

Sustainability of National Park and Tourism Development: - A systematic review on Bale Mountain National Park, Ethiopia

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Abstract

National parks and sustainable tourism development cannot separate in achieving and maintaining economic, social, and better environmental conditions. Despite the profound achievement, the sustainability of national parks and tourism services is under severe threat. This study aimed to investigate the sustainability of national parks and tourism development in Bale Mountain national park: by examining the effect of tourism marketing on the sustainability of national parks and sustainable tourism development. A systematic literature review has been employed to identify relevant literature using Scopus, web science, and Google scholar from 2010-2021. Based on the 934 article results, the researchers discovered no article specifically titled “national park and sustainable tourism development”. The study revealed that adapting and implementing tourism marketing for national parks and sustainable tourism remains undeveloped and resulted in failure to bring sustainable tourism development to Bale Mountain national park. This review concludes that, even though the notion of tourism marketing is the crucial strategy for the sustainability of national parks and the advancement of the tourism sector, its implementation remains in the infancy stage.

Keywords: sustainable tourism development, tourism marketing, National Park, Sustainable development, Systematic literature review.

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1. Introduction

Tourism marketing is one of the major areas of marketing that play a great role in poverty reduction and ensures the quality of life, Employment & decent work for the nation, Sustainability of the natural & cultural environment (Shalan, 2005; De Sausmarez, 2007; Reihanian et al., 2012, Cirikovi, 2014). The potential contribution of sustainable tourism in

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national development strategies and the global development agenda is also becoming a reality (Butler, 1999). Furthermore, Tourism has been identified by the United Nations as one of the main sectors to drive the change towards a green economy and is capable of making “a significant contribution to the sustainable development (Gunness, 2017). The purpose of sustainable tourism is to maintain cultural integrity, protect the environment, promote economic benefits, and establish social justice, meeting the needs of people to improve living standards both in the short and long term (Verbeek et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2013).

In national park tourism, sustainable tourism development is applied to protect the natural environment and biodiversity to improve the living standard of the community by optimizing local economic benefit, and providing high-quality experiences and satisfaction for tourists (Plummer - Fennell, 2009). Mihanyar et al. (2016); Puhakka - Saarinen (2013) argued that national parks and sustainable tourism cannot be separated for future sustainable tourism development. The national park has a great potential to hasten Sustainable tourism development to maintain a sustainable combination of economic, social, and environmental conditions in our competitive world (Valdivieso et al., 2015; Sriarkarin - Lee, 2018). If well managed and the right application of tourism marketing (Wearing et al., 2016), the national park can generate quality jobs for durable growth, reduce poverty, and offer incentives for environmental conservation (Ristić et al., 2019; Watson et al., 2013). However, despite its wide contribution to sustainable development, critical human-made challenges and constraints are the main difficulties (Belayneh et al., 2013; Mamo - Bekele, 2011; Teshome et al., 2011).

There are many protected areas of land in Ethiopia including wildlife reserves, national parks, community conservation areas, and priority forests (Watson et al., 2013; Belayneh et al., 2013; Gashaw, 2015, Welteji-Zerihun, 2018). However, despite the wide range of tourist attractions and is a land of exceptional natural resources; the tourism sector has not yet been fully exploited and relatively plays a small role in Ethiopia’s economy (Mamo, 2015; Mwinuka, 2017; Getahun-Yeshanew, 2016; Kebete, 2021). Bale mountain national park is one of the largest national parks in south-eastern Ethiopia with its unique and outstanding natural beauty, diverse attractions, and immense tourism potential in Ethiopia (Belayneh et al., 2013; Asmamaw-Verma, 2013; Welteji-Zerihun, 2018). Hansilo-Tiki (2017) explores that the park has compromised a high species richness and endemism level. However, despite its huge potential and importance, ecological degradation, rapid village expansion in and around the park, agricultural land expansion, overgrazing, recurrent and extended forest fire are becoming a severe threat to the survival of the national park and sustainable tourism (Mamo et al., 2010;

Teshome, 2011; Mamo-Bekele, 2011; Belayneh et al., 2013). This is affecting the sustainability of the tourism sector to bring economic, environmental, and socio-cultural development in areas as well as in the country.

As an attempt of addressing this gap, it was fascinating to review the contribution of the national park for sustainable tourism development along with the application of tourism marketing on the national park. The study also explores links between Bale Mountain national park and sustainable tourism. Through a detailed review of journals and articles, it outlines how the parks contribute to social and economic development with the effective application of tourism marketing to strengthen and accelerate progress on Sustainable tourism developments. The rationale for this paper lies in the assumption that while previous studies have explored and focused on the themes underpinning sustainable tourism research in the last 10 years, they have not positioned meticulous attention to the application of tourism marketing on the national park that plays a significant role for the sustainability of national park and tourism development. In this regard, the study is clarifying the essence of tourism marketing in enhancing national parks and sustainable tourism development as well as identifying a suitable tourism marketing mix that paves the way in expanding tourism investment opportunities on the national park.

2. Objectives of the review

The general objectives of the review were to investigate the sustainability of the national park and tourism development in Bale Mountain national park. Specifically, the purpose of the review was:

- ❖ To examine the effect of tourism marketing on the sustainability of national parks and tourism development.
- ❖ To develop and propose a conceptual framework from the existing literature.
- ❖ To identify challenges and threats that hinder the national park in delivering sustainable tourism development.

3. Theoretical Background

3.1. An overview of Tourism marketing and Sustainable tourism development in the national park

Globalization of the local and national economy, desire to push for change and economic development, industrial and population growth has led to potential damage of the natural environment in an irreversible way (Bramwell - Lane, 1993). Having this in mind, Since the

late 1980s, the concept of sustainability and sustainable tourism development has been one of the rapidly growing research areas and engrossed the attention of many scholars (Hashemkhani Zolfani et al., 2015). Bramwell - Lane (2012) pointed out that the idea of sustainable tourism was emerged as a negative and reactive concept in response to many tourism challenges and accepted as capable of creating positive changes and ways to secure positive benefit for socio-economic development. According to Brundtland G.H. (1987), Sustainable development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. Similarly, UNWTO - UNDP (2017) defined sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities. UNWTO (2013) also elaborates sustainable tourism as “Making optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity”.

In terms of achieving sustainable tourism development, it is apparent that there must be the right application of tourism marketing to maximize the economic benefits to the local community while simultaneously minimizing the environmental and social costs (Dwyer et al., 2009). According to G.P. Raju (2009), tourism marketing can be defined as “the systematic and organized efforts exerted by the tourism industry at international, national, and local levels to optimize the satisfaction of tourists, groups, and individuals, given the sustained tourism growth”. According to the author, tourism marketing is a group of related activities which involved the management of specific elements to create an exchange that satisfies its customers. Similarly, Ali Akasha et al., (2020) defined tourism marketing as an application of marketing concepts and principles to the travel and tourism industry. Since tourism organization is a service provider industry (Melese - Belda, 2021), in addition to the traditional marketing mix (4Ps) such as product, price, place, and promotion, 3Ps of the modern marketing mix are also applied in the tourism industry (Kotler - Keller, 2012). However, lack of strong control and effective management of tourism marketing such as tourism product, tourism pricing, Distribution, and accessible tourism product, marketing, and promotional activities, skilled human power, physically attached facilities, and process are major issues in the national parks (Sharpley and Pearce, 2007).

The importance of tourism marketing has also been highlighted in previous studies by different researchers. For instance, Rahmoun and Baeshen (2021) pointed out tourism marketing as a source of income and employment. According to the author, tourism marketing provides a

macroeconomic and financial benefit not only to the national economies or regional advancement but also to the local communities. Also, Ali (2021) explained that tourism marketing encompasses an opportunity for nations troubled with joblessness and destitution to generate employment and income for regional and national socio-economic development. However, due to the prioritization of short-term economic gains, at expense of long-term economic and environmental sustainability particularly developing countries are exposed to the negative effect of tourism marketing (UNWTO, 2020). On the other hand, tourists seek quality tourism products, appropriate price, accessibility, right information about the destination, hospitality, standard service delivery, and an attractive tourism environment (Benghadbane - Khreis, 2019). Thus, attracting tourists is the core economic motor of sustainable tourism, and tourism marketing must be managed and marketed appropriately for productive and sustainable tourism development (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019).

3.2. An overview of Bale Mountain National Park and Sustainable tourism.

Bale Mountain national park (BMNP) is one of the largest parks in south-eastern Ethiopia with a high level of species richness and endemism (Hansilo-Tiki, 2017; Mamo-Bekele, 2011). The park was established in 1970 by an Ethiopian wildlife conservation organization with the objective of conserving wildlife (Teshome et al., 2011). According to Alers et al. (2007), 78 mammal species (of which 22 mammals are endemic to Ethiopia) and 278 birds species (of which 16 birds are endemic to Ethiopia) have been recorded in Bale Mountain national parks. 57% of Ethiopia's endemic birds are found in Bale Mountain national park and this is the highest portion of endemism (Forest -Enterprise, 2014). Besides wildlife resources, Bale mountain national parks have a variety of topographic and climate with scenery of landscape, water bodies, attractive culture, local handicrafts, and indigenous knowledge (Watson et al., 2013; Welteji-Zerihun, 2018). It encompasses Bale-Arsi massif, which forms the western section of the south-eastern Ethiopian highlands and covers the biggest area above 3000 meters above sea level in Ethiopia (Watson et al., 2013; Gashaw, 2015). In fact, given the unique nature and diverse attractions, the national park has the potential to contribute to sustainable tourism development (Alers et al., 2007). The objective of sustainable tourism is balancing tourism needs and the environment with the sustainable socio-economic development of local communities (Sharpley - Pearce, 2007). The relationship between sustainable tourism and national parks is the most intimate and place where tourism is progressively considered an effective tool for socio-economic development (Plummer - Fennell, 2009). Given the vital

significance of sustainable tourism to the social and economic fabric of the national parks, appropriate application of tourism marketing is indispensable.

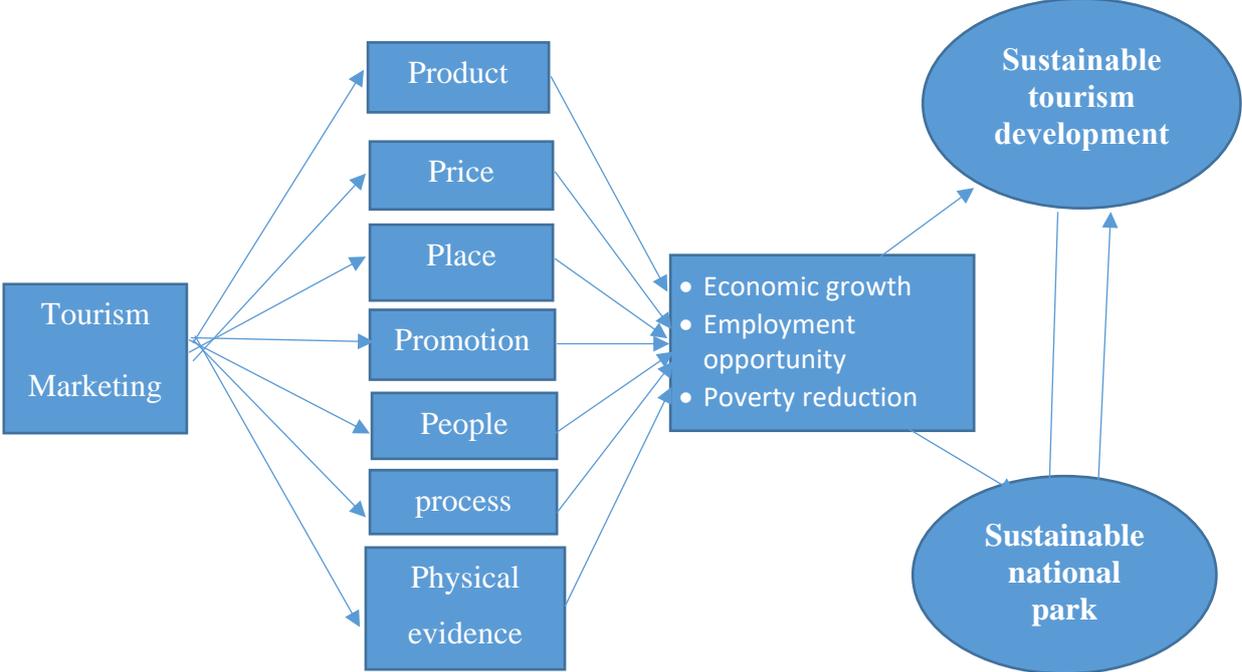
4. Conceptual framework

Based on the insights obtained from this review, the researchers develop a conceptual framework to offer a comprehensive overview of the relationships between tourism marketing, sustainable tourism development, and sustainable national park. To detail, the framework shows that tourism marketing is a combination of traditional and modern marketing mix which include product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. The right application of tourism marketing led us to economic growth, employment opportunity, and poverty reduction which brings sustainable tourism development and sustainable national park. As shown in Fig. 1, our conceptual framework highlights the relationships between tourism marketing, sustainable tourism development, and sustainable national park.

5. Methodology

The systematic literature review was selected for this study (see figure 2) because the SLR approach of reviewing previous literature offers a widespread view of the literature in a given field and helps to discover avenues for future research by revealing the research gaps (*Swartz, 2011*). Guided by PRISMA protocols and a checklist referred by Rethlefsen et al., (2021) researchers collected data from the database through four main phases: - Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion.

Figure 1. Conceptual frameworks between tourism marketing, sustainable tourism development, and sustainable national park.



5.1. Identification

In this phase, the researcher determined the search keywords and databases and decided on the journal types in this study. Thus, the search keywords that the researcher applied as a selection criterion were based on the topic of the studies and the following terms used in the title, keywords, and abstract of the studies: (“national park and sustainable tourism” and “tourism marketing”). Even though all databases have their pros and cons (Amentae & Gebresenbet, 2021) the researcher employed Web of Science, Scopus, and Google scholar as sources of publication, based on its wider coverage of high-quality scholarly information and is mostly used in most review research. Based on this search keywords criterion initially, the researcher extracted 882 studies from the web of science and Scopus and 50 journals from Google scholar.

5.2. Screening

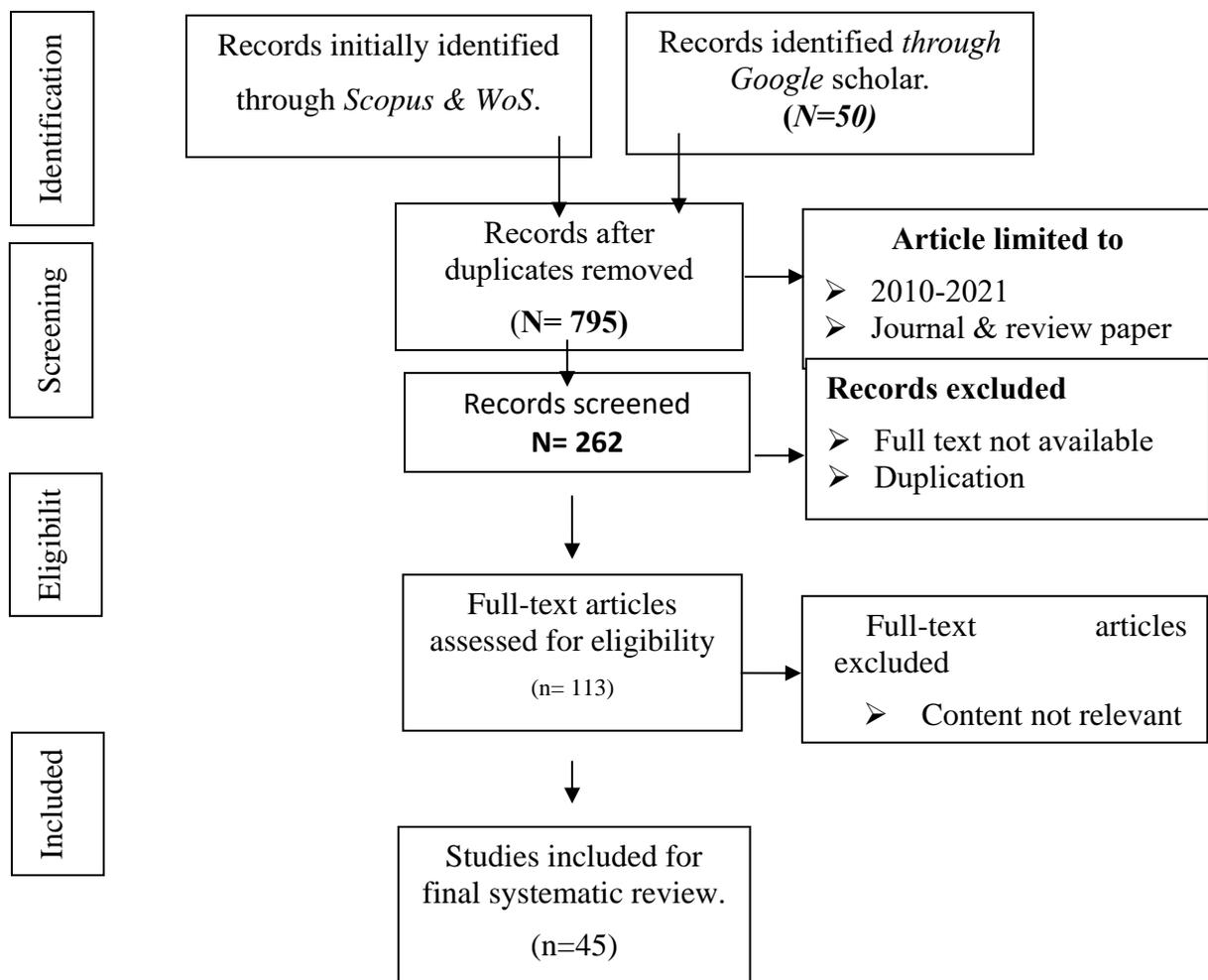
Initially extracted data encompasses studies belonging to diverse languages and different categories, including journal articles, reviews, conference papers, books, book chapters, and editorials. The researcher determined the inclusion and exclusion criteria to select relevant studies for the analysis and used the following inclusion/exclusion criteria: (1) studies related to marketing tourism; (2) studies discussing national park and sustainable tourism, and (3)

journal articles published in English only from 2010 to 2021. Based on inclusion/exclusion criteria the researcher was left with 113 articles in this phase.

5.3. Eligibility

Knowledge of the quality assessment criteria is essential in appraising the validity, applicability, and comprehensiveness of a review (Rethlefsen et al., (2021). To ensure the quality of the selected article review the researcher discovers and deeply reads the abstract, methodology, and conclusion. After reading the articles the researcher removes articles that do not fit inclusion/exclusion criteria. In this phase, 68 articles were removed for not qualifying the criteria, and only 45 articles were identified as the most suitable papers for this review.

Figure 2. Flow Chart for the Review Methodology



5.4. Included

Finally, after applying all inclusion/exclusion criteria 45 unique articles were included for synthesizing and analyzing the review. Publication year, Publishing journal, selected database, and retrieved papers are presented in the next section.

6. Finding and Analysis

6.1. Database, journal, and study distribution

This section presents the results from the analysis of the 45 papers and analyzed the contents of the selected papers to deliver essential insights into the sustainability of national parks and tourism development. The researcher portrays the descriptive statistics in terms of the yearly distribution and reviewed publication by journals, databases, and studies. Table 1. shows the full list of journals and databases used for the study. In this review, 2 databases (Scopus and Web of Science) and 1 web search engine (Google scholar) have been used to identify the relevant paper with our topic. Of 45 final studies selected for this review 32 (72 %) are from Scopus and web of science and 13 (28 %) are from google scholar. Regarding the source of the studies (n= 36) journals identified in this study. Among the review papers analyzed in this study, it is important to emphasize that most of them use publications in the journal of sustainable tourism (n = 4) as sources for their reviews, followed by the International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Management (n = 3) and African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism, and Leisure (n = 3).

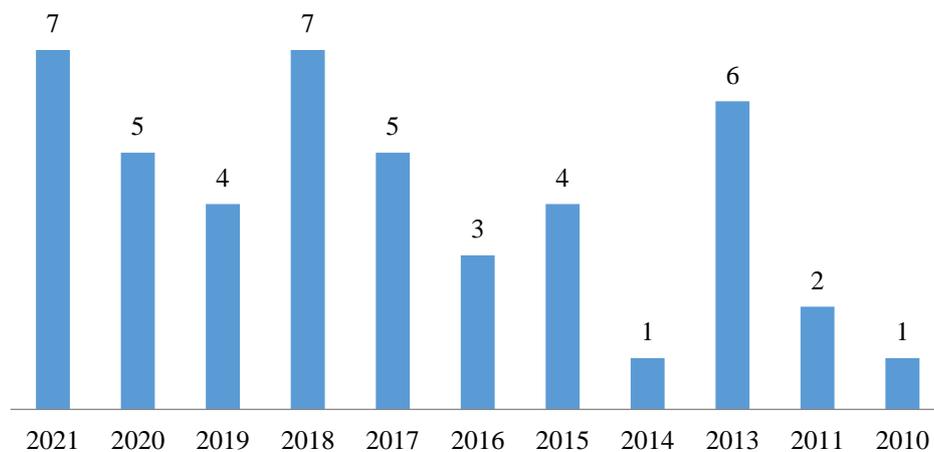
Table 1. sources of the studies by database and journal

Database	Journal	Number of studies
Scopus & WoS (n= 32)	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	4
	International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Management	3
	African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism, and Leisure	3
	Journal of Tourism & Hospitality	2
	African Journal of Hospitality	1
	World Review of Entrepreneurship Management and Sustainable Development	1
	Journal of Critical Reviews	1
	Journal of Destination Marketing & Management	1
	Journal of Environmental Planning and Management	1
	GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites	1
	Land Use Policy	1
	Agriculture & Food Security	1
	Asia Pacific Business Review	1
	Current Zoology	1
	Ecology and Society	1
	Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja	1
	Journal of Hospitality Management and Tourism	1
	Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change	1
	Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sports.	1
	The Journal of Environment & Development	1
Tourism Management Perspectives	1	
Tropical Ecology	1	
Systematic Reviews	1	
Journal of Agricultural Science	1	
Google Scholar (n= 13)	International Journal of Biodiversity and Conservation.	2
	Global Journal of Management and Business Research	1
	Research Square	1
	International Journal of Environmental science	1

	International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research	1
	International Journal of Natural Resource Ecology and Management	1
	journal of Applied Economics Studies	1
	Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality	1
	Journal of Physical Science and Environmental Studies	1
	NUST Business Review	1
	Procedia Economics and Finance	1
	Walia,	1
Database (n=3)	Journal (n= 36)	Study (n= 45)

Figure 3 reveals that studies on sustainable tourism and tourism marketing from 2010-2015 remained relatively low, with total studies of fourteen. However, from 2016-2021 an enormous increase in the study of tourism marketing and sustainable tourism development in the national park has been shown which is signifying much greater attention in the field.

Figure 3. Year-wise distribution of selected studies



6.2. Challenges and threats hinder the national park in delivering sustainable tourism development.

From all papers reviewed, the main challenges and threats that affect a national park were identified. This includes Village Expansion in and around the park, Agricultural Encroachment, Overgrazing, recurrent fires, illegal Timber and firewood harvesting, and poor infrastructure. As a result of these problems, the park has been affected by environmental degradation, continuous loss of habitat, large-scale forest destruction, land clearance, destruction of historical places and tourism attractions. Furthermore, the lack of application of the right

tourism marketing strategy and related rapidly growing negative pressures on the natural park are threatening the sustainability of national parks and tourism development.

7. Recommendation and Discussion

The national park has been played a substantial role to hasten sustainable tourism development to bring a sustainable combination of economic, social, and good environmental conditions (Sriarkarin - Lee, 2018; Valdivieso et al., 2015). In other words, the Sustainability of national parks and tourism is not separated for future sustainable development. The literature revealed that even though, Bale Mountain national park is enriched with diverse natural resources and immense tourism potential for the development of the tourism sector, sustainability of national park and tourism development is under “big question” due to different factors such as the rapid expansion of village in and around the park, overgrazing, recurrent and extended forest fire. This is a severe threat to the survival of national parks and sustainability of tourism development as well as affects the whole ecosystems and overall tourism product of Bale Mountain national park. Tourism marketing is a substantial marketing strategy that impacts the sustainability of national parks and tourism. As such tourism marketing must address the challenges of a national park in all aspects. This requires a holistic tourism marketing approach and understanding of the complexity of challenges in this area. Hence, the application and concept of tourism marketing, the urgency of incorporating holistic tourism marketing in the tourism industry contribute to the sustainability of both a national park and tourism development.

The literature revealed that Poor infrastructure and accessibility, lack of marketing and available funds are all currently hindering Bale Mountain national park from fulfilling its tourism potential. For instance, Rarely Usage of advertisement and promotional tools, availability of unstandardized, insufficient and poor quality brochures around the park, lack of skilled manpower, absence of local travel agent and tourist guidebook, absence of magazines, and poor-quality banners are the main problems (Bayih and Tola, 2017). This indicated that the application of tourism marketing such as people, process, physical evidence, and the existing promotional activities do not feed the resource endowments of the Bale Mountain national park. In nutshell, the concept and application of tourism marketing in a national park would play a key role not only in having healthy and sustainable tourism development but also in the economic growth of the countries. Tourism marketing is a green strategy and appropriate application can leverage economic, social, and environmental development.

8. Conclusion

This review has applied for a systematic literature review mainly mapping existing literature on national parks and sustainable tourism development. The literature consists of 45 papers from 36 scholarly journals published from 2010-2021. The study has identified some of the fundamental challenges facing the sustainability of national parks and tourism development and highlighted areas where future research could give attention to support the ongoing development of tourism development and national park. Crucially, there are serious human-made challenges, lack of appropriate application, and implementation of tourism marketing for the sustainability of both a national park and tourism development.

This study has some limitations. Firstly, the data used in this study are collected from scholarly journals, which exclude textbooks, conference papers, book chapters, and doctoral theses papers related to the topic. Secondly, this review was based on only one national park from Ethiopia, hence the situation from another national park was not examined. This may show that this review is not detailed; however, the authors believe that it provides and pave the way for academic researchers and practitioners for future research work particularly on the sustainability of national park and tourism development.

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Conference Proceedings

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