



**Evaluating the Link Between Economic Diversification and Sustainable Development:
The Case of the Tourism Sector in Sierra Leone**

Research Proposal



Name – **Abdulai Turay**

ID – **2018268**

Lecturer – **Prof. Amare Desta**

Module – **Advancing to Doctoral Research Stage**

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

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Introduction

One of the major strategic challenges that developing countries that rely heavily on a few exported commodities faces is economic diversification. Industries centred on agriculture and mining generally exhibit unstable patterns of development because they are heavily dependent on fluctuations in world markets and shocks in external demand, leading to structural unemployment. Sierra Leone offers a vivid example of this problem: for decades, the economy of Sierra Leone has depended on exports of iron ore, diamonds, rutile and agricultural products as sources of earnings and foreign exchange. While these contribute to the national economy, they often subject the country to recurrent economic downturns as commodity prices fall and production becomes disrupted, and this vulnerability was clearly reflected in the shocks resulting from the civil war, Ebola epidemic and more recently the Covid-19 pandemic, confirming the weakness of an economy anchored on weak productive base (Government of Sierra Leone, 2024).

To overcome such vulnerability, the Government of Sierra Leone has identified the need for economic diversification as one of the major strategic challenges the country faces under the Medium-Term National Development Plan 2024-2030, and tourism has been identified as one of the most promising and transformative sectors that could create employment, generate foreign exchange, encourage investment and boost overall private sector development in Sierra Leone. Tourism, unlike extractive industries, can develop strong links to transport, hotels and catering, construction, agriculture, and arts and culture industries. Also, tourism, unlike the extractive industry, provides a wider spread of benefits throughout the regional communities if properly developed and managed. Sierra Leone's tourism potential is quite impressive. The country is blessed with beautiful beaches, nature reserves, islands, and animals. Popular tourist sites include River Number Two Beach, Tokeh Beach, Bunce Island, Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, Tiwai Island, which are suitable for eco-tourism, heritage tourism, beach tourism and diaspora tourism, and recently some development initiatives have been implemented, including improvement of infrastructures and donor-supported conservation-tourism projects, which have signalled increased interest in tourism development in Sierra Leone (UNDP, 2025). However, the development of tourism remains below expectations and is inadequately understood in Sierra Leone despite its enormous potential.

In view of the significance and challenges of economic diversification as an appropriate strategy for development in Sierra Leone, this research will assess the actual role that tourism can play in promoting economic diversification and, at the same time, sustainably develop Sierra Leone. It is important to acknowledge that the development of tourism will not necessarily bring the required benefits; tourism has the potential to damage the environment, unequally distribute benefits, create weakly linked industries and lead to foreign-dominated enterprises without careful management.

Background

Sierra Leone, a lower-middle-income country located in West Africa, has made substantial progress since the end of the civil war in 2002. Following civil conflict, rebuilding

institutions, re-establishing infrastructure and luring investors were among the priorities for Sierra Leone's post-war reconstruction effort. Nevertheless, the pace of economic progress has been irregular as a result of continued dependence on natural resources and vulnerability to external shocks. Although exports of mineral products have been the mainstay, the sector is labour-intensive, and by contrast, an intensive sector like tourism creates employment opportunities for a broad base. Natural resource-rich countries tend to suffer from structural risks, the “resource curse”, i.e., dependence on a high level of commodity production discourages innovation, undermines institutions, increase macroeconomic instability (Auty, 2001). In the context of Sierra Leone, diversification into sectors such as tourism may serve as an avenue for a more stable, inclusive growth. Tourism: There are several competitive advantages in developing tourism in Sierra Leone. This sector provides opportunities for absorbing people with various skill levels; encourages the development of new enterprises, growth of Small and Medium sized Businesses (SMEs) and women and youth entrepreneurship; provides a framework for infrastructure development such as road networks, telecommunication, and utilities (water and electricity), which can be shared by other productive sectors of the economy; offers opportunities for preserving biodiversity, natural heritage sites and wildlife in the context of eco-tourism and cultural tourism. Despite these potential comparative advantages, tourism has several obstacles, such as poor road connectivity, inadequate electricity, limited hotel supply, weak international marketing, deficiency in human capital for tourism services, lack of access to financing and an inconsistent policy framework. As a result of these challenges, Sierra Leone has been unable to fully utilise its tourist assets, unlike countries with comparable natural beauty.

Problem Statement

Despite the rhetoric of tourism as an important pillar of diversification policy, there is little concrete evidence on how tourism in its current expansion phase contributes positively to the development goals of Sierra Leone. Existing literature on tourism generally treats it as one issue, either from its economic effects or from an environmental/social point of view, with very few attempts to synthesise and analyse the two dimensions together.

This leads to three crucial voids in knowledge. Firstly, very little quantitative evidence has been produced to identify its contributions in terms of GDP, employment, exports and reduced reliance on extraction. Secondly, the impacts of tourism on social and environmental conditions (community participation, conservation achievements, fair distribution of benefits) have been understudied. Thirdly, there are no practical, empirically informed ways to articulate and articulate a way that Sierra Leone can build tourism without repeating the patterns of unsustainability exhibited in other countries.

Without solid evidence, it can be argued that tourism is promoted rhetorically and does not contribute to any form of resilience, inclusion and sustainability.

Aim and Objectives

Aim

To evaluate the relationship between tourism-led economic diversification and sustainable development in Sierra Leone.

Objectives:

- Assess tourism's contribution to economic diversification (income, employment, foreign exchange).
- Examine the environmental and social sustainability impacts of tourism activities.
- Analyse stakeholder perceptions (government, businesses, local communities, tourists).
- Propose a strategic framework for balancing tourism growth with sustainability.

Research Question

- How does tourism development contribute to economic diversification and sustainable development in Sierra Leone?

Sub-Questions

- What is tourism's contribution to GDP, employment, and foreign exchange?
- Does tourism reduce dependence on extractive sectors?
- What are its social and environmental impacts?
- What institutional factors influence sustainable tourism outcomes?

Literature Review

Economic diversification refers to increasing the number and variety of production sectors and income sources within an economy (World Bank 2009). Diversified economies, according to Hesse (2008), will have lower volatility and lower risk levels, leading to more sustained long-term growth compared to non-diversified ones. For resource-dependent economies like Sierra Leone, diversification leads to reduced vulnerability to commodity price cycles and to external shocks (ECA 2005). The tourism industry contributes to economic diversification through exports of services, and it is linked to the other key productive sectors, such as agriculture, retail, construction and logistics.

According to the theory of tourism-led growth, visitors generate income at the national level through visitor expenditure. Other mechanisms for enhancing national income are through foreign investment generated by tourism development, revenue from tourism-related taxes, and the creation of jobs and the development of a skilled labour force (Balaguer and Cantavella-Jord 2002). Balaguer and Cantavella-Jord (2002) found that tourism can play a positive role as a long-term driver of economic growth, provided that other conditions are

right. However, dependence on tourism poses risks since the sector is vulnerable to events such as epidemics and pandemics, and also to political events, global trends in travel, etc. So tourism cannot serve as a substitute for the balance of the economy.

Sustainability is also highly relevant to this study. The Triple Bottom Line concept of sustainable development, defined by Elkington (1997), is the balance of economic progress, social equity and environmental responsibility. If we consider tourism, the Triple Bottom Line would entail that an increasing number of visitors results in economic benefits while a healthy environment is preserved, and the well-being of the local host communities is enhanced. Moreover, tourism is identified by the UNWTO (2018) as one of the ways in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, such as: decent work, reduced inequalities, responsible consumption and protection of biodiversity.

Despite significant potential, tourism is underdeveloped in Sierra Leone. The strong tourist potential is derived from attractive beaches, islands, wildlife parks and historically interesting sites. The poor infrastructure, lack of investor confidence, inadequate marketing and a volatile policy framework have limited the industry's contribution to growth. Most literature does not sufficiently address whether tourism development in Sierra Leone leads to diversification and sustainability simultaneously.

Conceptual Framework

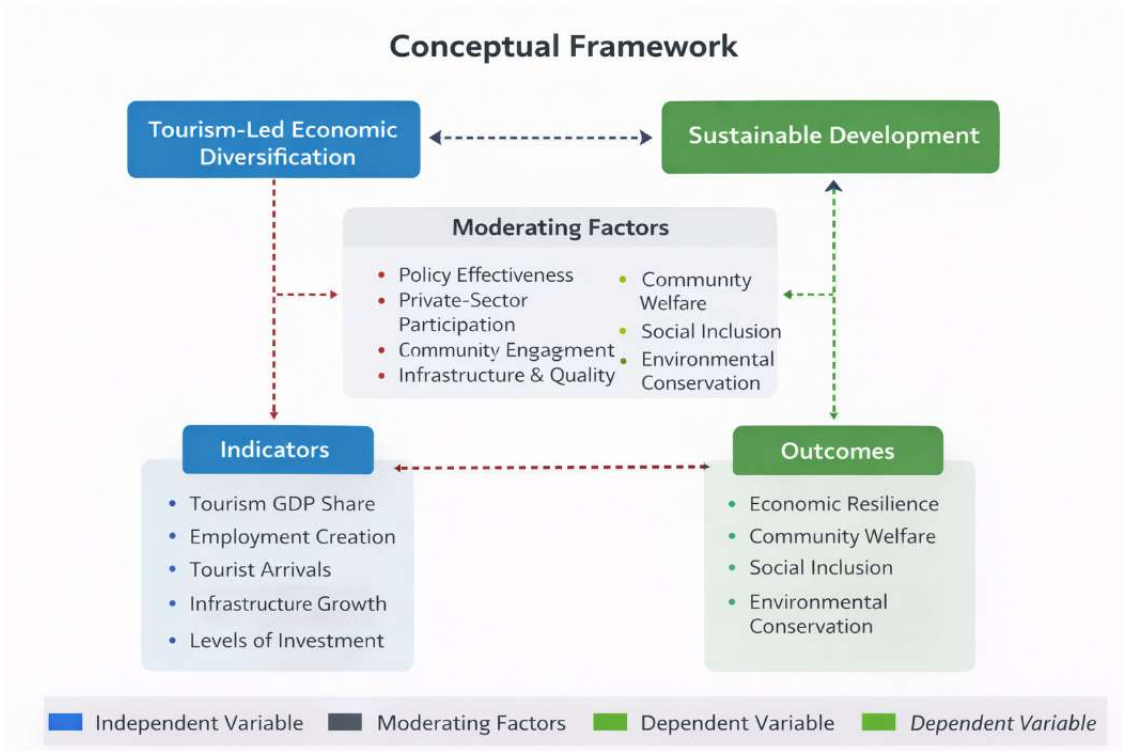


Figure 1

The framework (Figure 1) is an easy-to-visualise way of showing how tourism-led economic diversification will foster sustainable development in Sierra Leone. Tourism diversification

(the independent variable) has the following variables, which are anticipated to have a positive effect on development outcomes: tourism's contribution to the GDP, jobs created, number of tourists, infrastructure developments and amounts of private and public investment into the tourism sector. This is a clear indicator of how tourism would make national economies less dependent on primary industries like mining and instead bolster economies with increased production.

Sustainable development is the dependent variable, as this will show the desirable outcomes associated with tourism development. This will comprise economic resilience, better community welfare, social inclusion and environmental protection. This will translate to generating income and jobs because of the development in tourism. In addition, it is intended that with development in tourism, there will be an increase in welfare for communities, greater inclusiveness in societies and conservation of both natural and physical assets.

A key aspect of the framework is the identification of moderating variables which will either enhance or dampen the effect tourism diversification has on sustainable development. This includes the role played by effective policies, private sector investment, community involvement and the quality of infrastructure available. Positive outcomes will be expected to increase with strong government policies, extensive private sector investment and community involvement as well as effective infrastructure, while negative outcomes may occur with a poor policy environment, less investment or less community support and a poorly maintained infrastructure.

Tourism cannot promote itself to guarantee development, as its development relies heavily on effective systems that support its success. As such, this model serves as an analytical framework that can be useful to assess how tourism can be used as a tool to achieve Sierra Leone's sustainable development targets.

Research Paradigm/Thomas Kuhn's Theory

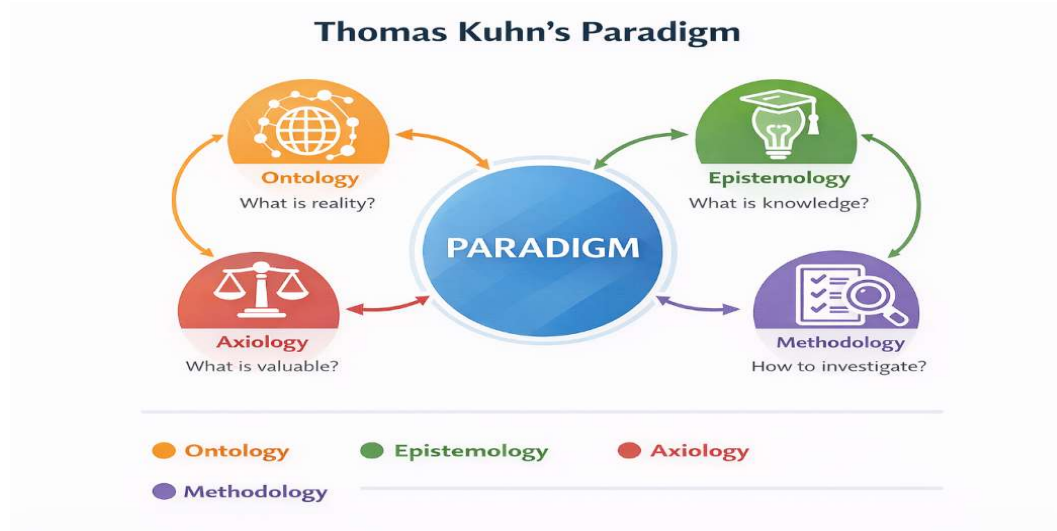


Figure 2

As shown in Figure 2, the research paradigm can be described as the underlying philosophical framework underpinning how the research is conducted, how knowledge is perceived and how evidence is interpreted. It will determine the assumptions that I hold about reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology) and method (methodology). In the context of this research, which investigates the contribution of economic diversification to sustainable development via tourism in Sierra Leone, the choice of research paradigm is particularly important as both quantitative and qualitative elements are incorporated in the study, i.e., measurable economic indicators and socially constructed perceptions among stakeholders. Thus, the study uses a pragmatic research paradigm that is conceptually supported by Thomas Kuhn's Theory of Paradigm Shifts.

A pragmatic approach is selected as it attempts to solve real-world problems and is not confined by either quantitative or qualitative approaches. According to pragmatism, no single approach can provide appropriate data in all situations, and therefore, the research allows for a combination of approaches. Given that the purpose of this research is to examine the contribution of tourism to GDP, job creation, and foreign exchange earnings alongside community experiences, perceptions of tourism, environmental impacts and institutional barriers, both qualitative and quantitative research approaches must be utilised. Thus, pragmatism underpins the research methodology and supports the mixed method approach required.

The concept of paradigms as a frame for scientific investigation and understanding was first introduced by Thomas Kuhn in his seminal work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Kuhn presented the argument that scientific knowledge is not a continuous accumulation of information in linear progression, but rather it involves paradigm shifts where traditional models are replaced by a new frame of reference due to scientific breakthroughs and anomalies occurring in previous understandings. A paradigm represents the common paradigms which are shared and accepted by all scientists or practitioners in a particular field during a specific period. New paradigms replace the older ones when previous models prove inadequate or do not fulfil the necessary purpose of providing comprehensive knowledge that helps to address problems as they arise.

Kuhn's theory serves as a valuable framework for analysing the paradigm shift of development in Sierra Leone. Previously, the model of economic growth in Sierra Leone centred on the extraction of mineral resources and their exports, and the development discourse did not fully integrate environmental issues and human capacity development. However, other areas of development policy had considered these issues. However, subsequent national crises, such as the civil war, Ebola virus disease outbreak, COVID-19 pandemic, as well as volatile mineral prices, have revealed the vulnerability of such an extractive-based economy and exposed how a one-dimensional paradigm of growth could hinder broader and inclusive development prospects and fail to ensure sustainability and resilient economic recovery and growth. The crises generated anomalies which were incompatible with the previous paradigm, raising questions on sustainability, employment generation and economic stability.

As Kuhn suggests, paradigms change when previous ones are proven insufficient to address emerging issues, and a new understanding that may not have been conceived before by scientists/practitioners becomes readily apparent. In Sierra Leone, the shift to economic diversification with the promotion of tourism can be explained as an emerging paradigm shift. Instead of focusing only on mineral resource extraction, an alternative development model that emphasises services, sustainability, entrepreneurship and participation in human resource development is advocated for the tourism sector. This represents a new model of development which emphasises sustainable economic development through environmental protection, inclusive economic growth and institutional building. A new paradigm shift favouring tourism sector as part of a diversified economy implies the application of a forward-looking and proactive approach to economic development, where sustainability and broad-based growth would form the centrepiece.

There is also growing recognition of this trend globally as governments abandon purely extractive resource-based economies and move towards sustainable development paths. In developed economies, the tourism sector is contributing to economic growth, job creation and foreign exchange earnings and can therefore be considered a new avenue of development. The promotion of tourism as a key tool for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (UNWTO, 2018), like poverty reduction, job creation, improved livelihoods, gender equality and protection of the environment, would necessitate a paradigm shift in traditional development strategy towards a sustainable approach based on services. Hence, tourism in Sierra Leone is an example of a new developmental paradigm.

Kuhn's theory strengthens the conceptual grounding of this research as it can assist in explaining the rationale behind the adoption of a new economic paradigm by the government in response to the structural weakness of the previous one, and explain the complexities in implementation, and how conflicting perspectives shape these transitions to new paradigms in relation to the mining and tourism sectors. Policy changes from one paradigm to the next can be gradual or sudden, and the existing framework will continue to compete with the new one, particularly when such factors as existing structure, interest groups and low capacity and infrastructure act as barriers to a quick paradigm shift.

This pragmatic paradigm research with a combined qualitative and quantitative approach complements Kuhn's theoretical approach by demonstrating the practical application of the paradigm shift within a case country like Sierra Leone. Quantitative methods are used to establish a clear link between tourism and key development indicators such as GDP, employment and export, whereas qualitative methods are applied to investigate how this new paradigm shift to tourism is implemented and perceived by the relevant actors. Thus, the mixed method approach allows for a more rigorous and comprehensive investigation of the contribution of tourism to economic development in Sierra Leone as part of the broader change of paradigm that characterised Sierra Leone's development strategy.

In conclusion, the paradigm for this study is rooted in pragmatism and informed by Thomas Kuhn's Theory of Paradigm Shifts. The pragmatic paradigm informs the mixed methods design used in the study, while Kuhn's theory provides a theoretical underpinning and

explanatory framework to explain Sierra Leone's transition towards sustainable development through tourism, considering a previously established extractive-dominated development paradigm.

Research Methodology

This study follows pragmatism as it deals with a topic which calls for objectivity and also an interpretive analysis. Pragmatism offers scope for a mixed methods approach to investigate practical policy questions rather than assuming quantitative or qualitative epistemology is appropriate (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

A mixed methods case study design is thus adopted. The quantitative approach measures the role of tourism in economic diversification through employment, share in GDP, foreign currency receipts and business proliferation. Secondary data will be gathered from Statistics Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Tourism, the World Bank, other Government official sources and a questionnaire distributed to businesses within the sector: hotels, restaurants, transport, and operators.

The qualitative approach would gather data from semi-structured interviews with government officials, investors, tourism organisations, local community leaders and other organisations working on development. These interviews will investigate tourism's opportunities, obstacles, environmental and governance issues. Data gathered through mixed methods could therefore triangulate quantifiable changes with an examination of experience.

Sampling and Data Analysis

The quantitative approach will employ stratified random sampling to obtain a representative selection of tourism sub-sectors and approximately 200 respondents to the survey. The qualitative approach will utilise a purposive sampling method to gain 25-30 participants with experience or expertise within relevant subject matter.

SPSS will be employed to analyse the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarise the trend of each sector, and correlational and regression analysis will be conducted to test the relationship between tourism growth and the results of diversification. The qualitative data will be analysed using thematic coding within the NVivo software. Themes will be generated, such as community benefit, pressure on the environment, barriers to investment, and institutional success. Ultimately, these two methods will be synthesised to interpret the overall results.

Ethical Considerations

The research will seek ethical clearance from the respective university committee before data collection. Data will be gathered from voluntarily participating respondents who would have given their informed consent. Respondents would be guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, particularly during the discussion of controversial governance or business issues. Data will be stored securely and solely for the purpose of research. Wherever appropriate, the researcher will conduct interviews in Krio or English.

Expected Contribution

The likely academic and practical impacts will be one of each. Academically, the work should build on existing literature in the field of diversification and tourism for sustainability by adding an empirical context in a frail, post-conflict African economy. It is likely to be one of only a few empirical studies at the DBA level that directly link tourism development to sustainable development outcomes in Sierra Leone. Practical impacts will result in evidence-based policy recommendations to the government, investors and development agencies and should be at least: increase infrastructural investment, up-skill the tourism workforce, community-based tourism development, strict environmental legislation, destination branding and improve tourism data management systems.

Proposed Timeline (22 months)

Gantt Chart

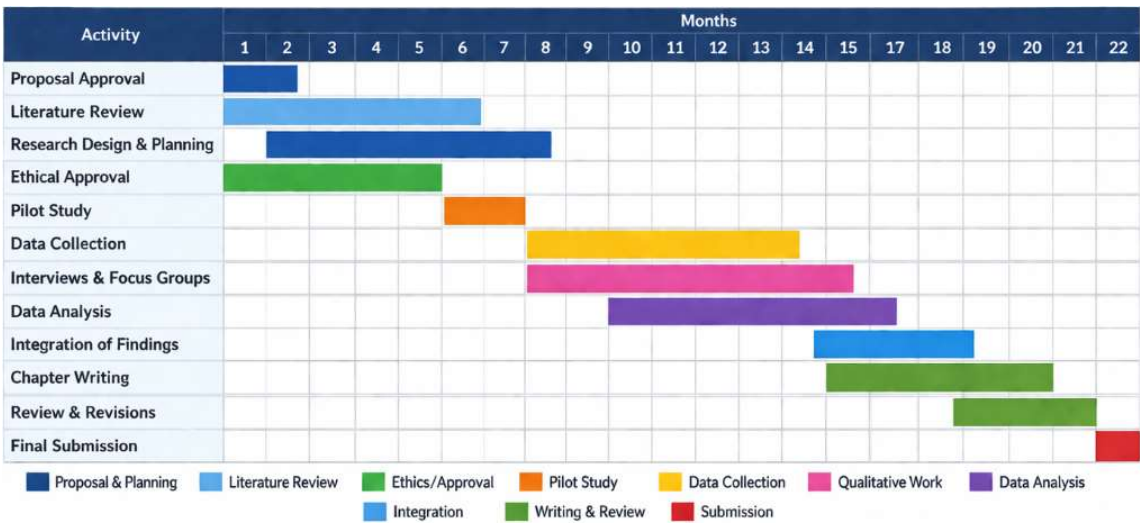


Figure 3

The Gantt chart (Figure 3) presents a practical and logically arranged timetable to effectively complete the proposed DBA research topic: Evaluating the Link Between Economic Diversification and Sustainable Development: The Case of the Tourism Sector in Sierra Leone. This chart visually lays out each stage of the research process, how each component of the research activity will be sequenced over time, and ensures that all crucial academic, ethical and operational requirements will be completed in an orderly fashion. The chart highlights that the research project has been designed to ensure its feasibility and to integrate a suitable timeframe while maintaining a high-quality output.

Initially, the Gantt chart begins with proposal development and approval, which is to be carried out within the first couple of months of the research period. This phase is deemed necessary as it establishes the academic direction of the study by outlining a clear research problem and defining clear research objectives that need approval by the supervisor. Within this timeframe, the researcher will aim to have finalised a research topic, research problem, and research questions, as well as having an agreement that the research work is suitable for a

DBA program. This ensures all prerequisites are in place and reduces the need to make alterations further on in the research project.

Overlapping the proposal period is a substantial period for the literature review. One of the most significant parts of the research project at the doctoral level. This involves a rigorous analysis of existing literature surrounding economic diversification, tourism and sustainable development and is crucial in determining theoretical models that can be applied to this research project, identifying significant findings that are relevant to this research and will help in forming a concept within this research. The Gantt chart shows a considerable duration is being allocated to this phase so as to ensure a full and comprehensive review of literature on economic diversification, tourism development and sustainable development takes place.

As part of the initial research phases, the Gantt chart shows that research design and methodology planning are incorporated within the first few months. Here, all aspects concerning the methodology of the research project will be decided upon, including, but not limited to, the philosophical stance of the researcher, research approach, research design, methods for collecting data and analytical methods that will be adopted to analyse the data collected. With this being a mixed-methods research study, considerable time must be spent defining the various methods so that they can be incorporated effectively and questionnaires, interviews and sample designs are produced accurately and in accordance with the research questions and objectives.

Of importance in the research design and methodology is the six months allocated for ethical approval. The Gantt chart identifies this as a crucial stage within the research process because ethical approval is required before any research on human participants is allowed to commence. Ethical approval is a process which is notorious for being time-consuming because there are extensive procedures which need to be adhered to before the process is completed, such as the development and submission of research instruments to ethical boards, informed consent procedures for the participants, maintaining confidentiality and data protection. It is expected that the researcher will have to engage with the participants and the study concerns potentially many diverse human beings, namely, governmental bodies, owners of businesses, community members and tourists, and for that reason, the inclusion of a long enough time frame for ethical approval is very important.

Following ethics approval and the initial planning phases of research design and methodology, the Gantt chart details that a pilot study and instrument validation stage will take place. This phase involves the use of questionnaires or interviews with a small number of people to gauge the effectiveness of these research tools. The pilot study will enable the researcher to identify if any questions are unclear or not effectively worded, if any equipment malfunctions, or if any logistical barriers need to be overcome. This will be useful to eliminate any errors within the questionnaire and instruments prior to their being distributed on a large scale for data collection, and it helps ensure that both the questionnaire and instruments have reliability and validity prior to distribution.

The data collection stages are shown in the Gantt chart after the initial planning and ethics approval. Data collection is shown to have a division between quantitative data collection and

qualitative data collection and shows a partial overlap between them. Quantitative data collection is to be conducted first and will revolve around collecting numerical and measurable evidence about tourism, such as employment rates created within the sector, economic output from the sector, level of investment into tourism, tourist arrival and spending levels, and business performance indicators. It is anticipated that questionnaires will be distributed to establishments such as hotels, restaurants, and various other businesses that support tourism, to collect quantitative information regarding these indicators.

Qualitative data collection will follow or overlap with quantitative data collection. This involves qualitative interviews and/or focus groups and will focus on gaining depth in the results and understanding the views of relevant stakeholders, which may not be captured in quantitative data. Stakeholders may include government, investors, tourism authorities, local people, business owners, etc., and these interviews/focus groups would aim to gather information concerning views on the economic diversification of the tourism sector and sustainability. The concurrent overlap of qualitative data collection allows for maximisation of time while gathering differing types of data.

Upon collection of sufficient primary data, the Gantt chart shows a dedicated stage for data analysis. Data analysis will then involve analysing the quantitative data obtained using appropriate statistical software that would be applied such as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and the application of inferential statistical analysis, such as correlations and regressions. The results generated from these analyses will attempt to reveal if there is any significant correlation or relationship between variables relating to economic diversification, such as growth in employment, increase in investment levels and decrease in poverty levels and variables relating to the tourism sector. The analysis of the qualitative data will probably be performed using a qualitative data analysis tool, such as the NVivo software, and it will aim to identify themes and topics from interviews/focus groups, which may highlight barriers that hinder the sustainable development of tourism and evidence that may be contradictory or additive to the quantitative data.

Integration of findings is then included as a separate stage on the Gantt chart after data analysis. In a mixed-methods study, integration of results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses is essential to gain a holistic view of the research problem. The purpose of integrating findings is to determine whether the qualitative data support or explain the quantitative results and to complement the objective findings with subjective viewpoints. For example, although statistics can show an increase in employment in the tourism sector, interviews with local community members may suggest that these jobs are temporary or unsustainable.

Finally, the Gantt chart presents a long period dedicated to chapter writing, which is logical given the scope of doctoral work. This time will cover the preparation of individual chapters that will constitute the final dissertation. These include the methodology chapter, findings chapter, discussion and conclusions chapter and possibly a recommendations chapter. During this period, it will be vital to make use of time to prepare sufficient drafts and incorporate all essential aspects that need to be covered to fulfil the research question.

Following chapter writing, the chart provides a period for review and revisions. All chapters must be carefully reviewed at this stage to ensure clarity of argument, structure, referencing styles (Harvard in this case) and overall coherence of research. Any areas which lack depth or clarity would also be looked at within this phase to incorporate additional detail and information so that all weaknesses are addressed before final editing.

Lastly, the chart depicts a time allocation for editing, proofreading and submission of the thesis. Editing and proofreading involve the final fine-tuning of the document in regard to grammar, syntax and spelling, ensuring that Harvard Referencing is consistently adhered to and that the document is free from typos, errors within tables/figures and ensuring the overall presentation is of an acceptable academic standard. Finally, the submission of the thesis marks the final stage and ensures the research project concludes in the 22nd month.

Overall, the Gantt chart that spans 22 months gives a good pathway to achieving the intended research. It proves that the research could be undertaken within the timeframe set and has encompassed all major components of the doctoral research study. The schedule, if followed strictly, should assist the researcher in developing a high-quality DBA thesis contributing to knowledge and practice.

Personal Reflection

The entire process of designing this research proposal has been an exciting and successful learning endeavour, which has enhanced my knowledge of research and development challenges in Sierra Leone. During this whole endeavour, I have been able to know the necessity of diversifying the economic base and the role of tourism towards development, creation of employment opportunities and the increase of national sustainability.

One thing I am clearer about now is that tourism can be regarded not only as a leisure industry but also as a tool that can encourage investment and entrepreneurial activities; also, the ability of the sector to connect with other sectors such as Agriculture, Transport, Construction and Culture. Moreover, I am aware that sustainable development extends beyond the economy alone, but to society and the environment, in that tourism offers a huge potential, but poorly managed tourism could result in socio-economic disparity and degradation of the environment.

My ability as a researcher has improved significantly through identifying research gaps, reviewing the literature available and defining objectives as well as choosing suitable methodologies. The application of pragmatism as a philosophical stance for mixed methods research helps to know that solving real-world problems is based on the effective merging of the quantitative empirical evidence and qualitative experiences and views of stakeholders.

My Professor (Prof. Amare Desta) played a significant role in the entire process of writing this research proposal. Their expert supervision, feedback, experience and encouragement have made me develop my proposal to a much greater extent and gained more confidence in my proposal writing and research design. I greatly appreciate his encouragement and professional guidance toward the achievement of this study.

All in all, it is undeniable that writing this research proposal has been an opportunity for me to improve my research skills and increase my confidence while contributing to a development issue for Sierra Leone. I believe this study will be a great asset, providing useful recommendations to promote sustainable diversification in the nation and encourage further investigation into related topics.

Conclusion

This research proposal explains why the link between economic diversification and sustainable development through tourism in Sierra Leone needs to be analysed. Over the past years, Sierra Leone has been highly dependent on the extractive industry, making it prone to external shocks, fluctuating commodity prices and a limited job creation mechanism. Alternative sectors to achieve inclusive, sustainable growth have become a priority and an urgent challenge for Sierra Leone.

With Sierra Leone being a rich source of natural resources, coastal tourism potential and an ever increasing array of biodiverse and cultural attractions to international market; the tourism sector represents a clear strategic opportunity for Sierra Leone, which can generate foreign exchange earnings, jobs and employment opportunities for the local population, enhance infrastructure development, stimulate entrepreneurship and strengthen forward and backward linkages with the broader economy (agriculture, transport and hospitality sectors). Yet, growth of the tourism sector alone is not an automatic guarantee to achieve sustainable development; the sector could yield a wide array of negative results without adequate policy direction, environmental sustainability, community involvement, sound investment and planned approaches.

Finally, the overall contribution of this research will be in the area of knowledge accumulation, and to the formulation of appropriate policies and development strategies to inform and guide researchers, policy makers, planners, international aid and investment institutions in Sierra Leone's attempt to attain competitiveness in global trade and make tourism a leading engine of the nation's transformation.

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