

# 1 Factors Hindering Tourism Industry Development: Gambella 2 People's National Regional State, South West Ethiopia

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## 7 **Abstract**

8 Tourism is a circulation of people who travel to or stay in places outside their home country.  
9 It has been believed as a major ingredient in the economic development strategy. However,  
10 various external and internal factors have been affecting the sustainable development of the  
11 tourism industry worldwide. Although Ethiopia possesses numerous natural, religious,  
12 historical, non-natural and cultural tourism attractions, economic contribution and its  
13 potential are incomparable. Shortage of tourist facilities, lack of skillful human resources,  
14 weak promotion, lack of integration and political will are the major negatively contributing  
15 forces. Although Ethiopia possesses massive tourism development potentials with its unique  
16 biodiversity and spectacular topographic features, its economic contribution to the country is  
17 unmatched. Similarly Gambella Region has endowed with tourism potentials. But, its tourism  
18 industry development is in an infant stage. Nevertheless a limited study has been done in  
19 identifying factors hindering the development of the tourism industry in the region.

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21 **Index terms**— tourism, tourism industry, constraints, gambella, Ethiopia.

## 22 **1 Introduction**

23 Tourism is circulation of people who travel to or stay in places outside their home country (their usual place  
24 of residence and/or work) for short periods, usually no longer than a year, and for different purposes such as  
25 leisure, business, or any purposes other than formal employment (UNDESA, 2010; UNWTO, 2013). Tourism is  
26 a major constituent in the economic development strategy ??WTTC, 2012). It has become one of the largest  
27 socio-economic and social sectors registering rapid growth worldwide (Goeldner and Brent, 2012; ??TTC, 2015);  
28 and accounts for 10% of global gross domestic product (GDP); plays significant role in accelerating development  
29 and eradicating poverty (Zortuk, 2009; Meriague, 2014). Vellas (2011) stated that it is newly emerging industries  
30 and became an increasingly important source of income, employment and wealth in many countries. On the other  
31 hand, various factors have been affecting sustainable development of the tourism industry worldwide. According to  
32 Philip (2017) factors affecting tourism industry development may be either internal or external. External factors  
33 like weather, safety, access to amenities, peace, and security may affect the development of the tourism industry  
34 (Becken, 2010). Likewise, internal factors like inadequate infrastructures, weak human resources, low marketing  
35 and promotion strategies (Mekonen, 2016; Selemon and Chiranjib, 2018), and weak linkage with international  
36 organizations can hinder the development of tourism industry in a given place ??Tadesse, 2015; Yimer, 2016).  
37 Rachel and Richard (2009) stated that management decisions are not worth the paper they have been written  
38 on and decisions have not been implemented. Lack of integration and recognition of tourism on political agendas  
39 have also contributed to the weak development of tourism industry (Dodds, 2007a; Telfer and Sharpley, 2008).  
40 Lack of coordination and commitment between government bodies, an absence of stakeholders involvement,  
41 weak communication between authorities have been hindering the sound enough development of the tourism  
42 industry (Ardahaey, 2011; ??TTC, 2012; Yimer, 2016). Although Ethiopia possesses numerous natural, religious,  
43 historical, manmade and cultural tourism attractions, economic contribution and its potential are incomparable

## 5 D) DATA ANALYSIS

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44 (Ali, 2017); the sector's contribution to the nation's GDP was 4.1% in 2015 which is very low (WTTC, 2016).  
45 Even though Ethiopia has known with an ever increasing international tourist flow, the country is one of the  
46 lowest tourist flow benefit recipient countries in Africa (MoCT, 2012; UNWTO, 2012). There is a shortage in  
47 number and type of tourist facilities at existing and potential tourist destinations and vicinities; interpretations  
48 and presentation of tourist attractions are not based on credible facts and knowledge (Ali, 2017). Handicrafts,  
49 local creative products, performing arts and entertainment services, which can help to lengthen the stay and  
50 increase spend of visitors at every destination, are not offered in sufficient variety, quantity and quality (Tadesse,  
51 2015; Yimer, 2016). Moreover, there are inadequate trained human resources (Ali, 2017; ??oCT, 2012). Similarly  
52 Gambella People's National Regional State is one of the beautiful tourism destinations of the country which has  
53 being located in Southwest of Ethiopia. It has a wealth of natural, non-natural, historical and cultural resources  
54 (Selemon, Chiranjib, and Alemken, 2019). However, the development of the tourism industry in the region is in  
55 the infant stage. According to MoCT (2012) visitors' survey, few tourists have been visited the Gambella Region;  
56 and also the region has not been listed under the influential tour and travel operators' package. There are various  
57 factors hindering the development of the tourism industry in the region. Nevertheless, a limited study has done in  
58 identifying factors hindering the development of the tourism industry in the region. Hence, the current research  
59 addresses the above-stated problems and contributes to the tourism industry development in the Region.

## 60 2 II.

### 61 3 Research Methodology a) Description of the Study Area

62 The study was being conducted from June/2018-April/2019 in Gambella People's National Regional State.  
63 Gambella People's National Regional State is located in the South-western part of Ethiopia about 777 km  
64 away from Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. It has being situated in the lowlands of Baro-Akobo River  
65 Basin between latitudes 6 0 22' to 8 0 37' North and longitudes 33 0 10' to 35 0 50' East. It has a total area of  
66 approximately 34,063 km<sup>2</sup> of land. The region borders with Benishangul Gumuz and Oromiya regions to the  
67 North; Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State (SNNPRS) and the Sudan Republic to the  
68 South; Oromiya and SNNPRS to the The population of this study comprises three zones of Gambella region with  
69 their twelve woredas (Gog, Abobo, Jor, Abol, Dimma, Jikaw, Makuey, Lare, Wanthowa, Akobo Godere, and  
70 Mengeshi Woredas. It also involves Itang special woreda and Gambella Town Administration. In this particular  
71 study, the non-probability sampling technique (purposive sampling) was being employed to get relevant data from  
72 the respondents. Accordingly, key informants from 3 zones (n= 15), 13 districts (n= 65), Gambella National  
73 Park office (n=5), Gambella Culture and Tourism Bureau (n=5), Gambella Tourism Organization Office (n=5),  
74 Gambella Culture, History and Heritage Research Directorate (n=4) and Gambella Government Communication  
75 Office (n=4), altogether 103 respondents were purposively selected. Selection criteria were: i) their position in a  
76 zone, districts or kebeles, ii) their level of knowledge and experience to the tourism industry iii) the most senior  
77 experts and iv) the most relevant individual who can give crucial data to achieve the objectives of the research.

### 78 4 c) Data Collection Methods

79 Data collection methods should be stated clearly. Properly planned data collection method provides a clear  
80 overview of what tasks would be carried out, who will perform them, organize human and material resources,  
81 and minimizes errors. There are 3 zones and 13 Woredas to conduct an inventory of natural tourism potentials  
82 of the Gambella Region. Since it is difficult for a single person to collect data from those zones and Woredas,  
83 it is crucial to involve data collectors. Thus, three data collectors from Gambella Tourism Organization were  
84 purposively selected. The selection criteria were: a) they are experts in Gambella Tourism Organization, b) they  
85 know better about tourism potentials of the Region, c) they can easily communicate and gather data from the  
86 woredas administrators and senior experts, and d) they are our primary stakeholders in this particular study.  
87 Hence, the discussion was held for this research how to collect data from the 3 zones and 13 woredas. Preliminary  
88 field visitation and data collection was being done together. Gambella Tourism Organization Office experts further  
89 gave training for other woreda level data collectors as a necessity. They gave full orientation for woreda level  
90 data collectors before they were left alone. In all circumstances, monitoring, seldom field visit, cross-checking and  
91 verification were done to ensure the reliability of the data. According to the scheduled plan, in-depth interview  
92 using open-ended questions has been held with purposively selected key informants. Respondents were being  
93 given the opportunity to express their ideas, opinions, feelings, and knowledge about factors hindering tourism  
94 industry development in the region as well as their respective zones or woredas. Furthermore, the research crew  
95 was also made field observation through recording important information, note taking, photo camera capturing,  
96 etc. regarding natural tourism potentials of the region. On the other hand, secondary data sources (published  
97 documents, articles, books, unpublished data, archives, brochures, etc.) were being referred for the further  
98 clarification of the data.

### 99 5 d) Data Analysis

100 Qualitative data was being analyzed in meaningful content description whereas quantitative data was being  
101 analyzed in numerical values. The data gathered first edited, categorized, arranged and organized before encoding

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102 into the software. Frequency and percentages were calculated using SPSS software version 20 and charts and  
103 graphs were used to show results. Text explanations and descriptions used in the case of the qualitative data  
104 analysis. Likewise, data collected through field observation were being analyzed in a content descriptive way to  
105 relevant meaning and summarization.

## 106 **6 III.**

## 107 **7 Results and Discussions a) Demographic Characteristics of 108 the Respondents**

109 In this particular study, demographic characteristics like sex, education level, income levels, age categories, as  
110 well as the marital status of the respondents were being observed. As table 1 shown below about 83.5% of the  
111 respondents were males. Concerning education level, most of the respondents were educated one (first-degree  
112 holders) (74.76%), and 22.33% of the respondents were diploma holders. Most of the respondents (68.93%) were  
113 between the ages category of 26-35 whereas a few respondents (6.8%) were in the age interval of 46-55. Concerning  
114 marital status, most of the respondents were being married (95.15%) (table1). Even though Gambella People's  
115 National Regional State has endowed with enormous tourism potential, its tourism industry development is  
116 relatively in the infant stage. The region is not benefited from tourism industry sector as expected and compared  
117 with existing tourism potentials. Different factors have been hindering the development of the tourism industry  
118 and maximizing benefits from the sector. The region has received very few visitors flow which results in less  
119 contribution to economic growth from the tourism industry. According to the findings of this study, the main  
120 factors challenging tourism industry development in the region were being discussed below (Figure 2). Tourism  
121 industry needs specialized, trained and committed human power for its sustainable development in a particular  
122 area. Because, it has its terminologies, principles, approaches, rules, guidelines, code of conducts, and so on.  
123 Inadequate specialized human resources in a specific tourism sector means its development in that area is under  
124 question. This phenomenon is also visible in the Gambella Region in tourism industry related sectors. About  
125 81(78.64%) of respondents presented that tourism industry sectors have inadequately specialized, trained and  
126 skillful experts. It is the fourth-ranked major challenge which is hindering tourism industry development in the  
127 region. In the zonal and woreda levels, there is lack of specialized expert who contributes That is why tourism  
128 industry development in the region is in the infant stage.

## 129 **8 ii. Lack of Information Centers for the Tourism Destinations**

130 Information centers play a vital role in attracting visitors to the destinations and contribute to the tourism  
131 industry development. It may be offices, agencies, information desks in the hotels, recognized individual/groups.  
132 They provide valuable and brief information for visitors regarding destinations in the area. Among the  
133 respondents, about 70(67.96%) indicated that lack of information centers for the tourism destinations in the  
134 region has contributed to the low flow of international and domestic tourists to the region. Even in the Gambella  
135 town, the capital town, there is no information center. Hotels, guest houses, and pensions are not committed and  
136 delivering information about tourism attractions of the region. Hence, lack of information centers in the regional,  
137 zonal and woreda level is the sixth-ranked major constraint of tourism industry development in the region.

## 138 **9 iii. Weak Promotion and Marketing of Tourism Destinations**

139 Strong promotion and well-designed marketing strategy is the core activity in the development of the tourism  
140 industry. Efficient promotion can attract various visitors from the different corners of the world. Welldesigned  
141 tourism product marketing strategies ensure sustainable visitors flow to the destinations and make the area  
142 specific product to being known by the influential visitors. However, there is a weak promotion of existing  
143 tourism potentials and weak marketing strategy in the region. In support of this idea, about 92(89.32%) of the  
144 informants focused that there are weak promotion and marketing strategies. In spite of some promotion activities  
145 by the concerned regional offices, the tourism potentials has not yet promoted as its marvelous tourism potential.  
146 The region has being called that "the desert paradise" due to its attractive tourism potentials (lakes, jungles,  
147 forests, waterfalls, rivers, wildlife resources, cultural resources, historical sites, and non-natural attractions). Even  
148 though concerned regional government offices have been making undeniable efforts (promoting through flyers,  
149 brochures, tourism day celebration, special events, etc.), weak promotion and marketing strategies have held the  
150 second major hindering factor of tourism industry development in the region.

## 151 **10 iv. Weak Infrastructures Development**

152 Infrastructures development is the backbone in the process of tourism industry development. Every tourism  
153 destination should be accessible to be visited by different visitors, explorers, university students, researchers,  
154 environmentalists, conservationists, etc. Without improved infrastructure facilities, a certain tourism potential  
155 site could be abandoned as an insignificant tourism product. About 99(96.12%) of the informants underlined  
156 that weak infrastructure development is unresolved and the first-ranked major constraint of tourism industry  
157 development in the region. Most of the tourism destinations in the region are inaccessible for visitation and

158 requires a long journey on foot. Even there is a lack of trekking routes, roads, campsites, resting places,  
159 accommodations, viewpoints, etc. on the way to the destinations. Furthermore, it needs the installation of  
160 electricity, water availability, communication opportunities, and accommodation centers.

## 161 11 v. Lack of Tour Guide Associations and Linkage with

162 Tour and Travel Operators Visitors can't communicate with all local community and ask information about the  
163 tourism destinations of the specific place. Similarly, all local community; even all experts can't make linkage  
164 with tour and travel operators as well as visitors. Hence, the tourism industry needs bridges between visitors  
165 and local community or potential tourism destinations. Recognized and certified local tour guide associations are  
166 "ambassadors" and can serve as representatives of the local community, region, state, local culture, and so on.  
167 They provide valuable and worthy information for visitors and attract different visitors to destinations through  
168 promotion and communication with an influential tour and travel operators. Nevertheless, about 77(74.76%)  
169 of the respondents stressed that there is no tour guide association at regional, zonal as well as woreda level in  
170 the Gambella region. A lack of tour guide associations has resulted in lack of linkage with a huge tour and  
171 travel operators in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. Besides to this, no tour and travel operators have  
172 listed the region in their travel circuit as major tourism destination area and have limited intention to work in  
173 this region due to lack of tour guide associations, standardized accommodation deliverers, weak promotion and  
174 marketing strategy. According to the findings of this study, lack of tour guide associations IV.

## 175 12 Conclusion

176 Tourism industry plays a central role in the economic development. Although Ethiopia is known for its  
177 considerable tourism industry development potentials, the sector's contribution to economic development is  
178 unmatched due to different internal and external factors. Likewise, Gambella Region has endowed with various  
179 tourism potentials, numerous factors have been hindering the tourism industry growth. Constraints like weak  
180 infrastructures development, inadequately trained human resources, lack of local tour guide associations, an  
181 absence of linkage with tour operators, lack of information centers, weak promotion of tourism destinations, and  
182 inadequate accommodation deliverers are the major unresolved hindering factors of tourism industry development.  
183 It requires contribution, integration, cooperation, collaboration, commitment and playing the significant role of  
184 multiple stakeholders to ensure sustainable tourism industry development in the region. Therefore, the first  
185 activity to enrich tourism industry development is improving infrastructures (roads, accommodation deliverers,  
186 campsites, water facilities, internet cafes, telecommunication, bank services, and electricity) to the tourism  
187 destinations with the contribution of multiple stakeholders. To install standardized accommodation deliverers  
188 (lodges, resorts, hotels) discussing and reaching to consensus with capable enterprises like Kurfitu Resort, Paradise  
189 Lodge, Haile Resort, Planet Hotel, Buska Lodge, Turmi Lodge, Simien Lodge, Eco-Omo Lodge, etc. is vital  
190 activity. The other activity in to develop the tourism industry in the region is effective promotion and marketing  
191 of available tourism products. It involves developing and disseminating different brochures, flyers, guidebooks,  
192 websites, using the internet and social media, arranging programmes in Medea, forming school conservation clubs,  
193 and workshops. To attract both international and domestic visitors, making a connection and communication  
194 with tour and travel operators like Ethiopian Tour Operators Association (ETOA), National Tour Operation  
195 (NATO), Four Winds Travel and Tour Agent, Awura Tours, Alpha Tour, and Travel, etc. is fruitful activity.  
196 Local tour guide associations shall be organized to promote existing tourism potentials and linked with these tour  
197 and travel operators to attract international visitors as wells to put Gambella Region under the travel circuit  
198 of different tour and travel operators. Furthermore, available tourism potentials of the region should promote  
199 wherein big hoardings, billboards, posters, photographs and travel desks being placed at selected transit points,  
200 and hotels/resorts. Teasers and Trailers must be designed to tease the travelers and tourists through various  
201 advertisements include CD/DVD. Collaterals and posters must be attractive and distributed free of cost to the  
202 hotels, resorts, restaurants, shopping arcades, supermarkets as well as tour operators for free promotion of tourist  
203 attractions. Use the internet to increase the visibility of tourism potentials of the region to exchange information  
204 and expertise by developing web pages, social networking sites like/Facebook, WhatsApp, Google+, LinkedIn,  
205 yahoo groups, and maintaining of e-mail lists current.

206 V.

## 207 13 Recommendations

208 ? Proper Infrastructures need to be developed in ecofriendly starting from Gambella town to major tourism  
209 destination sites with the integration of multiple stakeholders. ? Potential promotional and marketing strategies  
210 being developed and adopted.

## 211 14 vi. Inadequate Accommodation Deliverers

212 Accommodation or services deliverers are one of the vital elements in the tourism industry development. However,  
213 almost there is no standardized accommodation or services deliverer, particularly in zonal and woreda level. On  
214 behalf of this explanation, about 87(84.47%) of the respondents pointed out that inadequate accommodation  
215 delivers the third restraint of tourism industry development in the region. There are very few standardized

216 accommodation deliverers at the regional level (Gambella town, capital town); namely Baro Gambella Hotel,  
217 Tadesech Hotel, Andnet Hotel, Midregenet Hotel, Galaxy Hotel, Dessie Hotel, Solomon Debebe Hotel, Holy day  
218 Hotel, Giwa Hotel, Mobil Hotel, Asir Aleka Hotel, Tirupati Hotel, Fana Hotel, and Alazar Guest House. But,  
219 if there is high tourist flow from the different corners of the world to the Gambella Region, the existing services  
220 deliverers cannot accommodate and fulfill visitors' interests.

## 221 **15 vii. Accessibility, Security, and Peace**

222 Gambella Region is accessible through air transport (two times per day) and land transport from Addis Ababa  
223 (Capital city of Ethiopia) to the Gambella town (capital town of the region). Nonetheless, about 63(61.17%)  
224 of the key informants stated that the accessibility from the regional, zonal and woreda towns to the different  
225 tourism destinations is very poor. Some of the tourism destinations are inaccessible for higher institution students,  
226 researchers, explorers, and visitors and requires time-consuming journey on foot to reach attractions. On the  
227 other hand, informants pointed out that the region is a source of peace and security in spite of its poor accessibility  
228 to the tourism destinations.

229 ? Information centers and local tour guide associations being organized in regional, zonal as well as woreda  
230 level.

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this work. <sup>1</sup>

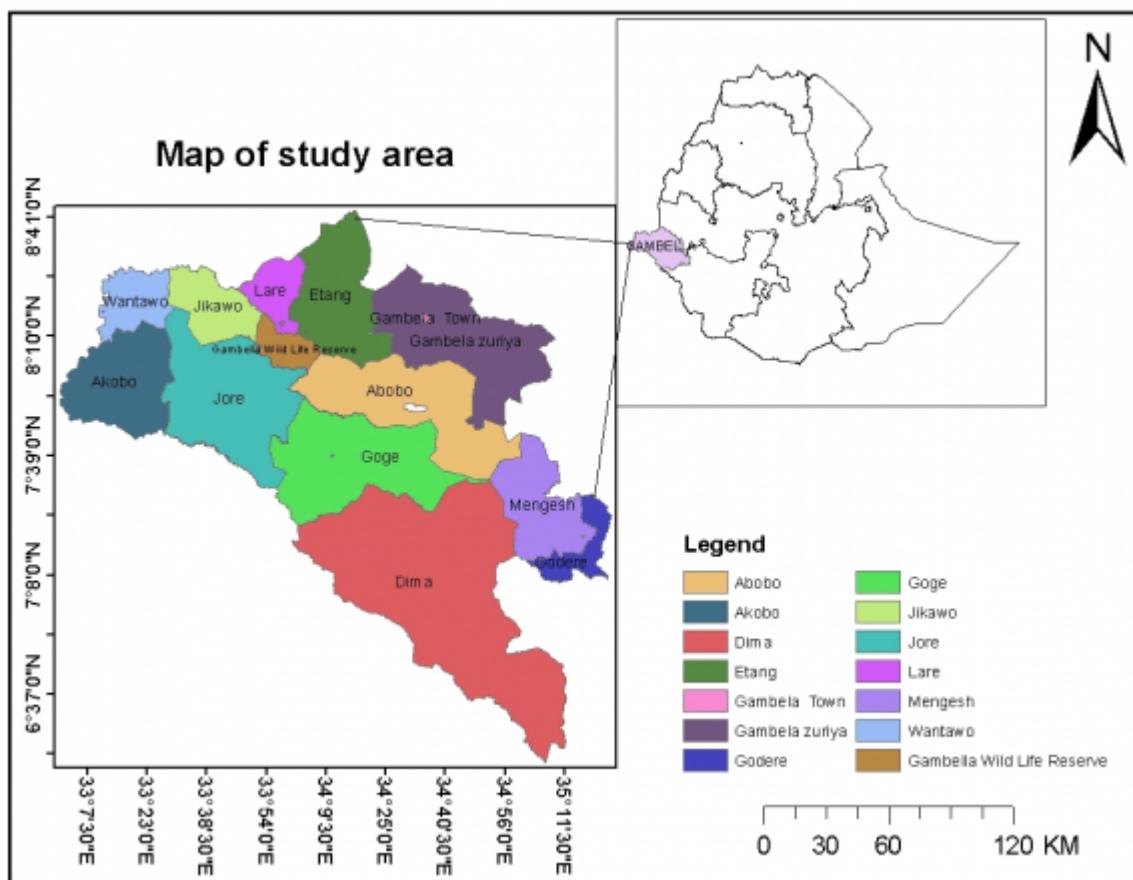


Figure 1:

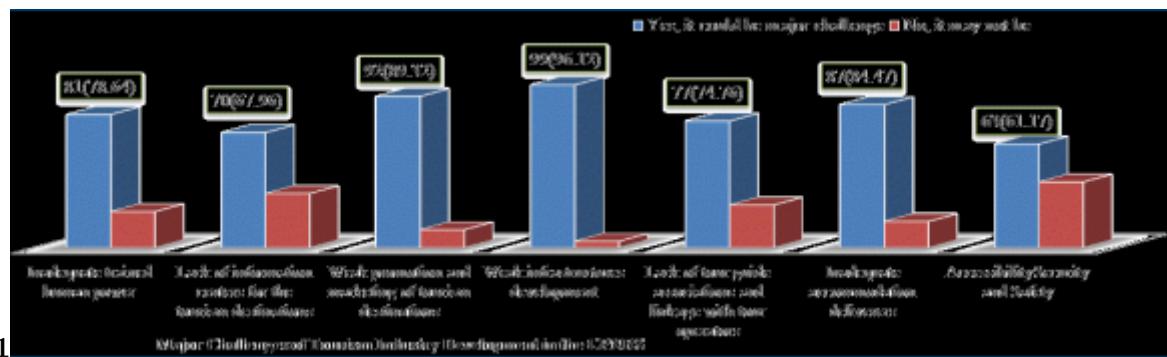


Figure 2: Figure 1 :

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Factors Hindering Tourism Industry Development: Gambella People's National Regional State, South West Ethiopia

No.	Variables	Sample		Woredas	Frequency	Percentages (%)
		Regional offi- cials*	Zone cate- gories **			
Sex	Male	20	10	56	86	83.5
	Female	3	5	9	17	16.5
	Master	3	-	-	3	2.91
Education Levels	degree					
	Bachelor	20	15	42	77	74.76
	Diploma	-	-	23	23	22.33
Age Categories	18-25	-	-	6	6	5.83
	26-35	23	8	40	71	68.93
	36-45	-	5	14	19	18.45
Marital Status	46-55	-	2	5	7	6.8
	Married	22	16	60	98	95.15
	Single	-	-	5	5	4.85
Income Levels (in ETB)	2000-3000	-	-	22	22	21.36
	3000-4000	-	5	34	39	37.86
	>4000	23	10	9	42	40.78

[Note: NB: \*Gambella Culture and Tourism Bureau, Gambella Tourism Organization Office, Gambella Government Communication Office, Gambella Culture, History, and Heritage Research Directorate and Gambella National Park Office \*\*Anywaa Zone, Nuer Zone and Majang Zone \*\*\* 12 woredas of three zones and Itang special woreda Source: Field Survey (2018/19)]

Figure 3: Table 1 :

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Factors Hindering Tourism Industry Development: Gambella People's National  
Regional State, South  
West Ethiopia

and linkage with tour and travel operators are the fifth-  
ranked main constraint of the tourism industry  
development in the region.

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Figure 4: ?



### 238 .1 Acknowledgments

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## 15 VII. ACCESSIBILITY, SECURITY, AND PEACE

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