of educated human resource in this regard including climate change, lack of government policy support, poor stakeholder collaboration, communities' awareness towards tourism, unclear boundary embarkation of the Choke mountains as destination, is the major challenges what a researcher found in Choke mountains area.

## **5.2. Recommendation**

In this study natural tourism potentials of Choke Mountain and its Environs were identified. However, the study also identified different gaps which are the bottleneck to develop tourism products from the potential identified. Therefore, to exploit tourism potentials of the area and to make best tourism destinations with full of attractive tourism products, researcher has suggested the following recommendations.

To use all tourism potential for the development of tourism area and to increase the benefit of government, communities and other stakeholders, first of all potential should be developed it to meaningful tourist products. To make successful tourism product development in the area, need a positive involvement of different stakeholders like government, NGOs, private tourism business enterprises, local communities, Medias and other possible tourism stakeholders of tourism. To make Choke Mountain and its environs for tourist destination, first the potential tourism resources of the area should be well promoted through different promotional tools and it has to have broader awareness creation program for the wider communities towards the tourism resources via awareness creation campaign.

Generally, the researcher has recommended and suggests different ideas for different stockholders. For instance,

### **5.2.1 Government**

Involvement in tourism development is widely recognized (Zhao & Timothy, 2015). As dredge (2010) points out, the key function of government is to protect and enhance public interest; a key motivator behind such involvement is the responsibility for controlling and monitoring the scope and pace of tourism development. In addition, tourism is a highly fragmented sector where issues and conflict emerge and intertwine, often unsolvable by the private sector, thus calling for government involvement and also there are issues in choke that needs the involvement of local and regional government like,

1. Boundary demarcation, as Choke Mountain majorly has covered the administration area of more than seven Woredas. As a result, there is no responsible distinctive body to manage as destination, conservation, development and promotion as destination .The researcher recommends that the boundary demarcation were facilitate the tourism product development of the area. Preservationists must prove that they can compensate the costs of local communities for their extractive use and livelihoods along with conservation of endangered species and ecosystems

2. Road construction, accessibility is the major factor which affects the success of the destinations in terms of tourist arrival. So destination with a easily accessibility invites the development of tourist product development.
3. Creating the awareness of local communities, choke is found in the rural area and the local community mainly manages their life with agricultural activity mainly in choke area and the local community awareness towards tourism still poor so government is expected to give extended trepanning for local communities on the issue how tourism is benefit for them.
4. The other strategic activity is policy formulation, and minimizing the dependency of the local communities on the areas by creating alternative way of energy, work opportunity and other alternative way of life which helps to minimize the negative effect on the natural and cultural resources of the area.
5. Finally, both local and regional government is the promotional activities, promotion require a research and a large investment so that it is difficult to promote the destinations by a single body.

The governmental action plans should be clear enough and transparent in order to avoid conflicts and disputes. The agreements for resource use and conservation between park officials and local communities must be very clear and transparent. Similarly, the rights and duties of local communities and forest should be undoubtedly defined, so as to avoid any disputes later on. Also, there should not be any incompatibility or inconsistency between state rules and local institutions. Further, the boundaries and zones of any protected area should be clearly demarcated for the effective implementation of action plans. The governance and legislation must be conveyed effectively to the forest officials and local people in order to develop confidence and local participation.

### **5.2.2 Private Business Enterprises**

Private business enterprises are the major tourism stakeholder which is facilitating the tourism development in general and tourism product development in particular. And the private business enterprises are expected to do the flowing activities with the collaboration of governments. Improve and establish different accommodation establishments, private transportation systems should be improved; health centers, electricity,) should be provided in the sites. Destination facilities and services should also be provided. Tourist information centers, information communication, tour and travel facilities, guiding services,

recreational centers, shopping and commercial facilities, billboards and signage, maps and other facilities should be available.

### **5.2.3 Local community**

Local communities are a stakeholder and owner of the destination and the community shall participate in the protection and conservation of natural attraction which are identified in this study. For example, minimizing the negative effect of overgrazing by using shift grazing; develop the experiences of reforestation; developing sense of ownership and local people are severely restricted or relocated from protected areas.

### **5.2.4 Medias**

Promotion and advertisement is essential part of tourism product development in the destination. Promoting and advertising may be done by mainly in both printing and non-printing like magazines, newspaper, Radio, TVs including internets.

The media bodies at different level that owned by both government and privet has the responsibility to promote and advertise the tourism destinations in general and tourism products in particular.

### **5.2.5 Educational institutions**

According to MoE, in Ethiopia there are more than 44 public universities and many collages across a country and they are working mainly in three pillars such as education, community service and research & development, so Universities are expected to do extensive research and development in deferent issues and tourism is one of the major issue which need the intervention of such types of institution.

In case of choke mountain area mainly Debre Markos University is found there and this institution is highly recommended to do on the issue research, training and development, conservation and awareness creation about tourism industry in general and tourism product development in particular.

## **5.3. Limitations of the study and future research directions**

This study mainly focused on the natural tourism potentials and limitations of Choke Mountain, but there are also cultural and historical tourism potentials in choke Mountain. Therefore Future research works shall focus on cultural and historical tourism potentials in choke Mountain.

However, this study used qualitative research approach, but this may require some numerical data related with the challenges of tourism product development on the area. With reference

to sampling techniques, this study did not utilize probability sampling techniques such as simple random sampling, systematic sampling and stratified sampling. Hence, the study applied purposive sampling techniques for the key informants and available sampling for survey visitors to collect data and draw conclusions. Because of this, the sample selected for the study may not represent the whole target populations.

Data obtained from both Interview and FGD were analyzed together. But, interview and FGD data might need different way of analyzing methods. As far as sources of data from published materials are concerned, the current study employed materials which do not contain the name of the publishing institution, volume and issues. This study also utilized some materials which are not up to date. This might also be a limitation in the study.

Future research works shall focus on examining the challenges of tourism products at each level of tourism stakeholder and sustainable tourism development of tourist destinations from the perspectives of foreign and domestic visitors independently. It shall also focus on repeating the current study after some years to understand whether differences were obtained or not. Pertaining to the methodological aspects, future research shall also emphasis on both qualitative and quantitative researches.

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## Appendix

### Information about the respondents

Interview Code	Date of interview	Year	Profession/ position	Area of community/ organization
001	Aug. 28	2020	Lecture, head of Choke mountain conservation center	DebreMarkos University
002	Aug. 28	2020	Head at Senan woreda culture and tourism office	Senan woreda culture and tourism office
003	Aug. 27	2020	Head at East Gojjam culture and tourism office	East Gojjam culture and tourism office
004	Sept. 03	2020	Head at Bubung woreda culture and tourism office	Bubung woreda culture and tourism office
005	Aug. 26	2020	East Gojjam Zone tourism promotion expert	East Gojjam Zone
006	Sept.02	2020	Senior citizens /elder	Senan woreda
007	Sept.02	2020	Local residence	Senan woreda
008	Sept.02	2020	Local residence	Senan woreda
009	Sept.02	2020	Local residence	Senan woreda
010	Sept.02	2020	Local residence	Senan woreda
011	Sept.02	2020	Local residence	Senan woreda
012	Sept.02	2020	Local residence	Senan woreda

❖ **Interview guide** (Debre Markos university conservation center, Senan woreda culture and tourism office, East Gojjam culture and tourism office, Bubung woreda culture and tourism office and East Gojjam Zone tourism promotion experts)

1. Tourism potentials
2. Unique features of the mountain
3. Tourism practice in the area
4. Tourism Product development
5. Stakeholder involvement
6. Community awareness
7. Challenges of tourism product development

❖ **Interview guide**( Local Communities)

1. Roles of local communities
2. Histories of caves
3. Tourism and its importance