Innovations

Community Participation in Conservation of Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development in the Historic Churches of South Wollo Zone, Ethiopia

[1]Molla Nigus Argaw; [2]Alemseged Beldados; [3]Tania Tribe;
[4]Endalkachew Teshome

[1] PhD Student in Tourism and Heritage Management Program at the University of Gondar, Ethiopia;and Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, Wollo University, Ethiopia

[2] Department of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington (UNCW), USA

[3] Department of History of Art and Archaeology, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, United Kingdom

[4] Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, University of Gondar, Ethiopia

Corresponding Author: Molla Nigus Argaw

Abstract:. *Local communities, as custodians of heritage resources and Indigenous Knowledge Systems, should play a central role in passing down their heritage, especially to younger generations, and in utilizing it for the development of cultural heritage tourism.This study aimed to investigate communityparticipation in the conservation of cultural heritage and tourism development in the historic churches of South Wollo Zone, Ethiopia. A mixed-methods approach was utilized, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. The study drew on a combination of primary and secondary data sources. Primary data included self-administered questionnaires distributed to 268 participants, along with semi-structured interviews with 16 key informants, three focus group discussions with 18 participants, in addition to field observations. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, while qualitative data were analyzedusing content analysis.The findings revealed that community participation was a successful model for heritage conservation and tourism development, and the majority of monastic communities saw the conservation of heritage resources as significant. However, several barriers exist, including operational barriers (unwillingness of stakeholders to share power, centralization of public administration, and lack of information), structural barriers (elite domination, lack of financial resources, professional attitudes, and absence of an appropriate legal system), and cultural barriers (limited capacity of poor people, and apathy and low awareness in the local community.*

Keywords: *CommunityParticipation, Cultural Heritage, Heritage Conservation, Tourism Development, South Wollo Zone*

1. Introduction

Heritage has been largely reflected as a legacy, a symbol, and a representation from the past generations handed over to the present with the hope of passing it across to future generations (NilsonandThorell, 2018). It is an epitome of accomplishments and a valuable asset of happenings in the past that are documented and retained for the benefit of the present and future generations (OladejiandAkinrinola, 2010; Scheld et al., 2014) and possess both tangible and intangible attributes (Lenzerini, 2011). According to Ivanocic (2008), heritageis defined as a broad concept that includes the natural and cultural environment that encompasses landscapes, historic places, sites, and built environments, biodiversity, collections, past, and continuing cultural practices, knowledge, and living experiences.

Cultural heritage is considered a means of communication between the historical and present generations in a particular community (NilsonandThorell, 2018). Culture and heritage are inexorably intertwined; thus, it is subsequently difficult to talk about one without somehow referring to the other. Culture is about the way of life of particular societies or communities, indigenous belief systems, practices, customs, behavior even attitudes (Baker et al., 2014;Maffi and Woodley, 2010). Most conservation practitioners believe that cultural heritage is both tangible (can be touched; real˙ in the sense of being a physical thing, such as a building, object, or ruin) and intangible (cannot be touched, but is still ‚real˙ in the sense of reflecting significant values within a community; include festivals, religious rituals, dance, music, etc.)source. According to UNESCO (2003),cultural heritage is an important component of the cultural identity of communities, groups, and individuals, and its intentional destruction may have adverse consequences, not just related to buildings and the physical landscape, but also to members of a community and their traditions and values. Cultural heritage provides emotional and intellectual platforms on which individuals and communities establish their identity. Citizens should have the right to engage in the deliberations of the destiny of cultural heritage (Chan, 2016).

The idea of conservation has appeared in heritage literature from as early as the 16th century, with a focus on social memory (Jokilehto, 2007).Conservation is a process of maintaining the authenticity of cultural heritage verified value (Nkwanyana, 2018). According to Michael (2009),community-based conservation is not possible without an understanding of the term "community."The term community is elusive, and grasping a clear definition is often problematic (Aas et al., 2005). According to Singh et al. (2003), community refers to a concept where a group of people with shared cultural norms and identities live in a common geographic area. On the other hand, Williams and Lawson (2001) described the term community as a group of people who share common goals or opinions. Although community participation occupies much space in the academic discourse as a core tourism development pillar (Saufi et al., 2014). Without community participation in the process, heritage management overlooks its social

consequences and undermines people's association with cultural heritage (Chan, 2016).

The World Heritage Convention, established by UNESCO in 1972, acknowledged cultural heritage as "an integral part of community life," highlighting the responsibility of the international community as a whole to collaborate in safeguarding World Heritage sites (Brebbia et al., 2017). The participation of the community in heritage conservation and tourism development makes a positive contribution to the quality of life of residents and makes heritage site conservation programs more sustainable (Nicholas et al., 2009).According to Nkwanyana (2018),Local communities are the custodians of cultural heritage resources and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). The participation of residents is imperative for the sustainability of the tourism industry at any destination (Gursoy*et al*., 2010). Thus, community participation is an essential part of community development and one of the factors in the community capacity-building process, which allows the involvement of people in the different stages of decision-making (Aref and Ma'rof, 2008).Local communities should play a proactive role to ensure positive benefits from tourism. Employment opportunities, environmental consciousness and protection, and an influx of foreign currency to the host nation are just a few examples of the contribution that the tourism industry can make to the economy of a country (Aydin andBoz, 2006)

The importance of community involvement in the conservation of cultural heritage is emphasized in various sources, such as academic studies and institutional agreements (Mydland and Grahn,2012). Community participation is thus critical to the ethical performance of cultural heritage management. However, there is no overarching definition for 'community' since the interpretation of this word varies according to different contexts (Chan, 2016). The communities often hold a vast storage of local and Indigenous Knowledge that is being dipped into by outsiders seeking to amplify their own experience and understanding of these cultures (Zeppel, 2006). Nonetheless, the presence of plenty of cultural heritage sites in Ethiopia in general and the South Wollo Zone (SWZ) in particular.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The sustainability of cultural heritage resources is strongly linked to the effective participation of local communities in the conservation of these resources(Oladeji et al., 2022). Cultural heritage resources are perceived as major components of the community's survival and religious practices in terms of worship and spiritualism in Africa. The contributions of the rich diversity of African heritage to World Heritage have been recognized to be a unique wealth of immeasurable value (Adedayo, 2006). According to Ivanocic (2008), local communities have considerable natural endowments such as rich cultures and game parks, all of which can stimulate tourism and, given the right environment and cultural heritage management, could become a powerful force for bringing development to rural areas in the future, thus alleviating dire poverty and creating employment.

Community involvement is vital to ensure that high-quality service and productsaredelivered. Besides, since tourism experiences rely on all aspects of the community, involving and ensuring the participation of local communities in tourism development is crucial (Peter, 2003).Community participation in heritage management has become a worldwide phenomenon in the last two decades;it is a bottom-up approach that has spread across the practices of heritage conservation (Ronchi, 2020; Yung and Chan, 2011).Community participation in heritage management and conservation helps the communities to strengthen their intellectual capacity and intricate link to communal heritage physiognomies, fosters social cohesion, inclusion, bonds, trust, and linkage between the government (at the top) and other categories of people at the grassroots level (at the bottom) (Cimadomo, 2015; Labadi, 2016). Active participation of the community in heritage conservation helps the continuity and sustenance of heritage resources (Huong, 2016).

However, it is frequently claimed that local communities are not participating actively intourism development processes(Akama, 1999).Community participation throughout the sector in Ethiopia is weak and shallow, affording very little opportunity for benefits from tourism to disperse to the local community (Messele, 2010).

There are many studies related to the challenges, opportunities, and potential of heritage tourism development regarding the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC) (Getnet, 2013; Gedecho, 2014; Getahun and Yeshanew, 2016; Esubalew et al., 2020). Based on the researchers' understanding, no empirical work has been done to examine the community's participation in heritage conservation and tourism development in the study area.Therefore,the current study intends to examine community participation in the heritage conservation and tourism development in the SWZusingfourmonastic communities (Haiq Estifanos, Abba Gyorgis Zegascha, Tedibabe Mariam, and Atrons Mariam)by employing stakeholder theory and Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation.Specifically, this study aims to:

➢ assessing existing heritage conservation and tourism development in the Monasteries;
➢ examine the extent and types of community participation in heritage conservation and tourism development;
➢ Identify factors that hinder community participation in the conservation of heritage andtourismdevelopment process in the study area.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Heritage conservation and tourism development

Heritage is defined in different ways, and one can freely say that it is quite a vague and complicated concept(Ashgate, 2008). As Waterton and Smith (2010) argued, heritage is not something inherited from the past but is made by contemporary cultural processes in the process of defining and commemorating the past. According to UNESCO (2002), 'Heritage' is "our legacy from the past, what we live

with today, and what we pass on to the future generations." Itis defined as the material artifacts that shape people's attitudes and behaviors, whereas culture refers to the intangible works that individuals of society employ to survive within their cultural context. The word heritage encompasses cultural attributes from the past and present that people in a society value and wish to bestow on the next generation (Pederse, 2002).

Cultural heritage covers all tangible and non-tangible assets, which include all the features of the environment, stemming from the intermingling of people and places over time (ICOMOS, 2013). Most conservation practitioners believe that cultural heritage is both tangible (can be touched; real' in the sense of being a physical thing, such as a building, object, or ruin) and intangible (cannot be touched, but is still ‚real' in the sense of reflecting significant values within a community; include festivals, religious rituals, dance, music, etc.)source.Socio-cultural, cultural heritage values have a connection to society, between present and past (Zancheti et al., 2009)

The idea of conservation has appeared in heritage literature from as early as the 16th century, with a focus on social memory (Jokilehto, 2007).The term conservation is derived from the Latin word conservare, which means the preservation of the existing condition (Harper, 2010). In the context of heritage sites conservation, it includes all the processes of looking after a place to retain its significance, caring not only for the cultural heritage values of the site but also for the surrounding environment (ICOMOS, 1999). Therefore, conservation is a broad term that includes all processes of looking after a place, such as restoration and all acceptable management systems and strategies. In line with the aims of this paper, heritage conservation from the perspectives ofcommunity involvement and protection will be focused on. Conservation Science, as a new field, is interdisciplinary, complex, global in character, both scientific (theoretical) and technological (practical), and adopts the modern concept of integrated conservation (Moldovan, 2010). Conservation is a process of maintaining the authenticity of cultural heritage verified value (Nkwanyana, 2018).The concepts of collaborative conservation and participatory conservation focus on stimulating all stakeholders involved in the process (cultural, social, economic, and environmental) and the active involvement of the public and community members (Spiridon, 2013).

From the extensive literature review, it has been found that there is a close connection between 'Heritage' and 'Tourism'. According to Bushel and Jafari (1996), the relationship between tourism and cultural heritage is not a 'newly formulated concept'; rather, it can be addressed as a 'newly advocated concept'.Dann (1996) opines that cultural heritages are one of the major inspirational factors for traveling in different periods.Tourism continues to be an agent of economic development, particularly in a setting where there are fewer economic alternatives to tackle poverty and reduce unemployment (Ashley, 2006; Mitchell and Coles, 2009).It provides various economic benefits including the development of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises; employment

opportunities for residents including women and the youth; injection of fresh income into local economies and other non-economic benefits such as cultural exchange, capacity development, improved access to services such as infrastructure, health care, water supplies, telecommunication, and transportation services (Kennedy et al., 2013; Sakata and Prideaux, 2013).Therefore, if 'Heritage' and 'Tourism' both can be managed properly, the overall benefit of 'heritage tourism' would be maximized,which can facilitate both the host as well as the guests at a particular destination.

2.2. Community participation in heritage conservation and tourism development

According to UNESCO (1972), the significance of community participation in preserving cultural heritage is endorsed in a wide range of literature, including scholarly research and institutional conventions. However, there is no overarching definition for 'community' since the interpretation of this word varies according to different contexts. The World Heritage Convention promulgated by UNESCO in 1972 recognized cultural heritage as "a function in the life of the community," and the protection of World Heritage is the duty of the international community as a whole to cooperate."The term community is elusive, and grasping a clear definition is often problematic (Aas et al., 2005).Community comes under the umbrella of "stakeholder," an English word that can hardly be translated into any other language (Chan, 2016).The term community can have a specific geographic meaning with a clearly defined spatial boundary and area,and refers to groups of people with a common interest (Chapman and Kirk, 2001).

Nowadays, many development initiatives require the participation of local communities for the sustainability of the development initiatives (Ribot, 2004). A clear and commonly shared concept of community participation is difficult to establish. However, the levels of participation influence or control decision-making, actions, and outcomes are often key to the descriptions of community participation (Muray, 2002).Community participation constitutes a relationship, established by the members of the community, through their collaboration in achieving common goals and making the community a better place in which to live(McCloskey, 2011).Community participation in heritage management can settle conflicts between the needs and interests of residents, between the pursuit of a better quality of life and economic development, and heritage conservation(Sirisrisak, 2009).

2.2.1. Types of community participation

The meaning, scope, and spectrum of community participation can vary depending on a myriad of factors such as social, political, cultural, technological, and economic conditions (Afua, 2012). The literature describes several types of community participation, ranging from manipulative participation to citizen power (Arnstein, 1969). Similarly, Petty (1995) developed a typology of community participation inclusive of seven levels. The lowest level is in the form of

manipulative participation (manipulative participation), and the highest level is in the form of personal mobilization (self-mobilization).

Meanwhile, Tosun applied the typologies of Arnstein and Pretty in the context of tourism development and heritage management; three types of community participation can be identified: coercive participation, induced participation, and spontaneous participation (Tosun, 2006). Coercive community participation refers to the lowest level of participation in which residents have no power over tourism development. Their involvement is limited to various predefined activities revolving around tourism destination promotion, and they receive few economic benefits. The second form of community participation, based on Tosun's typology, is induced community participation, which is similar to citizen tokenism in Arnstein's model and consultation in Petty's typology. Although residents have a say in the heritage management and tourism development process, they have no actual power or control over the decisions being made by those in positions of authority. The highest level of community participation is spontaneous participation in Tosun's model, citizen power in Arnstein's typology, and self-mobilization and interactive participation in Pretty's study. In spontaneous participation, residents have the power to make decisions and control the development process (Tonsun, 2000).

The Ladder of Participation was proposed via way of means of Arnstein in 1969 as a theoretical framework to demonstrate the degree of citizens' strength in participation. This eight-rung ladder shows the extent of power redistribution from the authority to the citizens at different levels. The higher the rung is, the more power is redistributed to the citizens.

Table 1: A comparison of different types of participation

7. Self-mobilization		(8) Citizen Control	Degrees of Citizen		**Spontaneous participation** Bottom-up; active participation; direct participation; participation indecision making, authentic participation; self-planning
6. Interactive participation	←	(7) Delegated Power		→	
		(6) Partnership			
5. Functional participation		(5) Placation	Degrees of citizen tokenism		**Induced participation** Top-down; passive; formal; mostly indirect; degree of tokenism, manipulation, pseudo participation; participation in implementation and sharing benefits; choice between proposed alternatives and feedback.
4. Participation in material incentives	←	(4) Consultation		→	
3. Participation by consultation		(3) Information			

2. Passive participation		(2) Therapy	Nonparticipation		**Coercive participation** Top-down, passive, mostly indirect, formal participation in implementation, but not necessarily sharing benefits; choice between proposed limited alternatives or no choice; paternalism, non-participation, high degree of tokenism, and manipulation
1. Manipulative participation		(1) Manipulation			
Pretty, 1995		Arnstein, 1969			Tosun, 2006

Sources: Eladway*et al*. (2020)

The importance of community participation in the planning, development, and management of heritage conservation has also been acknowledged by international organizations. The policy of UNESCO has been adopting the view that 'heritage protection does not depend alone on top-down interventions by governments or the expert actions of heritage industry professionals but must involve local communities' since the conference in Amsterdam in 2003 on 'linking universal and local values' (Labadi and Logan, 2016). In the same year, in UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO further revalued and recognized the value of communities in heritage conservation.

2.3. Challenges of community participation in heritage conservation and tourism development

Several factors influence community participation in conservation programs and tourism development. Identifying these factors can contribute toward a deeper understanding of community participation and facilitate the development of sustainable conservation programs and tourism developments in WHS sites (Jaafar et al., 2015).Nonetheless, few studies have investigated the factors influencing community participation in heritage management and tourism development, for example, using the Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability (MOA) model to identify the factors influencing community participation (Hung et al., 2011).Motivation concerns residents' willingness and interest to become involved in the development/management process. Focusing on the perceived positive impacts of tourism encourages the community to participate in tourism activities and heritage conservation programs and to support tourism development, whereas focusing on the perceived negative effects reduces their support for tourism development (Jaafar et al., 2015). The aforementioned opportunities refer to preconditions, such as the political will, rules, and channels that make possible the participation of residents in tourism activities and conservation programs (Hung et al., 2011). These opportunities, therefore, are a reflection of the extent to which current circumstances are conducive to community participation (Jaafar et al., 2015). Without open channels of communication between community members and

correspondence organizations, community participation in conservation programmes and tourism development is impossible (Aas et al., 2005).Moreover, the ability of the community to participate in conservation programs and tourism development is contingent upon various factors, including knowledge, skills, and financial resources (Hung et al., 2011).

In organizing the factors related to factors of community participation in the decision-making process of tourism development in developing countries, Tosun (2006) divided them into three main headings: (i) Operational limitations, (ii) Structural limitations, and (iii) Cultural limitations. Most of these limitations occur in developing countries, although they do not exist in every tourist destination. Operational limitations include centralization of public administration of tourism, a lack of coordination, and a lack of information. For structural limitations, the items include attitudes of professionals, lack of expertise, elite domination,lack of trained human resources, relatively high cost of community participation, lack of an appropriate legal system,and lack of financial resources. Finally, cultural limitations cover the area of limited capacity of poor people and apathy and low level of awareness in the local community (Tonsun, 2000).

2.3.1. Theory informing the study

Considering that, the adoption of stakeholder theory into the current study helps to better understand relevant tourism stakeholders and their interests, concerns, and possible roles in the process of heritage conservation and tourism development in the historic churches of SWZ.Stakeholder theory (ST) has been consistently used to elaborate on various phenomena in tourism research (Byrd, 2007; Domínguez-Gómez and González-Gómez, 2017).Hardy and Pearson (2018) employed ST to analyze perceptions and roles of stakeholders in sustainable tourism development, while Theodoulidis et al.(2017) adopted ST to explore the link between corporate social responsibility and financial performance in tourism industries.Moreover,Pasape et al. (2013) implemented ST to explain the development ofsustainable ecotourism in Tanzania, whereas Tham (2018) utilized ST todemonstrate how the involvement of multiple stakeholders determinesmedical tourism development.

3. Research Methodology
3.1. Description of the Study Area

This study focuses on the historical churches of the SWZ in the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS), specifically those in the monasteries of Haiq Estiphanos, Abba Giyorgis Zegascha, Tedibabe Mariam, andAtrons Mariam. These historic sites were selected due to their rich heritage and historical significance.
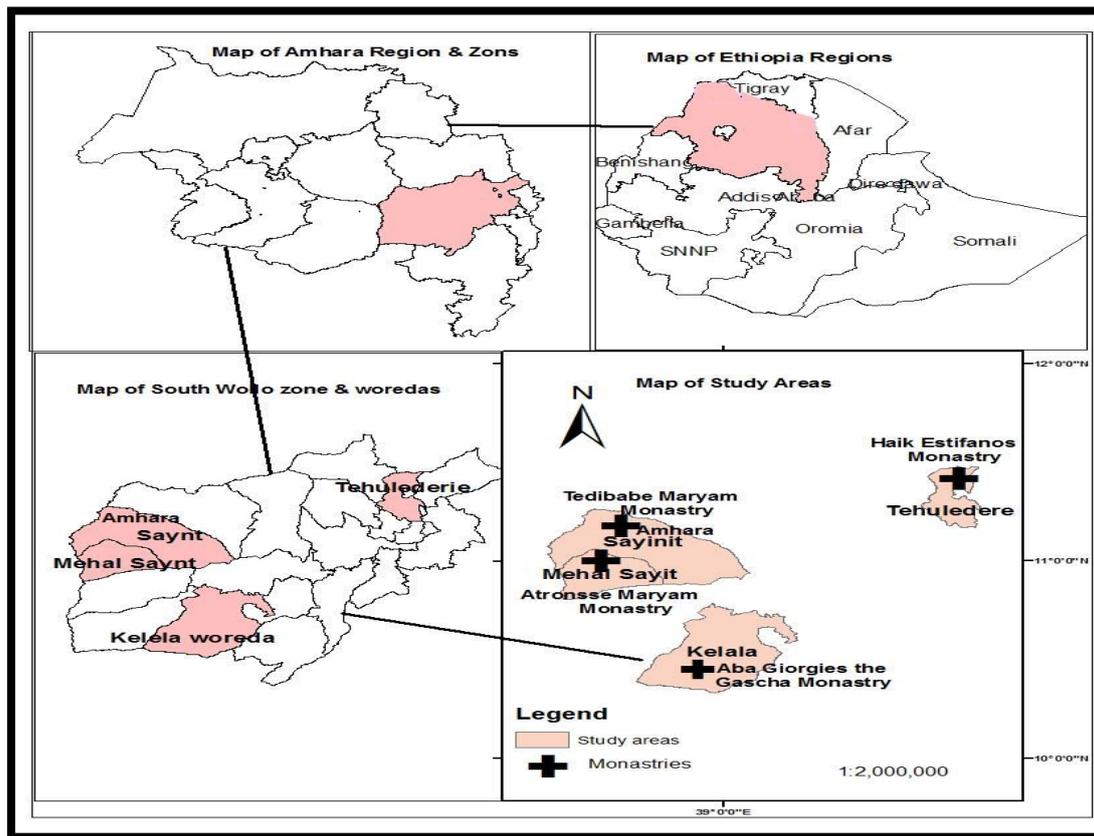
Figure 1: Maps of the Study Areas

3.2. Materials and methods

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, which is a mixed research approach.A mixed method layout is beneficial to seize the satisfaction of each quantitative and qualitative approach (Creswell and Poth, 2016). The mixed research method maximizes the strength of qualitative and quantitative research and minimizes the weakness of using one method. In terms of research design, the current study utilized a concurrent designthat follows pragmatism as a theoretical assumption and is an efficient and popular approach to mixed-methods research (Creswell and Clark, 2017).Both qualitative and quantitative methods were mixed to obtain the triangulated results in this design for this study. At first, two types of data sets were collected concurrently, and secondly, they were analyzed independently using quantitative and qualitative analytical methods. Based on the purpose of the data inquiry and contact numbers, descriptive and cross-sectional research designs were used, respectively. A descriptive study was used to provide a general understanding of the extent and types of community participation and factors that hinder community participation in heritage conservation and tourism development in the historic churches of SWZ.

3.3. Target Population

The historic churches that were chosen for the study are Haiq Estiphanos, Abba Gyorgis of Gascha, Tedibabe Mariam, and Atrons Mariam monasteries. The

subjects of this study include the elders and leaders of local communities living in the study areas, the religious servants and leaders of the monasteries, and employees of the culture and tourism office at the district and zone levels.

3.4. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size Determination

For the current study, the researcher employed probability (stratified random sampling) and non-probability (purposiveand snowball) sampling methods.In the interest of ensuring the trustworthiness.s of research findings, quantitative data are triangulated with qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (Decrop, 1999). To gather quantitative data, 268 respondents were recruited from local communities living in the selected four historical monasteries (Haiq Estiphanos, Abba Giyorgis Zegascha, Tedibabe Mariam, and Atrons Mariam) usingstratified random sampling.To determine the sample size of this study, the researcher used a simplified (Yemane, 1967) sample size determination formula as follows.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)2}$$

Where n sample size

N= total population

e = level of errors which is = (0.05/95%).Therefore, based on this formula, the required sample size $n = \frac{811}{1+811(0.05)2}$=268

Concerning qualitative data, the sample size of participants in the qualitative approach of the study is decided based on the attainment of the data saturation concept (Charmaz, 2006). Guest et al. (2006), as well as Burmeister and Aitken (2012), have clarified that six interviews may be sufficient to attain data saturation. In this study, 18KeyInterview Informants (KII)and 3FocusGroupDiscussions(FGD)were carried out with various stakeholders, as indicated in Table 2; each focus group contained six participants, as indicated in Table 1 below.Participantsfor the KII and FocusFGD were selected based on their knowledge and closeness to the research problem under study.

3.5. Data Collection and Instrument

The main sources used for the study comprised both primary and secondary data. The primary data are collected from the sample population through a questionnaire survey, KII, FGD, and extended personal observations.Secondary data sources pertinent to the study are also consulted to provide robust theoretical support to research findings (Tsang et al., 2011).Regarding the secondary data, Eligible sources of data, such as research journal articles, books, media, and government and non-government reports,wereemployed.The questionnaires were prepared in English and the Amharic language. The questionnaires were administered through face-to-face interviews using the Amharic language (the official working language of Ethiopia and the local language of the subjects of the study area). The questionnaires have two sections. The first section portrays the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second sectionpresented

related to community participation in the conservation of cultural heritage and tourism development. The questionnaire has both closed-end and open-ended types of questions.

The researcher used interview guiding questions related to the study objective. These interviews were conducted face-to-face, making them ideal for gaining insights and perspectives from a small number of respondents (Creswell, 2009).The interviews took place from April to July 2024. The study utilized FGDs to cross-check unclear information from semi-structured interviews, addressing disputes over community participation in heritage conservation and tourism development in the historic churches of SWZ. In addition to interviews and FGDs, direct observations and field notes were used to examine the roles of local Communitiesin heritage conservation and tourism development. The field observations and field notes data were utilized to triangulate and cross-check the findings of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and FGDs.

Table 2: Composition and number of interviewees engaged for this research

No	Category of Interviewees	Total No. Interviewees	Details
1	Woredas Culture and Tourism Office Heritage Conservation and Tourism Development Experts	6	Semi-structured interviews were organized for these 6 heritage conservation and tourism Development experts separately for barely an hour and 20 minutes each.
2	Administrators of theMonasteries	4	Semi-structured interviews were organized for these 4 Administrators of the monasteries separately for barely an hour and a half each.
3	Representatives of the Local Community Elders	4	Semi-structured interviews were organized for these 4 Local Community Elders separately for barely an hour each.
4	South Wollo Zone Culture and Tourism Department Experts	2	Semi-structured interviews were organized for these twoheritage conservators and protection experts separately for barely an hour and a half each.
5	Monasteries heritage custodians	18	ThreeFGD for the six monasteries' heritage custodians lasted an hour and a half for each group.
	Total	34	

Source: Researchers' Construct from Fieldwork 2024

3.6. Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected from both primary and secondary sources were tallied, tabulated, and analyzed through descriptive statistical tools, and a discussion was made through explanatory and category methods.Quantitative data fromthequestionnaire were analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26 and Excel to compute descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation).In addition, qualitative data generated from KIIs, FGDs, observation, and document consultations were managed, analyzed,and organized through content analysisto triangulate with quantitative information and used to strengthen the overall understanding of the issue.Moreover, to make the research observable, it was supported by different figures of heritage with explanations. Some facts and points were also assisted by secondary sources of materials. Finally, based on the information that was obtained from the analysis part, a conclusion and recommendations were made, taking into account the most important points related to objectives and problems.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Community Participation and Practices of Cultural Heritage Conservation

4.1.1. Residents' Attachment to the HistoricChurches

The questionnaire survey asked that are believed to help understand the residents' level of attachment to the heritage. The descriptive findings ofsome of these questions are listed below in Table 3. To understand their level of attachment to the heritage, respondents were asked whether the churches have any value for them or not. The findings indicate that around 96.6% of sample respondents believed that the historical churches have economic, religious, cultural, and historical values for them. Furthermore, such values may incubate their sense of ownership over the monasteries. As indicated in Table 3, more than 97.3% of the sample respondents replied that they have a sense of ownership over the historical churches. Hence, this shows to what extent the residents tend to have a profound sentimental attachment to the heritage.

The survey findings regarding monastic residents' level of attachment to their heritage seem to be inconsistent.Timothy (1999) argued that residents of developing countries seem to have few sentimental attachments to historic and other heritages.

Table 3: Respondents' views about the historical churches

Do you have a sense of ownership over the historical churches? (263)	Frequency	Percent
Yes	256	97.3%
No	7	2.7%
Do you think the historical churches are important to you? (263)		
Yes	254	96.6

No	9	3.4%
If yes, what kinds of importance do they have for you?(254)		
Economic importance	25	9.8%
Religious importance	77	30.3%
Cultural & historical importance	70	27.6%
All of the above	82	32.3%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.1.2. Residents' Support forheritageConservation tourism development

From Figure 2, we can understand that residents' spiritual attachment to thechurches is very strong, as more than 96.6% of the sample respondents visit the monasteries merely for worship purposes. This is not surprising given the fact that visiting thechurches to receive blessings is a fact of daily life for many EthiopianOrthodox Christian believers. As noted in Table 4, because the monasteriesare living heritages, the local population tends toassociate itself with the heritage in a spiritual sense. The church buildings, religiousfestivities, ecclesiastical treasures, and others constitute the residents' daily lives. As shown in Table 4, 92.4%of respondents accepted that the conservation of the historical churches is also their responsibility. As a result, they seemto be willing to contribute whatever is necessary to protect the churches according to theircapacity.

As indicated in Table 4, we found that more than 69.6% (183) of samplerespondents have supported historical churches in conservation missions in the past. Out of those,they provided conservation support, about 21.3% were Financial, 35.5%physical, 19.1% both financial and physical, and 24.0%of them provided other activities in the study area.The KIs support this idea,

Community members are helping to conserve valuable cultural and historical artifacts. The efforts are mainly focused on several preservation tasks such as regular cleaning of church buildings and treasures to maintain their condition., Exposing heritage items to natural sunlight to prevent moisture and mold, and 'Maetane' (fumigating) cultural heritages made from organic materials with the smoke of incense, prevents heritages from deterioration and decay(informant Abba FikreYohans, 2024).

These activities are crucial for maintaining the integrity and longevity of these cultural heritages. It is a wonderful example of community involvement and dedication to preserving history and culture. On the other hand, as Table 4 shows, around 30.4% of the sample respondentsreplied that they have never supported the historical churches for conservation purposes. Out of those who provided their origin, lack of interest 36.3%, no one has asked them for their support 40.0% and they do not have enough financial and physical capacity 23.8%. Based on the information obtained from the interviewees, a lack of awareness among monastery custodians is the major problem in conserving and preserving movable and immovable cultural heritages of all monasteries. This does not mean that the

monastery administrators, the clergy, and the worshipers are unaware of the significance of heritage and ignore the cultural heritage to be lost and damaged. The KIs to strengthen this idea,

In many churches and monasteries, including those that were chosen as samples for study, the custodians prioritize controlling and protecting cultural heritages primarily from external threats such as fire, theft, and vandalism. However, they often neglect the importance of preservation and conservation activities. This means that while they are vigilant in keeping these valuable heritages safe from immediate harm, they may not focus enough on the necessary steps to maintain and preserve the items' long-term condition(informants Abba Muche, Abba Gebre Mariam, and AtoYidnekachew).

This lack of attention to preservation and conservation can lead to the gradual deterioration and decay of these cultural treasures over time, despite the efforts to protect them from more immediate dangers.

Table 4: Respondents' support for heritage conservation

Do you think you have the responsibility of preserving this historical church? (263)	Frequency	Percent
Yes	243	92.4%
No	20	7.6%
Have you ever supported the conservation of this ancient Monastery and its treasures? (263)		
Yes	183	69.6%
No	80	30.4%
If yes, what was your support? (183)		
Financial	39	21.3%
Physical	65	35.5%
Both financial and physical	35	19.1%
Others	44	24.0%
If no, what is your reason? (80)		
Because I am not interested	29	36.3%
Because no one has asked me to do so	32	40.0%
Because I don't have enough financial andphysical capacity	19	23.8%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.1.3. Respondents' attitudes towards heritage conservation and tourism development

As indicated in Table 5, respondents' attitudes towards Have you ever been invited to public discussions regarding heritage conservation in the past?About 31.2% (82), not at all, 44.5% (117)sometimes, and 24.3%(64) frequently. The result

indicates theineffectiveness and disorganized features of the discussions. The findings show that about 45.6% (120) of the sample respondents claimed thatthey had never had discussions on any conservation-related issues. The remaining 35.7% (94) and 18.6% (49), sometimes and frequently, respectively, had discussed conservation-related issues. The result clearly shows that there is a level of commitment sometimes on the part of the people in terms of a financial donation, attending meetings, and volunteering. Mydland and Grahn (2012) emphasized that participation in the preservation and conservation of heritage resources is often carried out by voluntary workers who spend their money and time on heritage belonging to the community, especially when the resources are not of national interest. This agrees with Lvova (2013) that the community is ready to contribute to the preservation of important heritage resources in different ways, including financial support based on perceived values and significance of these resources. This action has significantly eliminated or reduced financial limitations for conservation since reliance is not on inter-institutional partnerships and public funding.

Table 5: Respondents' attitudes toward local officials' efforts in conservation

Have you ever been invited to public discussions regarding heritage conservation in the past?	Frequency	Percent
Not at all	82	31.2%
Sometimes	117	44.5%
Frequently	64	24.3%
Are you involved in volunteer work related to heritage conservation?		
Not at all	120	45.6%
Sometimes	94	35.7%
Frequently	49	18.6%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.1.4. Respondent's awareness of heritage conservation and tourism development

In this study, awareness about heritage conservation was defined as the extent to which residents know about conserving cultural heritage. In addition, during the interviews, awareness was also defined to respondents as being to which they are aware of the effect of their physical interaction with the church on the deterioration of church buildings and movable heritages. There could be many ways of measuring awareness; however, for this dissertation, respondents were asked to rate their level of awareness. They were given a five-point scale from very low (1) to very high (5) to rate their level of awareness of heritage conservation. Figure 2 indicates the comparison of respondents' awareness of heritage conservation; about 9.9% and 44.9% of the respondents rated their level ofawareness of heritage conservation as very low and low, respectively, whereas around 20.9% and 7.2%

of the samplerespondents rated themselves as having a high or very high level of awareness on the issuesof heritage conservation of the monasteries. The remaining 17.1% of respondents rated their level of awareness of heritage conservation as medium-level awareness. Thus, it should be noted that without awareness of the essence of conservation and a properunderstanding of the values of the heritage, their commitment, in some cases, might havenegative impacts on heritage values. Studies often consider a lack of awareness as animpediment to heritage conservation (Temesgen, 2013). Timothy and Nyaupane (2009) arguethat the lack of awareness of locals is one of the challenges that often thwart heritageconservation objectives, particularly in less-developed nations.
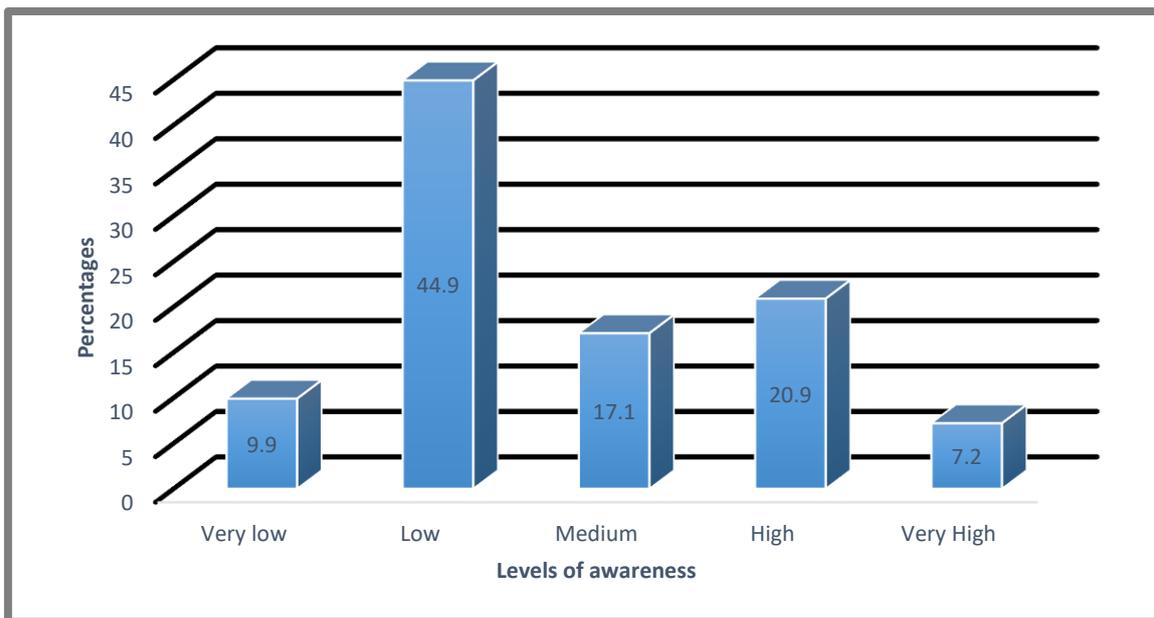
Figure 2: Respondents' awareness of heritage conservation
Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.1.5. Willingness to support heritage conservation and tourism development

AsTable6 indicates, 90.5% (238) of the sample respondents were willing to continueproviding their support for conservation in the future. Theirwillingness to provide conservation support is highly associated with gaining salvation 78.2% (186), gaining tourism benefit33.2% (79), keeping its historical value 53.4% (127), and keeping its cultural value 31.9% (76) of respondents. Whatever their reason may be, it is necessary to maintain theirwillingness and commitment, as residents are the ultimate guardians of the heritage. It is valuable to address the importance of mobilizing residents' participation andcommitment to conserving built heritages (Yung andChan,2011).

In general, the governmental sector is composed of several ministries and authorities that aim to improve the quality of public services and enhance the country's economy (Alshboul, 2016). To sustainably harmonize heritage tourism and conservation, the local governmentmust induce residents' participation in various conservation and tourism-related issues. The local government can play significant roles in conserving heritage sites and inpromoting tourism with the

participation of the residents (Temesgen, 2013). In this dissertation, respondents were asked to assess the performance of local governments that have taken adequate measures to inform the community about the concept of heritage conservation. Table 6 summarizes the respondents' responsesregarding the performance of the officials on conservation-relatedissues.The findings show that only 25.1% (66) of the sample respondents claimed that they had never had discussions on any conservation-related issues, while 74.9% (197) of respondentshad discussed conservation-related issues in the past. The selected residents, who are invited to these meetings, are allowed to express their opinions based on their knowledge regarding topics discussed in the meetings or workshops.Usually, local authorities facilitate these meetings and workshops.

Table 6: Respondents' willingness to support heritage conservation

Are you willing to provide support for the conservation activities of the church in the future? (263)	Frequency	Percent
Yes	238	90.5
No	25	9.5
If yes, what were your reasons? (238)		
To gain salvation	186	78.2%
To gain tourism benefits	79	33.2%
To keep its historical value	127	53.4%
To keep its cultural value	76	31.9%
Do you think the local government has taken adequate measures to inform the community about the concept of heritage conservation in the past? (263)		
Yes	197	74.9%
No	66	25.1%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Based on the five-point scale from "very Low" (1) to "very High" (5), respondents rated the performance of the local government officials in heritage conservation practices at historical churches, as well as promoting tourism in the study areas. Figure 32 shows that the value of officials' performance related to church conservationwas very low, 30.4% and low 34.6% while high 9.9% and 2.7% very high.
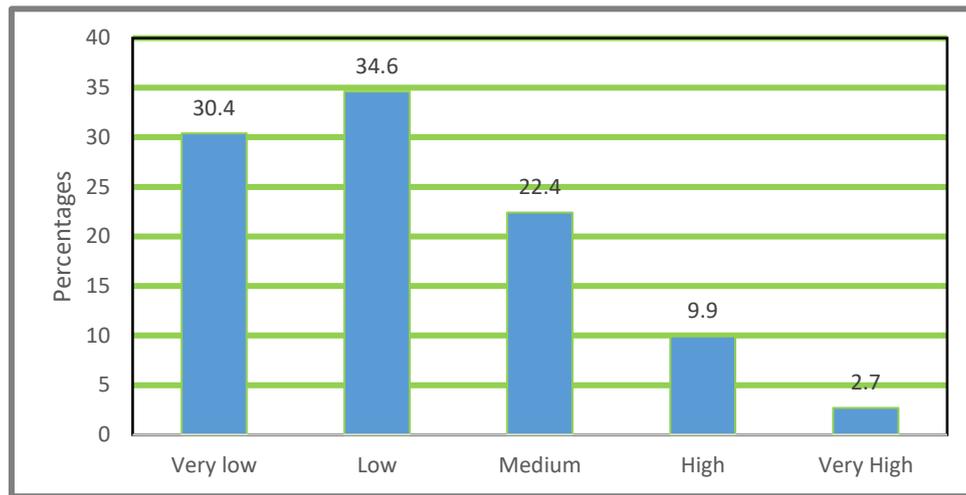
Figure 3: Performance of the local government officials in heritage conservation practices at historical churches
Source: Field Survey, 2024

4.2. Factors to Community Participation in Heritage Conservation and Tourism Development

Community participation is one of the best ways to ensure that heritage sites are well-managed and conserved (Makuvaza, 2014). Involving the community breeds success, as pointed out by Ezeuduji (2011), and local governments to facilitate the capability building of the local community members can task equity in local communities. Local communities' participation and cooperation with relevant tourism stakeholders is critically important and lead to successful cultural heritage conservation. Different scholars mention differentbarriers to community participation in tourism development and heritage conservation. For this study, the barriers to community participation are divided into three main categories: operational, structural, and cultural. The results of the mean and standard deviation for the nine items are provided in Table7.

Under operational barriers, the findings suggest that the residents of the monasteries perceive that there is a high level of centralization of public administration towards tourism development and heritage conservation activities by52.5% (138) and 27.8% (73) of respondents agreed and strongly agreed, respectively (mean = 3.87,σ = 1.072). This implies that the public administration system is too bureaucratic to respond to public needs effectively and efficiently (Tosun, 2000), as the top management is afraid of sharing power and resources. The results from the interviews indicate that the respondents share the same concerns regarding the centralization of public administration.The offices' representatives from the Culture and Tourism office noted,

There is often a noticeable gap in communication between the administrative bodies (such as local government officials or leaders) and the public. This lack of effective communication can have several negative consequenceslikemistrust,lack of participation in effective initiatives, and missed opportunities for collaboration (informants AtoWorku and AtoYidnekachew).

To address these issues, it is crucial to establish open lines of communication and build trust between the community and administrative bodies. This can be achieved through regular, transparent updates, actively seeking and incorporating community feedback, and ensuring that community members feel heard and valued in the decision-making process.

As Table 7 shows, the unwillingness of shareholders to share power is the second barrier under the operational factor. Further, the data suggests that the residents believe that various government and other agencies coordinate well for the development of tourism and heritage conservation in their historical churches, 49.0% (129) and 22.8% (60) of respondents agreed and strongly agreed, respectively (mean =3.63, σ =1.225).Local community participation is hampered because there is a lack of coordination among those people involved in tourism development (Dograand Gupta, 2012).The KIs agreed that,

In the study areas, the community is often excluded from the decision-making processes related to tourism development and heritage conservation. As a result, they do not actively participate in these crucial areas. The involvement of both the government and society is essential for achieving successful tourism development and effective heritage conservation. This collaboration ensures that the initiatives are inclusive, sustainable, and beneficial for all stakeholders.In the case of the SWZ, many external private tourism operators struggle to coordinate their business activities with the local community. This difficulty arises because the local community may have limited knowledge and experience in effectively communicating and expressing their ideas. This gap in knowledge and experience hinders meaningful collaboration and the implementation of successful tourism and conservation projects. (informantsQeisTesfaMicheal, AtoDemsew, and AtoYidnekachew).

The third factor under operational barriers is the lack of information. The residents believe that the government officials have adequate information about the various tourism resources of their historical churches about 47.5% (125) agreed, and 25.9% (68) strongly agreed (mean = 3.74, σ = 1.147).Based on the key informants' and FGD's response,the lack of information is the other problem that prevents locals from participating in tourism development and heritage conservation, and as long as people are still not equipped with relevant and necessary information, they will remain isolated and not participate in any of the tourism initiatives and heritage conservation.The local community feels that there are many tourism projects by local authorities or the private sector that are done secretly without informing them. Therefore, minimum involvement from the public should be anticipated (Tosun, 2000).The local community members highlighted about lack of information,

In this community, there is a significant gap in the availability and dissemination of tourism and heritage information. Even the limited information that exists is not effectively communicated to the community members in ways that they can easily understand and engage with. This lack of accessible information poses several

challenges: limited awareness, ineffective communication, participation, and missed opportunities (informantsAto Worku and Abba Wolde).

Under structural barriers, the findings suggest that residents of the destination believe that there is a high attitude toward professionals, about 58.2% (153) agreeing and 19.8% (52) strongly agreeing (mean = 3.76, σ =1.063).This implies that, related to the centralization of public administration, professionals seem to feel that their ideas and work are better than local people who may have low education levels, as stated in the demographic profile. The data suggests that only a few people (generally outsiders) are taking the benefit of tourism, and the people of the destination are not getting the maximum benefit because of tourism development. Besides that, there is a lack of strong NGOs at the national or international level that can encourage locals to actively participate in tourism development.A participant highlighted the attitude of professionals,

In the context of the tourism sector in our community, it is evident that there is a significant lack of participation from NGOs. This means that NGOs are not actively involved in supporting, promoting, or developing tourism-related activities or projects in the area. The absence of NGO involvement can have several implications: limited resources and support, missed opportunities for collaboration,andreduced advocacy and awareness(informant W/roHabiba).

The only notable exception to this lack of NGO involvement is the recent foundation stone ceremony at Logo Haiq. This indicates that there has been a recent initiative, possibly led or supported by an NGO, to establish a project or development in the Logo Haiq area. While this is a positive step, it highlights the overall scarcity of NGO participation in the tourism sector.

Elite domination is also a barrier that is highlighted by the local community in Table 7 shows 50.2% (132) agreed and strongly agreed with 28.1% (74) (mean = 3.79, σ = 1.199). This indicates that the respondents mentioned that political dominance is quite high among certain groups of people who hold management positions. Many tourism projects were given to their relatives, and the minority was left behind in terms of politics and economic activities (Tosun, 2006).

The next obstacle related to the structural barriers is the lack of an appropriate legal system. The residents believe that there is no appropriate legal system to encourage local community participation. The respondents strongly believe that there is a high cost of community participation58.2% (164) agree, and 19.8% (51) strongly agree (mean = 3.87, σ =.925), which diverts the interest of locals from tourism participationin their destination.The FGD participants added,

The local community has claimed that the current legal system in these churches is not encouraging them to actively engage in the governance and decision-making processes that directly affect their lives.Moreover, it has been observed that many tourism project briefings are not being well disseminated to all local communities. Instead, these briefings are only being communicated to the heads of the districts of culture and tourism offices, as well as the heads of monasteries. This selective dissemination of information has left many community members uninformed and

disconnected from crucial developments that could affect our heritage and tourism opportunities (informants Abba Tekle Giorgis and Abba Mogessie).

As Table 7 indicates, lack of funding was also indicated as a major obstacle to community participation in tourism development and heritage conservation initiatives. This is another structural cause that affects community participation in heritage conservation and tourism development, especially spiritual tourism development. The local community operates businesses on a small and medium scale. They usually have limited funds to expand their business as compared to outside investors. The findings suggest, respondents strongly believe that there is a lack of financial resources46.0% (121) agree, and 17.5% (46) strongly agree (mean =3.52, σ =1.128).Limited financial resources in tourism development, which is a capital-intensive industry, are often related to the limited capacity and support of the central and local governments in the development and development of tourism infrastructure/support facilities. This capital/cost limitation will eventually lead to the desire of the public to obtain outside capital in the form of investment from private companies, which has implications for foreign ownership.In the current study, as the KI indicated,

A crucial issue that has been hindering the progress and involvement of our monastic community in tourism development and heritage conservation initiativesisthe primary barrier we face is a severe lack of funding.Monasteries hold a wealth of cultural and historical significanceand are not only spiritual havens but also custodians of our rich heritage. However, without adequate financial support, our monastic community is unable to participate fully in conserving and promoting this invaluable heritage.The lack of funding restricts our ability to maintain and restore historical sites, create engaging tourist experiences, and effectively market our heritage to a broader audience. This results in missed opportunities for economic development and cultural enrichment(informants Abba Muche and Abba Zerihun).

The cultural barriers, apathy, and low level of awareness in the local community are the main reasons to discourage the community from participating in tourism development and heritage conservation. For local community feels that they gain less benefit from tourism development as they see other investors dominate business in their motherland. It was observed that while most participants expressed a desire to be more intimately involved in decision-making with the government, they did not know the ways to do so. The findings suggest that because of apathy and low levels of awareness in the local community, 56.7% (149) agreed and 15.6% (41) strongly agreed (mean=3.67, σ =1.012). According to informants, there was a lack of knowledge regarding the rights of citizens, governance, administrative laws, and the judicial system. They felt that local agencies should organize awareness and education drives.Therewas also a lack of knowledge regarding the long-term impacts of tourism on the local economy and society. While participants were eager to display their local culture to tourists, especially foreigners, they did not know the positive or negative impact that might accrue.

Under cultural barriers, the findings suggest that because of the limited capacity of poor people to participate in tourism development and heritage conservation 40`.3% (106) agreed and 12.9% (34) strongly agreed (mean =3.12, σ = 1.315), they are unable to participate in the tourism development and heritage conservation. Based on the interview question responses, respondents showed that,

We stand together to address a pressing issue that affects our community deeply, a chronic shortage in capacity, disenabling many of our members from meaningfully participating in development initiatives. This challenge is painfully evident when we consider the lack of knowledge, information, and understanding of development among our community members.Without a doubt, this issue is further exacerbated by the low levels of education and literacy among us. When individuals are not equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge, they are unable to fully engage in the very initiatives that are meant to uplift our society. This not only hinders individual growth but also stalls the collective progress of our entire community(informantsHabibaandAto Belay).

Table 7: Barriers to community participation in heritage tourism conservation

No	Type of Barriers	Questions Items		SD	D	UD	A	SA	Mean&St.deviati on
1	Operational	1. Unwillingness to share power	Count	22	40	12	129	60	3.63 1.225
			%	8.4	15.2	4.6	49.0	22.8	
		2. Centralization of public administration	Count	9	36	7	138	73	3.87 1.072
			%	3.4	13.7	2.7	52.5	27.8	
		3. Lack of information	Count	13	40	17	125	68	3.74 1.147
			%	4.9	15.2	6.5	47.5	25.9	
2	Structural	4. Elite domination	Count	22	27	8	132	74	3.79 1.199
			%	8.4	10.3	3.0	50.2	28.1	
		5. Lack of financial resources	Count	13	49	34	121	46	3.52 1.128
			%	4.9	18.6	12.9	46.0	17.5	
		6. Attitude of a professional	Count	15	27	16	153	52	3.76 1.063
			%	5.7	10.3	6.1	58.2	19.8	
		7. Lack of an appropriate legal system	Count	8	22	18	164	51	3.87 .925
			%	3.0	8.4	6.8	62.4	19.4	
3	Cultural	8. Limited capacity of poor people	Count	36	71	16	106	34	3.12 1.315
			%	13.7	27.0	6.1	40.3	12.9	
		9. Apathy and a low level of awareness in the local community	Count	8	40	25	149	41	3.67 1.012
			%	3.0	15.2	9.5	56.7	15.6	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

5. Conclusion and implications

5.1. Conclusion

This paper has revealed the state of heritage conservation and tourism development at thehistoric monasteries ofSWZ. Community participation plays a significant role in reviving and sustaining the status of heritage sites, leading to economic development and subsequent improvements in the quality of life of local communities.The findings of the current study reveal that the residents of destinations prefer to limit their involvement in economic activities to participation in the decision-making processes of heritage conservation and tourism development.The research findings further revealed that local communities wish to take part in the conservation of cultural heritage and the tourism development decision-making process. The findings have shown that while local communities recognize and acknowledge the need to involve conservationists, tourism professionals, and experts when making decisions about heritage conservation and tourism development, they insist that they wish to participate in the decision-making process.

 Local people strongly stated that 'taking part actively in the heritage and tourism decision-making process' is an appropriate way of participating in the local community in heritage conservation and tourism development. They want to see decisions about their heritage conservation and tourism development in their local area made jointly by government officials and elected committees in consultation with the local community. This was overall the most accepted means of participating in local communities in heritage conservation and tourism development.Therefore,heritageconservation and tourism development, being a broad idea,cannot be achieved only by one group of stakeholders but by different groups of active stakeholders, where the local community is also recognized as a key active player.

This studyhas also identified and discussed the barriers to community participation in tourism development, especially in the area of decision-making. There are three barriers encountered by the local community: operational, structural, and cultural.The findings indicate that there are culture is an internal factor, while operational and structural is the external barriers, which hinder community participation. Internal barriers are related to factors that can be controlled by the local community, while external barriers are beyond their jurisdiction.To encourage local participation, all stakeholders involved in heritage conservation and tourism development need to work together. For internal factors like cultural barriers, local people should have the spirit to change their attitude and look at heritage and tourism as something that motivates them.For external factors like operational and structural barriers, other stakeholder, especially local authorities and management, the private sectors, as well as NGOs, need to change their perception and create a space for the local community to participate in heritage conservation and tourism development of the historic monasteries of SWZ.

5.2. Implications:

Effective conservation requires the collaboration of various stakeholders, including religious leaders, local authorities, and the community, to ensure that the unique architectural features, historical artifacts, and traditional practices are conservedfor future generations.Therefore, the researcher forwards the following recommendations for better conservation and the better exploitation of the tourism development of the study area.

➤ Empowering local communities through active participation in conservation and tourism can lead to increased ownership, pride, and responsibility towards cultural heritage sites. This can result in more sustainable and effective conservation efforts.

➤ Improving training programs for local artisans and tour guides can enhance their skills and knowledge, leading to higher-quality conservation and tourism services. This can also foster a sense of professional development and community pride.

➤ Developing comprehensive theoretical frameworks that explain how different models of community participation can be effectively applied in the context of cultural heritage conservation and tourism development. This can provide a better understanding of the factors that influence successful community engagement.

➤ Applying theoretical models that integrate sustainable tourism practices with cultural heritage conservation can provide a holistic approach to heritage conservation. This can ensure that tourism development does not compromise the integrity of heritage sites.

➤ Improving data collection techniques to capture comprehensive and reliable data on community perspectives, experiences, and impacts related to cultural heritage and tourism. This can enhance the accuracy and validity of research findings.

editing, and final verification. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: The principal author received financial support during the fieldwork, but not for the submission of this article.

Availability of data and material: The datasets generated or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.The data is the primary data that the corresponding author collected from the field. This data is part of the corresponding author'sPhD research. Therefore, the corresponding author wants to say that I will share it with anyone after the publication who is interested in this research.

Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate: The data collection method was granted ethical approval by the University of Gondar, Department of Tourism, on January 13 /05/ 2024, under reference number TMGT/565/2016, after proposal defense, a review of the procedures and protocols. The research protocol was reviewed and approved to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. All participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and their responses were anonymized to protect their identities.

Consent for Publication: The participants' photographs taken in the monasteries have consent from the participants for publication. No personal photographs were included, but the monasteries' museum/participants' photographed treasures exhibit.

Competing interests: All four authors declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References:
1. Aas, C., Ladkin, A., Fletcher, J. (2005). Stakeholder collaboration and heritage management. Anna. Tour. Res. 32 (1), 28–48.
2. Adedayo, O. F. (2006). Conservation, Osun OsogboSacred Grove, Nigeria. In A guide for cultural heritage and local development.
3. Akama, J. S. (1999). The evolution of tourism in Kenya. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 7(1), 6-25.
4. Alshboul, K. (2016). Assessing local community involvement in tourism development around a proposed world heritage site in Jerash, Jordan.
5. Aref, F., &Ma'rof, R. (2008). Barriers to community participation in tourism development in Shiraz, Iran. Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences, 5(9), 936-940.
6. Arnstein, S.R.(1969). A ladder of citizen participation. J. Am. Inst. Plann. 35 (4), 216–224.

7. Ashgate, (2008). Graeme Aplin, Heritage: Identification, Conservation, and Management (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2002), 14.

8. Ashley, C.(2006). How Can Governments Boost the Local Economic Impacts of Tourism? Options and Tools, Overseas Development Institute and StichtingNederlandseVriwilligers (SNV), London.

9. Baker L.R., Olubode O.S., Tanimola A.A. &Garshelis D.L. (2014). Role of local culture, religion, and human attitudes in the conservation of sacred populations of a threatened 'pest' species. Biodiverse Conserve. Northwest,

10. Brebbia, C. A., Longhurst, J., Marco, E., & Booth, C. (Eds.). (2017). Sustainable development and planning IX (Vol. 226). Wit Press.

11. Burmeister, E., & Aitken, L. M. (2012). Sample size: How many is enough? Australian Critical Care, 25(4), 271–274.

12. Bushell, R. & Jafari, J. (1996). 'Developing Cultural Tourism Opportunities, Annals of Tourism Research, 23 (4), 954-955.

13. Byrd, E.T.(2007). Stakeholders in sustainable tourism development and their roles: applying stakeholder theory to sustainable tourism development. Tour. Rev. 62 (2), 6–13.

14. Chan, P. (2016). Community Participation in Heritage Management: A Case in Macau.

15. Chapman, M. & Kirk, K. (2001). Lessons for Community Capacity Building: A summary of the research evidence

16. Charmaz, K. (2006). Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis. Sage.

17. China. Cimadomo, G. (2015). Community participation for heritage conservation. In L. Verdelli (Ed.), Sustainability in heritage protected areas.

18. Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). Designing and conducting mixed methods research. Sage Publications.

19. Creswell, J. W., &Poth, C. N. (2016). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. Sage Publications.

20. Creswell, J.W. (2009). Research designs. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach.

21. Dann, G. M. (1981). Tourist motivation and appraisal. Annals of tourism research, 8(2), 187-219.

22. Decrop, A. (1999). Triangulation in qualitative tourism research. Tourism Management, 20(1), 157-161

23. Dogra, R., & Gupta, A. (2012). Barriers to Community Participation in Tourism Development: Empirical Evidence from a Rural Destination.

24. Domínguez-Gómez, J.A., González-Gómez, T. (2017). Analyzing stakeholders' perceptions of golf-course-based tourism: a proposal for developing sustainable tourism projects.

25. Eladway, S. M., Azzam, Y. A., & Al-Hagla, K. S. (2020). Role of public participation in heritage tourism development in Egypt: a case study of Fuwah City. WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment, 241, 27-43.

26. Esubalew, B., Solomon, N., & Akele, B. (2020). Religious tourism practices, potentials, and challenges: The case of Dire Sheikh Hussein Area, South East Ethiopia. J. Soc. Sci, 48(3).

27. Ezeuduji, I., & Rid, W. (2011). Rural tourism offers local community participation in The Gambia. Tourismos, 6(2), 187-211.

28. Gedecho, E. K. (2014). Challenges of religious tourism development: the case of Gishen Mariam, Ethiopia. American Journal of Tourism Research, 3(2), 42-57.

29. Getahun, B. T., & Yeshanew, Y. A. (2016). Historical Survey of Tourism Industry in Ethiopia and its Potential for Economic Development: The Case of Lake Tana Region. The International Journal of Business & Management, 4(2), 421.

30. Getnet, Z. (2013). Potentials and Challenges of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church to Heritage Tourism Development: The Case of Entoto Complex, Addis Ababa.

31. Gursoy D, Chi C, Dyer P. (2010). Locals' attitudes toward mass and alternative tourism: The case of Sunshine Coast, Australia. Journal of Travel Research 49 (3): 381-394.

32. Harper, D. (2010). Online etymology dictionary.www.etymonline.com.accessed

33. Hardy, A., Pearson, L.J.(2018). Examining stakeholder group specificity: an innovative sustainable tourism approach.

34. Hung, K., Sirakaya-Turk, E., & Ingram, L. J. (2011). Testing the efficacy of an integrative model for community participation. Journal of Travel Research, 50(3), 276–288.

35. Huong, P.T.T. (2016). Living heritage in Hoi An. In S. Labadi & W.

36. ICOMOS. (1999).Burra Charter – The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance: australia.icomos.org.

37. Ivanovic, M. (2008).Cultural tourism. Juta and Company Ltd.

38. Jaafar M, Md Noor S, Rasoolimanesh MS.(2014). Awareness and willingness for engagement of youth on World Heritage Site: A study on Lenggong Archaeological Site. Asian Social Science. 10(22):29–36.

39. Jokilehto, J. (2007). History of architectural conservation. Routledge.

40. Kasahun, T. (2013). Harmonizing Heritage Tourism and Conservation in the Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela, Ethiopia. National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies.

41. Kennedy, M.O., Monica, V.V., Maria, A.S.N., Carlos, A.R.G.(2013). Ecotourism in developing countries: a critical analysis of the promise, the reality, and the future. J. Emerg. Trends Econ. Manage. Sci. 4 (5), 481–486.

42. Labadi, S. (2016). Impacts of culture and heritage programmes. In S. Labadi & W.

43. Lenzerini, F. (2011). Intangible cultural heritage: The living culture of peoples. European Journal of International Law, 22(1), 101–120.

44. Lvova, O. (2013). Valuing the cultural heritage, economic, and cultural value of the Coliseum. International Journal of Heritage Studies, 5(1), 35–48.

45. Mafja, L. & Woodley, E. (eds). (2010). Biocultural diversity conservation: a global sourcebook. Earthscan, London.

46. Makuvaza, S. (Ed.). (2014). The management of cultural world heritage sites and development in Africa: history, nomination processes and representation on the world heritage list. Springer Science & Business Media.

47. McCloskey DJ, McDonald MA, Cook J, Heurtin-Roberts S, Updegrove S, Sampson D, Gutter S, Eder M. (2011). Community engagement: Definitions and organizing concepts from the literature.

48. Messele, W. (2010). Community participation in tourism development in Tigray: The case of Axum (Doctoral dissertation, The Institute of Development Studies and Partner Organisations).

49. Michael, M. (2009). Community involvement and participation in tourism development in Tanzania: a case study of local communities in Barabarani village, MTO WA MBU, Arusha-Tanzania.

50. Mitchell, J., Coles, C. (2009). Enhancing Private Sector and Community Engagement in Tourism Services in Ethiopia. Overseas Development Institute, London, UK.

51. Moldovan, A. (2010).Conservareapreventivă a bunurilorculturale. IVth edition, Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște.

52. Mydland, L., &Grahn, W. (2012). Identifying heritage values in local communities. International Journal of Heritage Studies, 18(6), 564–587.

53. Nicholas, L. N., Thapa, B., &Ko, Y. J. (2009). Residents' perspectives of a World Heritage Site: The Pitons Management Area, St. Lucia. Annals of Tourism Research, 36(3), 390– 412.

54. Nilson, T., &Thorell, K. (2018). Cultural heritage Preservation: The Past, the present, and the Future. Halmstad University Press.

55. Nkwanyana, M.S. Ezeuduji, I.O. &Nzama A. T. (2016). Cultural Heritage Tourism in South Africa: Perceived as a Panacea for Rural Development?ActaUniversitatisDanubius, 12(6), 160 - 167

56. Oladeji, S. O., &Akinrinola, O. O. (2010). Potentials of cultural heritage tourism as a basis for sustainable heritage site development in Nigeria. Applied Tropical Agriculture, 15(1& 2), 6–11.

57. Oladeji, S. O., Grace, O., & Ayodeji, A. A. (2022). Community Participation in Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage Resources in the Yoruba Ethnic Group of South-Western Nigeria. SAGE Open, 12(4), 21582440221130987.

58. Pasape, L., Anderson, W., Lindi, G. (2015). Good governance strategies for sustainable ecotourism in Tanzania. J. Ecotour. 14 (2-3), 145–165.

59. Pedersen, A. (2002). Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites: A Practical Manual for World Heritage Site Managers

60. Pretty, J. (1995). The many interpretations of participation. Focus, 16(4), 4–5.

61. Ribot, J. (2004). From exclusion to participation: Turning Senegal's forestry policy around? World Development

62. Ronchi, A. I. (2020). Community involvement in built heritage conservation: The case study of the Birzeit Historic Centre Project, Palestine.

63. Sakata, H., Prideaux, B.(2013). An alternative approach to community-based ecotourism: a bottom-up, locally initiated, non-monetized project in Papua New Guinea. J. Sustain. Tour. 21 (6), 880–899.

64. Saufi, A., O'Brien, D., Wilkins, H. (2014). Inhibitors to host community participation in sustainable tourism development in developing countries. J. Sustain. Tour. 22 (5), 801–820.

65. Scheld, S., Taplin, D., & Low, S. (2014). The value-based approach for cultural heritage preservation in U.S. Public parks. APT Bulletin, 45(2/3), 158.

66. Singh, S., Timothy, D.J., Dowling, R.K. (Eds.), (2003). Tourism in destination communities. Cabi, Wallingford.

67. Sirisrisak T. (2009). Conservation of Bangkok's old town. Habitat International. 405–411.

68. Spiridon, P. (2013). Integrated scientific conservation: public access and the role of the conservator. International Workshop. Scientific, technological and innovative research in the current European context – Vth Edition (10 May, AlexandruIoanCuza University of Iași), 269-276. Available at:www.eudirect.ro.

69. Tham, A. (2018). Sand, surgery, and stakeholders: a multi-stakeholder involvement model of domestic medical tourism for Australia's Sunshine Coast.

70. Theodoulidis, B., Diaz, D., Crotto, F., Rancati, E.(2017). Exploring corporate social responsibility and financial performance through stakeholder theory in the tourism industry.

71. Timothy, D.J.(1999). Participatory planning: a view of tourism in Indonesia. Ann. Tour. Res. 26, 371–391.

72. Tosun, C. (2000). Limits to community participation in the tourism development process in developing countries. Tourism Management, 21, 613-633.

73. Tosun, C. (2006). Expected Nature of Community Participation In Tourism Development.

74. Tsang, N.K., Yeung, S., Cheung, C. (2011). A critical investigation of the use and effectiveness of interpretive services. Asia Pacific J. Tour. Res. 16 (2), 123–137.

75. Tsegaye, E. D. (2020). Anti-Orthodox Christian Attitudes in Ethiopia: An Assessment of Historical and Contemporary Persecutions of Christians. International Journal of Orthodox Theology, 11(4). 10-39.

76. UNESCO. (2003).The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

77. Waterton, E., & Smith, L. (2010). The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage. International journal of heritage studies, 16(1-2), 4-15.

78. Williams, J., & Lawson, R. (2001). Community issues and resident opinions on tourism. Annals of tourism research, 28(2), 269-290.

79. Yamane, Taro. (1967). Statistics: An Introductory Analysis, 2nd Ed., New York: Harper and Row.

80. *Yung EHK and Chan EHW. (2011). Problem issues of public participation in built-heritage conservation: two controversial cases in Hong Kong.*
81. *Zancheti S.M., Ferreira Hidaka L.T., Ribeiro C., Aguiar B. (2009). "Judgement and Validation in the Burra Charter Process: Introducing Feedback in Assessing the Cultural Significance of Heritage Sites",*
82. *Zeppel, H. (2006). Indigenous Ecotourism: Sustainable Development and Management. United Kingdom: CABI.*