

Potential of Tourism as a Sustainable Economic Development Strategy in Sierra Leone

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Abstract

Global tourism is expanding at an exponential rate, which has a significant effect on national economies all over the world. This industry has shown to be a key contributor to GDP growth and employment generation, as well as to the general stability and expansion of national economies. The following study evaluates the impact of Sierra Leone's tourism sector on job prospects and the country's economic growth from 1997 and 2022. The augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) and Phillips-Perron (PP) unit root tests were used to determine whether the variables were stationary. Two different statistical techniques are applied to the data analysis: regression analysis and the Johansen cointegration methodology. According to the study, there exists a statistically noteworthy correlation in between the expansion of the tourism sector and the ensuing expansion of the economy.

Keywords

Sustainable Tourism, Economic Development, Jobs, GDP Growth, Sierra Leone

1. Introduction

Sierra Leone is a nation known for its abundant natural resources and stunning landscapes, has been working towards leveraging the idea of environmentally friendly travel to fuel the growth of the economy and create job opportunities. The goal of sustainable tourism is to maximize benefits for all parties involved while reducing the detrimental effects of tourism on the environment and local populations involved. In the case of Sierra Leone, sustainable tourism initiatives have the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the country's economic improvement and provide much-needed employment opportunities for its citizens. Sustainable tourism has a substantial economic impact on Sierra Leone

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(Thullah & Liu, 2020; Hwang & Lee, 2019). By promoting responsible travel practices and supporting eco-friendly accommodations, the country may attract environmentally conscious tourists who are willing to contribute to local economies. Revenue generated from sustainable tourism activities, such as ecotourism ventures and wildlife reserves, can be reinvested into infrastructure development, conservation efforts, and community projects. This influx of capital can stimulate economic growth in Sierra Leone, leading to improved living standards and increased business opportunities (Kargbo, Ding, & Kargbo, 2016).

One of the principal benefits of sustainable tourism in Sierra Leone is its ability to generate job opportunities. As the tourism industry expands, there will be a demand for skilled professionals in sectors such as hospitality, tour guiding, conservation management, and cultural preservation. Furthermore, sustainable tourism encourages local community participation in tourism-related businesses, enabling them to take control of their cultural heritage and natural resources. By offering training programmes and support for small businesses within the tourism sector, Sierra Leone can leverage sustainable tourism to create jobs and reduce unemployment.

While the prospects of sustainable tourism are promising for Sierra Leone, there are challenges that need to be addressed. These challenges include environmental degradation, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to financing for sustainable tourism projects. To overcome these obstacles, it is essential for the government to implement policies that prioritize environmental conservation, invest in infrastructure development, and facilitate access to funding for sustainable tourism initiatives. Collaborative relationships between the public and private sectors, as well as the formation of partnerships with international organizations, is also capable of playing a crucial role in overcoming these challenges and encouraging environmentally friendly travel in Sierra Leone. There is a great chance that sustainable tourism will greatly boost the employment and economic growth of Sierra Leone. However, there is a research gap in understanding the specific strategies and policies that can maximize the financial gains from eco-friendly travel while guaranteeing the protection of the environment and cultural heritage. The extant literature offers insights into the potential for eco-friendly travel in Sierra Leone. However, there is a dearth of studies that quantify the impact of sustainable tourism on the country's economy.

This includes comprehensive studies that address the following key areas: There is a need for in-depth research assessing the direct and indirect contributions of tourism to GDP, employment generation, income distribution, and overall economic development. Understanding the specific sectors and communities that benefit from sustainable tourism can provide valuable insights for policymakers and industry stakeholders (Brokaj, 2014).

Research is needed to analyze the existing policies and regulations related to sustainable tourism in Sierra Leone. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of current strategies in promoting sustainability, community involvement, as well as the distribution of economic benefits in a fair and equitable manner. Fur-

thermore, there is a gap in understanding the difficulties and possibilities associated with implementing eco-friendly travel policies both at the national and local levels. A critical research gap exists in the field of understanding the role of local communities in sustainable tourism development. Studies focusing on community engagement, capacity building, and empowerment are essential to ensuring that tourism initiatives lead to inclusive growth and poverty reduction. Additionally, research should explore the socio-cultural effects of tourism on local communities and identify best practices for fostering positive relationships between tourists and residents (Gössling et al., 2005).

While some literature addresses environmental concerns related to tourism in Sierra Leone, there is a need for more comprehensive research on sustainable environmental management practices within the tourism sector. This includes assessing the impact of tourist activities on natural ecosystems, wildlife conservation, waste management, and climate change resilience. Research is lacking on effective marketing strategies to promote Sierra Leone as a sustainable tourism destination. Understanding consumer preferences, market trends, and branding opportunities can help position Sierra Leone as an attractive and responsible travel destination while maximizing economic benefits.

Addressing these research gaps is necessary in order for sustainable tourism to be fully realized as a means of stimulating economic growth and creating employment opportunities in Sierra Leone. By filling these knowledge gaps, policymakers, industry practitioners, and local communities can make informed decisions that support both economic development and environmental conservation. The current investigation therefore explores the nature of the connection between employment and the economic growth of sustainable tourism in Sierra Leone. The nation's natural beauty, cultural diversity, and historical heritage collectively contribute to its appeal as a tourist destination. By promoting sustainable tourism practices, Sierra Leone can harness its potential to drive economic development and create employment opportunities. Sustainable tourism contributes to economic growth in Sierra Leone by generating foreign exchange earnings, increasing government revenue, and stimulating investment in infrastructure and services. The influx of tourists results in an increased demand for local goods and services, which in turn boosting various sectors of the economy like lodging, transportation, farming, and handicrafts. Additionally, sustainable tourism has the potential to encourage the preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage, which are essential for long-term economic development. The development of ecotourism initiatives, community-based tourism projects, and responsible wildlife tourism can further enhance the economic impact of sustainable tourism in Sierra Leone (Sam-kpakra Sierraleone & Afewerk Demena, 2020). These initiatives attract visitors and create opportunities for local communities in Sierra Leone, fostering inclusive economic growth. Sustainable tourism generates employment in hospitality, cultural heritage, and traditional crafts. The hospitality industry is a significant contributor to employment, with oppor-

tunities spanning hotels, restaurants, and tourism operations. Cultural entrepreneurs benefit from heritage promotion. Community-based tourism empowers locals through guiding, homestays, and cultural performances. Investments in sustainable tourism infrastructure create jobs in construction, maintenance, and management. Prioritizing sustainable tourism ensures benefits are distributed equitably, leveraging natural assets for job creation and income generation. Sustainable tourism is essential for promoting economic expansion and employment creation in Sierra Leone. This is due to the fact that sustainable tourism attracts foreign exchange earnings, stimulates investment, creates job opportunities across various sectors, preserves natural and cultural resources, and fosters inclusive development. By embracing sustainable tourism principles and promoting responsible travel practices, Sierra Leone can harness the full potential of its tourism sector for the benefit of its economy and people (Growth, 2019). The relevance of this study to the sustainable tourism sector possesses the potential to greatly enhance the development of economic growth and the generation of employment opportunities in Sierra Leone (UNWTO). By embracing responsible tourism practices and addressing existing challenges, Sierra Leone positions itself as a desirable destination for environmentally conscious travelers while creating meaningful opportunities for its citizens.

The article is divided into six sections. The initial section of the study presents an introduction to the subject matter. The second part of the article deals with the empirical literature review and the development of theories and hypotheses. The third section of the article outlines the research methodology employed. The fourth section of the article presents the findings of the study. The fifth part also includes the discussions. The final section of the paper considers the conclusion, policy implications, and aims for further research and study limitations.

2. Empirical Literature Review and Hypotheses

The academic community holds diverse perspectives on the connection between employment, economic growth, and tourism in both nations, both established and developing. Many scholars agree the fact that the tourism industry significantly contributes to economic expansion. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) has indicated that tourism involves traveling for leisure outside one's typical surroundings. Evaluating its advantages for regional and national economies is crucial. Tourism positively impacts foreign exchange generation, employment creation, as well as regional income. Several research in less developing countries worldwide have shown a substantial link between tourism and economic growth (Ayeni & Ebohon, 2012). The study examined the growth of environmentally friendly travel in Nigeria, emphasizing travel as a key instrument to help diversify the economy. It supports the service sector and creates employment and revenue. While global tourism is higher in developed countries, opportunities exist for less-developed nations to benefit. Using qualitative research, the study found Nigeria's tourism industry has significant growth po-

tential but remains underexploited. The researchers concluded that tourism could play a significant role in poverty eradication and economic diversification efforts by the government. [Manwa \(2012\)](#) proposed that in order for tourism to benefit society sustainably, the initiative has to be financially beneficial. Such an approach would permit the protection and maintenance of well-liked vacation spots. This is also noted by Smith, who claims that the nation's ability to provide suitable and sufficient facilities is a prerequisite for the economic gains from tourism. [Brida and Risso \(2008\)](#) highlighted the impact of tourism has been identified as a key contributor to growth of the economy in Chile. This study's goal was to investigate the likely causal relationship between changes in exchange rates, travel-related spending, and the period's economic growth spanning from 1986 to 2007. The hypotheses were subjected to empirical analysis by using the co-integration test of Johansen. The writer identified a favorable relationship between economic expansion and tourism, with a significant role for tourism as the primary driver of economic expansion. [Pavlić \(2012\)](#) revealed the effect that the tourism industry has had on jobs in Croatia. The writers demonstrated that the travel and tourism industry was a significant contributor to the advancement of employment following the analysis of quarterly data from 2000 to 2012. They did so by applying two statistical tests, the Granger Causality Test and Johansen Co-Integration Test were applied to the data. Additionally, the researchers found that tourism had a favorable effect on co-integration and employment, which indicates that the variables exhibit a long-term correlation over an extended period ([Wang & Ma, 2015](#)). The correlation between gross domestic product (GDP) and tourism-related earnings in Guizhou, China, were examined. The study's conclusions showed a statistically significant relationship between GDP and tourism, with travel having a favorable impact on GDP expansion. According to [Akan et al. \(2010\)](#) there are causal links between Turkey's tourism industry and economic expansion. The investigators employed a number of statistical techniques, including the co-integration method, the Granger Causality test, the Phillips-Perron test, and a Vector Autoregression (VAR) model, to assess the information for the time frame between 1985 and 2007. The findings of the examination revealed that there was a discernible impact of economic development on the Turkish tourism industry. The evaluation demonstrated the existence of a sustained and predictable correlation exists between economic development and the growth of tourism ([Kreishan, 2011](#)). This study sought to examine the causal relationship between Jordan's economic growth and tourism receipts, with a focus on GDP. The researcher analyzed the data set for the period 1970-2009. In order to ascertain the causal association between the two variables, the researcher employed three statistical tests: the Granger Causality, Johansen Co-Integration, and Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) tests. The findings indicated a positive connection that is statistically significant between economic expansion as well as tourism growth over the long term. Furthermore, the Granger Causality test indicated the existence of an unambiguous correlation

between tourist receipts and the expansion of the national economy. [Adnan Hye and Ali Khan \(2013\)](#) aimed to estimate long-term link between Pakistan's economic expansion and tourism earnings. For their analysis, the writers used annual data spanning from 1971 to 2008. The study's conclusions supported the long-term link between tourism-related income and economic growth. The authors of the study demonstrated that revenue from tourism was associated with an acceleration of Pakistan's economic growth, excepting the period spanning from 2006 to 2008. [Manzoor et al. \(2019a\)](#) elucidated the interconnection In addition to the eradication of poverty and the expansion of tourism, Nicaragua has seen economic growth. The researchers found a clear link between the rise in tourism and the end of poverty. The writers clarified the type of relationship that exists between the variables being investigated and the phenomenon of "dollar democratization". Furthermore, the researchers emphasized the opportunities for employment and revenue that result from the transfer of assets and money from economically prosperous to less developed nations. [Manzoor et al. \(2019a\)](#) found a substantial correlation between foreign travel and trade while analyzing China and Australia. A case study of Korea demonstrates how economic progress can draw a sizable influx of business travelers. Additionally, the argument makes the idea that economic expansion can result from growth of tourism. Numerous investigations have shown a strong link in the setting of international trade, with a specific focus on export expansion, in relation to growth in the economy. The authors have shown a substantial correlation between exports and economic growth as well as a strong relationship between international commerce and economic development. Furthermore, the expansion of tourism is a significant contributor to the growth of the economy. Nevertheless, an export-focused approach to financial progress model has been found to result in a decline in tourism income. Finally, the efficacy of strategies for the persistent tourism promotion could be less than anticipated if a direct correlation there is no proven link between the growth of tourism and economic expansion. This is attributable to the generally positive impact of tourism growth on the economy. Within the context of the West African Region, particularly in Sierra Leone, studies on how tourism affects the expansion of the economy has been less prevalent in the field of tourism-related literature. Consequently, an investigation was conducted to ascertain the connection between employment, economic development, and tourism growth is a topic worthy of further investigation, especially in the context of Sierra Leone. Consequently, the following theories form the foundation of the research: The existing empirical literature published to date has not been able to identify a singular, universally acknowledged definition of sustainable tourism development. ([Durberry, 2004](#)), despite the existence of recent evidence that suggests The World Trade Organization (WTO) offers the definition of the term that is most frequently used, characterizing it as "development that serves the needs of present visitors and host regions while conserving and strengthening opportunities going forward, "it is important to note that

there is still considerable debate surrounding this definition (Chen & Chiou-Wei, 2009). Nevertheless, the empirical literature persists in addressing a multitude of foundational inquiries pertaining to the advancement of sustainable tourism practices. Consequently, a number of pertinent questions pertaining to the aforementioned area remains unattainable at this juncture. Furthermore, it is crucial to remember that the idea of sustainable tourism originates from the maintenance of environmental quality (Arshad, Iqbal, & Shahbaz, 2018; Adnan Hye & Ali Khan, 2013). It is of significant importance that any actions taken now will be detrimental to generations yet unborn (Arshad, Iqbal, & Shahbaz, 2018). Consequently, it has become evident that an evaluation of the long-term state of the environment, the economy, and community health is required (León-Gómez et al., 2021). In light of this, recent research has studied the impact of sustainability within the context of the tourism industry (León-Gómez et al., 2021). Given that it is regarded as a set of assumptions that will shape the future trajectory of this sector. According to Shan et al 2019. In light of these considerations, an increasing number of people are interested in studying the relationship between sustainable growth of tourism and its importance in this field (Hwang & Lee, 2018). Furthermore, it is essential to recognize it as a fundamental instrument for competitiveness (LEBON, 2018; Srinivasan, Kumar, & Ganesh, 2012). The empirical evidence from studies on economic growth demonstrates a long-term impact of tourist spending on the economy as a whole (Gautam, 2011). To achieve economic growth, a significant number of tourism development has benefited from government intervention. This industry has the power to create revenue through exports, disperse wealth, and aid in the growth of developing nations (Hwang & Lee, 2018; Gautam, 2011; Willis, 2011). Nevertheless, it can also have a detrimental effect on the environment over an extended period of time (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001). Furthermore, the aforementioned factors may have the effect of impeding the prospective economic development of tourist destinations (Hwang & Lee, 2018). Consequently, tourism can be regarded as an invaluable instrument to advance a sustainable development proposition (Hwang & Lee, 2018; Hall, 2007). In recent decades, a considerable number of researchers have endeavored to ascertain whether there is an effect of developing a sustainable tourism industry on economic expansion (Scheyvens and Russell, 2012; Oh, 2005; Brohman, 1996a). The aforementioned approach has been employed in order to illustrate the increasing significance of this study. This was achieved by delineating the existing research landscape in order to identify potential gaps and areas of interest. A content analysis and descriptive statistical approach has been employed to establish connections between literature authored by different authors, across various topics, with research fields.

Although previous literature has extensively examined this relationship, it is of interest to conduct an analysis of the dimensions, expansion, and dissemination of currently available scientific documentation, in addition, it is necessary to examine the composition and characteristics of the organizations that are con-

sidering these materials. Right now, investigation therefore seeks to determine the different research streams that have been developed in the field of literature examining the impact of environmentally friendly tourism development on economic expansion. Consequently, the results will make it possible to identify areas of ongoing research. interest and potential avenues for the future investigation.

2.1. Tourism in West Africa

West Africa is recognized as a distinct region with diverse landscapes, from grasslands and forests to swamplands, hills, and valleys. It boasts a diverse range of natural resources, including coastline, mountainous interior, rivers, as well as diverse climates, enhancing its appeal (Ige & Odularu, 2008). In West Africa, there are sixteen Countries, specifically Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo were the nations that were recognized. Despite the considerable potential for tourism, the economic base in these countries remains relatively weak. Additionally, the travel and tourism sector is also an instrument of the growth of the economy in West Africa, in a manner similar to other developing countries.

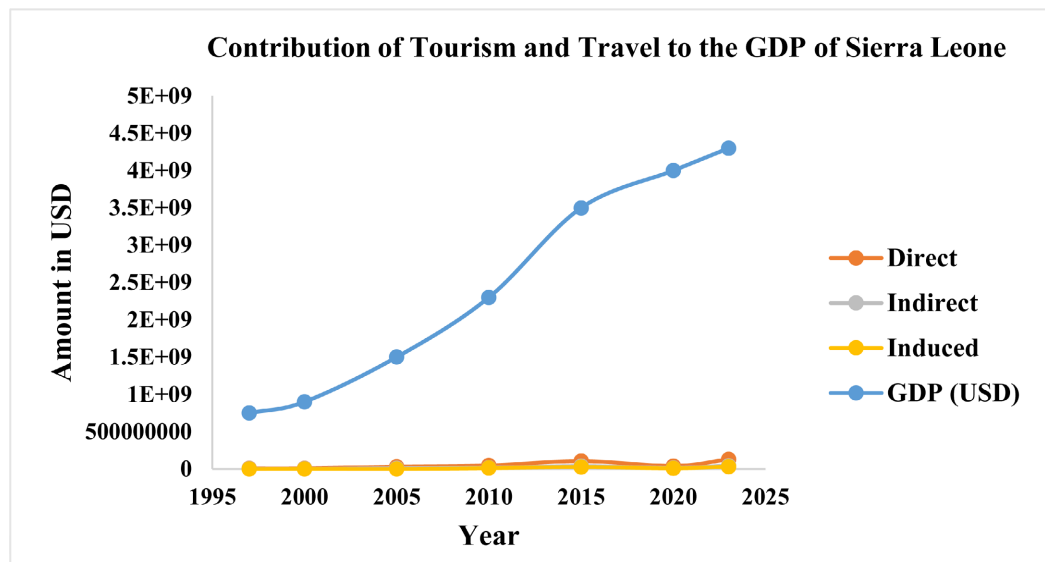
According to the report, the line graph shows how much the travel and tourism industries contributed overall to Sierra Leone's GDP between 1997 and 2022. Three different lines, each denoting a different category of contribution, are shown in the graph:

The orange line shows the direct contribution. The following line shows the travel and tourism industries' direct GDP contribution: From 2000 forward, the graph shows a notable growth trend that peaked around 2015, declined, and then increased rapidly once more until 2022. The direct contribution starts out relatively modest in 1997 and rises steadily to over 10,000,000 by 2005. It peaks at over 12,000,000 by 2015, then declines again before seeing a notable surge that culminates in approximately 14 million in 2022.

The grey line shows the indirect contribution. This line represents the travel and tourism sectors' indirect GDP contribution. Compared to the direct contribution, the indirect contribution shows a slower ascent, although it still shows a steady upward tendency since 1997. From about 2,000,000 in 1997 to over 4,000,000 by 2015, the indirect contribution rises and then somewhat declines before increasing once more towards 2022, when it reaches over 6,000,000.

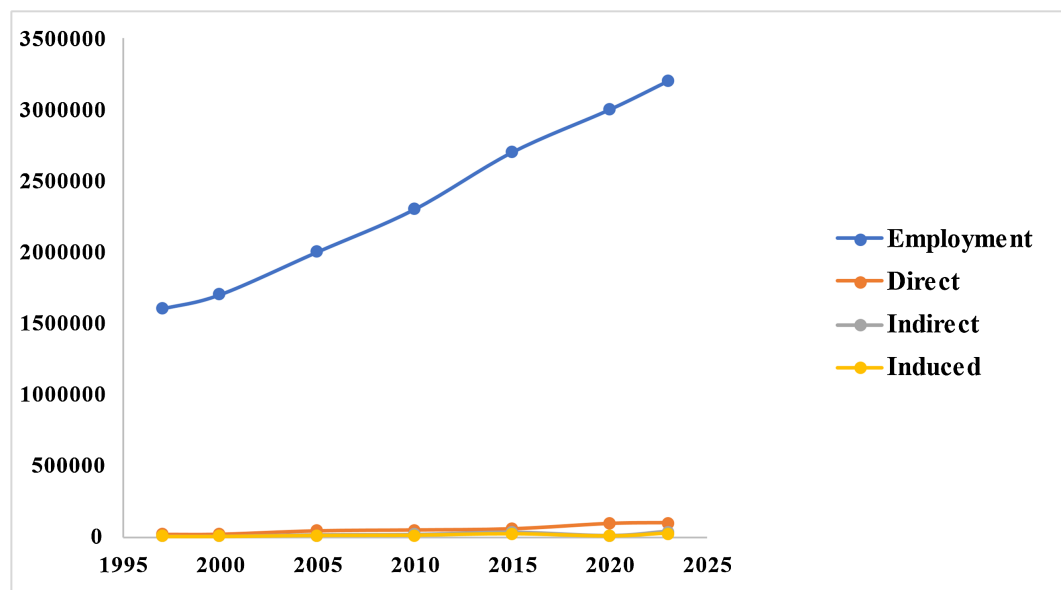
The yellow line shows the induced contribution to GDP. The induced GDP contribution of the travel and tourism industries is shown in this line. Similar to the indirect contribution, the induced contribution follows a similar pattern, starting at a relatively low level around 1997, showing a progressive rise throughout time, followed by a minor decrease before increasing once more in the direction of 2022. The induced contribution starts in 1997 at about 500,000 and rises to about 2,000,000 by 2015. By 2022, it is expected to reach approximately 3,000,000.

As a whole, travel and tourism’s direct impact on Sierra Leone’s GDP has shown some variation over the course of the study period, with a noticeable up-tick towards the end. On the other hand, the growth of indirect and induced contributions has been steadier and more progressive over time. The graph shows that, even with some variations in their direct contributions to GDP, the travel and tourism sectors are becoming increasingly significant, as illustrated in **Figure 1**.



Source: MTCA SL.

Figure 1. The GDP’s overall contribution from travel and tourism. (Adapted from the ministry of tourism and cultural affairs Sierra Leone 2018, West Africa).



Source: MTCA SL.

Figure 2. Contribution of travel and tourism to employment in SL from 1997 to 2022.

Figure 2 Overall contribution of the travel and tourism sectors to employment. (Adapted from the ministry of tourism and cultural affairs Sierra Leone 2018, West Africa).

With reference to west Africa region, Sierra Leone the region is renowned for its tourism potential and natural attraction sites. Sierra Leone is renowned for its natural beauty and the tourism industry is experiencing a period of growth. Sierra Leone offers a multitude of alluring prospects in the context of developing countries.

The ancient region showcases a rich cultural and historical heritage. The country is home to a plethora of tourist attractions in Freetown, Tacugama Chimpanzee, Lumley Beach, Bureh Beach, Banana Island, Outamba Killimi National Park, Lakka Beach, Tiwai Island, Bunce Island, River Number 2 Beach, Tokeh Beach, the Gola Rainforest National Park, the Sierra Leone National Museum, Fourah Bay College University, the National Railway Museum, the Sierra Leone Peace Museum, St. Georges Cathedral, and the Martello Tower situated at Tower Hill. Valleys within Freetown include Guma Valley, Congo Valley, Kortright Valley, Bat Hole Valley Regent Village, Sunshine Valley Hill Station, Happy Valley Waterloo, Sunshine Valley off Regent Road, Motormeh Valley back of Guma Valley, Lake Son Fon, and Moro Valley in Kenema District. In Freetown, there are numerous small swamps located in the inland valleys that are connected to the river systems.

(The highest mountain is Mount Bintumani, also called Loma Mansa Mountains.) Sierra Leone is home to historical mountain ranges, particularly in the northern region, featuring majestic landscapes and rich history. The Wara Wara, Loma Mansa, Sankanbiaiwa, and Wotuma ranges are notable, attracting trekkers, climbers, hikers, and tourists. These areas boast attractive rivers, lakes, valleys, and streams, drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. The Northern and Western regions offer a unique blend of natural beauty, socio-economic diversity, and historical significance. Consequently, Sierra Leone's tourism industry has seen significant growth, making it a top destination for nature and history enthusiasts. The number of tourists reached a total of 71,000 in 2019. In terms of tourist production, the depicted figure represents a 71.0% increase compared to the preceding two-year period.

The report indicates that in 2017, a total of 1,750,000 visitors travelled to Sierra Leone. According to data from the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, 30% of tourists were from within the country, with over 90% opting for road travel. A mere 1.8% and 8.5% chose rail and aircraft transportation, correspondingly, 2017 saw the WTTC projected Sierra Leone's tourism earnings at 19.4 billion dollars in the United States, equivalent to 6.9% of total GDP. Forecasts from WTTC suggest this figure will surge up to \$36.1 billion by 2030. Additionally, travel in 2016 accounted for 6.0% of all jobs. The percentage went up to 6.3% in 2017. It is anticipated that this figure will increase further in 2018. It is anticipated that the tourism industry's prosperity in Sierra Leone will help to re-

duce the country's poverty level. Tourism contributes positively to the prospects and advancement of Sierra Leone's economy, and this is expected to continue.

Furthermore, the line graph demonstrates the collective impact of the travel and tourism industries on employment in Sierra Leone between the years 1997 and 2022. The graph comprises four distinct lines, each representing a discrete category:

1) The blue line represents the employment data. This line depicts the aggregate employment within the travel and tourism sectors. There has been a notable increase over the period under review, with the figure rising from approximately 1.5 million in 1997 to over 3 million by 2022. This signifies a consistent expansion in employment opportunities within these sectors.

2) The direct employment figure is represented by the orange line. The line represents the direct employment provided by the travel and tourism sectors. The figure remains relatively stable and low, oscillating around 50,000 throughout the period under review. While there are minor fluctuations, no significant upward or downward trend is evident.

3) The indirect employment generated by the travel and tourism sectors is represented by the grey line. The indirect employment generated by the travel and tourism sectors is illustrated by this line. As with the direct employment line, it remains at a relatively low and stable level, indicating minimal changes over time. While the precise figures are not readily discernible, they seem to be even less than those for direct employment.

4) The induced employment effects of the travel and tourism sectors are illustrated by the induced line (yellow). This line illustrates the induced employment effects of the travel and tourism sectors. Furthermore, the values remain low and stable, at a level comparable to those observed in the direct and indirect employment categories. This suggests that the impact on induced employment has been minimal over the years. As a whole, while the total employment in the travel and tourism sectors in Sierra Leone has demonstrated considerable growth, the contributions from direct, indirect, and induced employment have remained relatively modest and consistent over the period from 1997 to 2022. As illustrated in **Figure 2**.

2.2. Theories and Hypothesis Development

Since the 1960s, the tourism industry has been recognized as a significant driver of economic development, with numerous nations implementing strategies to enhance their tourism sectors with the aim of improving their economic development (Telfer & Sharpley, 2007). In their research, Todaro and Smith (2011) suggested that development involves multiple dimensions, encompassing not only positive changes not just in national institutions and economic prosperity, but also in the fight against poverty. The notion of modernization (MT) is among the greatest widely admired developmental models that have prospered attention Since the late 1800s to the middle of the 20th century. It is believed that

this hypothesis builds upon another theory, namely with its roots in Keynesian economics, growth theory (Brohman, 1996b). Modernization Theory proponents (MT) argue that this issue is crucial for economic development, creating abundant economic and employment opportunities at the grassroots level. Wealthy, modernized economies offer citizens higher quality of life and access to technology. Modernization, with its innovative production methods, attracts foreign capital, facilitates technology transfer, and creates jobs. In tourism, modernization strategies aim to generate economic returns, with the multiplying effect of tourism acting as a development engine by redirecting other economic resources (Mishra, Rout, & Mohapatra, 2011). Dependency theory (DT) gained considerable traction during the 1960s and 1970s.

It can be stated that synthesis Of a multitude of interrelated theories, with a primary focus with regard to the inequalities between developed nations with strong capitalist economies and emerging countries in the southern hemisphere (Willis, 2011). This concept posits that traditionally underdeveloped nations have been devoid of progress opportunities by wealthy and developed nations. The foundation for emerging nations' economic dependency on development initiatives depends upon three key factors:

- 1) the transfer of cutting-edge technology from developed nations;
- 2) the accumulation of enormous debt and reliance on outside funding; and
- 3) the interest on loans that are remitted to industrialized nations (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001).

As a reaction to the substantial neoliberalism theory (NL), which was criticized for this notion throughout the 1970s and 1980s, was developed. The theory of Neoliberalism (NL) is open marketplaces worldwide, without any influence from the political or financial sway. The underlying tenet of this idea is the removal of all the obstacles built by wealthy nations. It is recommended that Global trade and finance flows should be unrestricted, with a little thought being attributed to the characteristics of the market of privatization, market expansion, de-regulation, Self-reliance and autonomy (Hall, 2007). During the 1970s and 1980s, it was common for governments to attract foreign capital, with hotel chains playing a pivotal role in neoliberal tourism. Infrastructure development in tourist areas can stimulate local and national economic growth. However, reduced engagement of the state in social welfare and limitations on unions of traders have decreased the expenditure on educational, health-related, and the environment. Neoliberal tourism impedes state development and exploits labor to benefit the tourism industry, leading state representatives to hesitate on human development projects.

Global policies during this era favored the West, often neglecting impoverished populations. Aid and development organizations sought to address poverty's root causes to improve life for the lowest socioeconomic strata. Instead of tackling root causes, alternate development (AD), sometimes known as the bottom-up approach, aimed to alleviate poverty symptoms, while baseline needs

analysis (BNA) focused on meeting essential requirements rather than economic development. Neoliberal and modernization theories gauged living standards by economic growth, but development through trade (DT) and alternative development (AD) theories questioned this. The DT method highlighted the unfavorable impacts of Western advancement on impoverished communities in the global south, while AD shifted focus from top-down to bottom-up development. The concept of sustainable development, or SD, is the integration between two distinct development and sustainability goals. In essence, this notion represents a combination of sustainability and development philosophies. Until the 20th century's conclusion, ecologists were primarily engaged in the principles of the nineteenth-century conservation movement. Those travelers who possess an awareness of environmental issues are particularly averse to ecological harm as well as social harm. The concept of sustainability has been embraced by tour operating companies, despite their initial motivation to promote ecological vacations. Ioannides posited that the organization known as IFTO, the International Federation of Tour Operators utilized sustainability in relation to technique for marketing plan in addition to the objective in order to increase revenue. At the moment, there is a concerted effort to reduce poverty via tourism that benefits the poor. In order to fulfil the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, the UNWTO 2005 study explicitly endorses the function of community tourism within the local private industry involvement. Drawing from the reviewed literature and theories, the study establishes the following hypothesis:

First hypothesis (H1). There is a benefit correlation between the GDP and the annual rise in tourism.

Second hypothesis (H2). There is a benefit correlation between the rise in employment rates and the yearly growth in tourism.

3. Research Methodology

Data Gathering

In order to investigate potential of tourism as a sustainable economic development strategy in Sierra Leone, a temporal sequence analysis was conducted on annual data from 1997 to 2022. According to this survey, the yearly growth in tourism was employed in the role of an independent variable, with GDP and jobs serving as variables that are dependent because the nature of this research might show certain variable that is stationary or non-stationary in the time series data. Prior to this, ADF, or the unit root test, was employed to ascertain that every series was integrated. First of all, a model of bivariate regression was employed for the purpose of quantitative analysis, with the objective of investigating the empirical connection and hypothesis testing between two variables (Manzoor et al., 2019b). Secondly, in order to identify an examination of the relationship over time between variables, co-integration worked there. Because of the purposes of statistical evaluation as well as the estimation of econometric models, the soft-

ware E-View 9 was employed. The data were collected from a variety of sources, including the Tourism Year Book and the Economic Survey of Sierra Leone, the National Tourist Board and the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Sierra Leone. Annual Reports on the Economic Impact of Tourism and the World Travel and Tourism Council.

These sources provide a comprehensive understanding of the tourism sector's development, its impact on economic growth, and employment in Sierra Leone. With regard to sustainable tourism, the expansion of the economy is inextricably linked with the creation of jobs in Sierra Leone between 1997 and 2022. Several key variables impact the advancement of the tourism sector: tourist arrivals, investment in tourism infrastructure, environmental conservation efforts, employment opportunities, community involvement, policy framework, cultural preservation, tourism revenue generation, marketing efforts, and risk management. These factors influence the growth, sustainability, and employment generation within the tourism industry, collectively shaping its trajectory and progress, the idea of sustainable tourism in order to increase the economy, and the development of employment opportunities in Sierra Leone over the specified period.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Descriptive Statistics and the Correlation Matrix

The variations' **Table 1** displays the correlation matrix along with the descriptive statistics. The table displays the correlations, means, and standard deviations. The relationship matrix's findings were consistent with those from the earlier research (*Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix of Variables*, n.d.) (Bedeian, 2014). In general, multicollinearity was minimal and did not represent a significant issue (Teed, 1978) (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Displays the correlation matrix and variable descriptive statistics.

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	1	2	3
EMP	6.538	0.938	4.5	7.67	1		
GDP	9.749	3.701	2.5	13.9	0.202	1	
Tour_g	11.78	0.999	10	13.8	0.392 *	0.727 **	1

Source: Authors computation using correlation matrix and variable descriptive statistics. Note: EMP: Employment rate; GDP: Gross Domestic Product; Tour_g: Tourism growth; *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.2. Unit Root Test Results

It was necessary to rule out the possibility that the data are not stationary by testing the unit root of the variables. Consequently, in the present study, we consider Dickey-Fuller and ADF unit root tests, which are widely accepted in the field, to be employed to ascertain the stationarity of the GDP, employment, and

annual growth in tourism (Tour_g) series. The following regression's estimate served as the foundation for the test:

$$\text{Let } \Delta y_t = \alpha + \delta y_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_i \Delta y_{t-i} + \varepsilon_t. \quad (1)$$

The symbol of the first distinction is represented by Δ : Y stands for the temporal sequence, t for α , the linear trend in time indicates a constant, the error term is represented by ε , and the number of lags in the anticipated variables is denoted by n .

Table 2. Displays the sequence-level values from the root test.

Variable	ADF Level	PP Level
GDP	-2.210278	-2.450704
EMP	-4.871852	-4.922699
Tour_g	-3.740363	-3.793420

Source: Authors computation using ADF and Dickey and Fuller unit root test. ADF: augmented Dickey-Fuller test; PP: Phillips-Perron test.

Table 3. Root test results of the sequence first-order difference.

Variable	ADF Level	PP Level
Δ GDP	-5.826917 (0.0004)	-5.903267 (0.0004)
Δ EMP	-10.34191 (0.000)	-14.01308 (0.000)
Δ Tour_g	-9,125,041 (0.000)	-9.842097 (0.000)

Source: Authors computation using ADF and Dickey and Fuller unit root test. Note: null hypothesis rejected at 5% significance level ** presents the outcomes of the analysis, which indicate the degree to which values among the three sequences were not stationary. Additionally, testing indicated that Tour_g, GDP, and EMP were at the first-order difference, stationary. The primary distinction was applied to the trio of sequences in order to lessen alterations in the information. Subsequently, three recently released series, namely Tour_g, EMP, and GDP, were generated, and the outcomes of their unit root test are presented in **Table 3**.

The outcomes of the ADF and PP tests, presented in **Table 2** and **Table 3**, indicate that the annual growth in tourism, employment, and GDP was not stationary at the level form but rather at the initial stage. Consequently, the two test variables were combined into an identical model 1 (Variable correlation matrix and descriptive statistics, n.d.) (**Table 2** and **Table 3**).

4.3. Method of Regression Analysis

In order to determine the effect of travel on employment and growth in the economy, it was examined utilizing regression examination. This identical method was also used to examine the role that tourism plays in job creation and economic expansion (Manzoor et al., 2019a).

The relationship between the variables is able to be written as Where:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_i + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

Symbolizes the changeable that is dependent; the independent variable is denoted by X_1 , the intercept by β_0 , and the coefficient to be calculated by β_1 . The following equation represents the suggested improved regression model:

The model details are as follows:

$$\text{Tou_g} + \varepsilon + \beta_0 + \beta_1 = \Delta\text{GDP} \quad (3)$$

$$\text{Tou_g} + \varepsilon + \beta_0 + \beta_1 = \Delta\text{Emp} \quad (4)$$

where Tou_g is the yearly increase in tourism, Gross domestic product is known as GDP, Emp stands for employment rate, β_0 is the intercept, β_1 is the coefficient to be calculated, as well as ε is the error term. Less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) was the p-value of 0.000, according to **Table 4**. This implies that the GDP benefited significantly from the yearly expansion of tourism. Moreover, the t-statistic values were higher than the 1.96 cutoff value (Asif, Jameel, Hussain, Hwang, & Sahito, 2019; Asif, Jameel, Sahito, Hwang, Hussain, & Manzoor, 2019). The R-squared figure indicated that a 5% difference in GDP was attributable to the yearly growth of tourism. Furthermore, the explanatory variables and the predicted variables showed a significant and positive connection, as evidenced by T-values higher than 1.96. These outcomes also agree with Kim et al.'s findings (Marin, 1992).

Table 4. GDP and tourism growth regression analysis.

Dependent Variable: ΔGDP				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	-21.95028	6.134822	-3.577981	0.0015
$\Delta\text{Tou_g}$	2.690465	0.518887	5.185067	0.0000
R-squared	0.528348	Durbin Watson		1.330163
F-statistic	26.88492	Prob (F-statistic)		0.000026

Source: Authors computation using regression analysis test. p-value was 0.000, which is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$)***.

The examination revealed that the variable under consideration was the rate of employment, while the annual increase in tourism constituted the independent variable. The examination revealed that there was a p-value of less than 0.05 (0.04). The results indicate that the yearly increase in the rate of tourism is significantly influenced by employment. The R^2 quantity indicates the fact that a 15% fluctuation in the rate of employment was attributable to the expansion of tourism. There was a positive beta coefficient, indicating a strong and favorable correlation existed between the rate of employment and the rise in tourism each year. Consequently, an alternative theory was approved and the null hypothesis rejected. The examination was conducted by Richardson (Manzoor et al., 2019a). The same pattern of results was confirmed in the study (Table 5).

Table 5. Regression analysis of tourism growth and employment.

Dependent Variable: ΔEMP				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	2.206832	2.083572	1.059158	0.3001
$\Delta Tour_g$	0.367638	0.17623	2.08613	0.0478
R-squared	0.153497	Durbin Watson		0.40489
F-statistic	4.351938	Prob (F-statistic)		0.047768

Source: Authors computation using regression analysis test. p-value (0.04) was less than 0.05***.

4.4. Results of the Cointegration Examination

Among the several methods available for time series data, Johansen's cointegration test was chosen in order to examine the steady, long-term correlation between employment, GDP, and annual tourism growth. One of the variables that required further investigation was the linear combination calculation, which was found to be stationary. In order to ascertain whether the variables showed a persistent association, Juselius and Johansen employed maximum statistics for eigenvalue and trace. There are numerous methods for determining the optimal lag length, with the most widely utilized being the Schwarz standard. This is due to the fact that the Schwarz criterion has been validated by science. And in comparison, to other criteria, the crucial values are more objective. Consequently, the trailing length in this investigation was obtained using the Schwarz critical values.

To carry out the cointegration analysis of Johansen, it was necessary for the variables to have a non-stationary level. However, we merged our three variables into the identical sequence.

Table 6 shows that the test for traceability outcome revealed a robust, cointegrating connection between the elements. It was less than five percent, indicating that it was not possible to reject the null hypothesis. This indicated that the variables were cointegrating, had enduring relationships, and moved together over time. Moreover, all of the variables were co-integrated and showed a connection over time, according to the maximum eigenvalue test.

5. Discussion

One of the sectors with the quickest rate of growth is tourism, which also propels many developed and emerging markets. It is the biggest provider of job openings, a significant contributor to prosperity generation, and a significant element of the economy's diversity. It is possible for weaker or deteriorating regions to be developed by the travel and tourism industry. In several West African nations, tourism is regarded as an active instrument for overcoming the lack of funding and experience available for development.

Table 6. Johansen Cointegration. Series: EMP, GDP, Tour_g Lags interval (in first differences): 1 to 4.

Unrestricted Cointegration Rank Test (Trace)				
Hypothesized No. of CE(s)	Trace		0.05	
	Eigenvalue	Statistic	Critical Value	Prob.**
None *	0.974991	94.64275	29.79707	0.0000
At most 1 *	0.456825	17.18381	15.49471	0.0276
At most 2 *	0.187754	4.366994	3.841466	0.0366

Trace test indicates 3 cointegrating eqn(s) at the 0.05 level. *Denotes rejection of the hypothesis at the 0.05 level. ** MacKinnon–Haug–Michelis (1999) p -values

Unrestricted Cointegration Rank Test (Trace)				
Unrestricted Cointegration Rank Test (Maximum Eigenvalue)				
Hypothesized No. of CE(s)	Max-Eigen		0.05	
	Eigenvalue	Statistic	Critical Value	Prob.**
None *	0.974991	77.45894	21.13162	0.0000
At most 1	0.456825	12.81681	14.26460	0.0836
At most 2 *	0.187754	4.366994	3.841466	0.0366

Max-eigenvalue test indicates 1 cointegrating equation (s) at the 0.05 level. *Denotes rejection of the hypothesis at the 0.05 level. **MacKinnon–Haug–Michelis (1999) p -values.

Source: Author's calculation by using E-view 9. Eqn. (equation), CE (cointegrating equation). Both test trace and max-eigenvalues indicated the same thing: that variables (GDP, EMP, Tour_g) were co-integrated. They had a long-run association, and for the long run, they could move together.

The current study's goal is to look into how employment, tourism, and economic development are related in Sierra Leone. The relationship between the rise of annual tourist and increases in Jobs and the economy was examined in order to ascertain the positive connection between the two. It is evident that an increase in tourism has a favorable impact on both the job creation rate and GDP. Kim et al. (Manzoor et al., 2019a). The study demonstrated causal associations. between the growth of the travel and tourism sectors and the expansion of the economic Taiwan's system. The study's conclusions indicated a sustained balance association. The study was conducted by Sanchez et al. (Manzoor et al., 2019a). The findings revealed that tourism expenses were the primary cause of the economic deficit. However, the studies also indicated that there was a favorable and significant economic influence on growth in the economy. Studies with an empirical focus have demonstrated the effect of demand for tourism on jobs and have indicated that the employment rate is significantly impacted by tourism (Balaguer & Cantavella-Jordá, 2002; Archer & Fletcher, 1996). According to Archer (Archer & Fletcher, 1996) and Mathieson (Mathieson, Wall, & House,

1985), tourism is a significant generator of both direct and indirect job prospects. Nevertheless, the existing research in this field is insufficient in Sierra Leone. Consequently, we conducted a thorough investigation of the aforementioned gap and were able to ascertain that, in a positive way, the findings of the current study align with those of previous investigations on this subject (Brida, Sanchez Carrera, & Risso, 2008). The cointegration analysis's findings indicate a correlation between GDP and the yearly growth in tourism. This result is consistent with Pedak's earlier study's conclusions (Biagi, Lambiri, & Faggian, 2012). In addition, the cointegration analysis's findings demonstrate the long-term connection between employment and annual tourism increases. These outcomes are available in accordance with the results of Dimoska's earlier investigation (Manzoor et al., 2019a). The findings show that the growth of the travel and tourism sector is a major factor in economic growth and the generation of employment opportunities. The findings were consistent with the theories. Research, both theoretical and empirical, has demonstrated the fact that the expansion of employment is positively impacted by the tourism industry. Furthermore, the immediate result of tourism regarding tourism and travel can result in the creation of more job prospects as a result of its stimulating influence in numerous sectors related to tourism. Promoting the acquisition of domestic products and services provided by the tourism sector boosts the sector's overall economic impact.

6. Conclusion and Policy Implication/Aims for Further Research

6.1. Conclusions and Policy Implication

The principal objective of the present investigation aims to investigate the relationship between employment and tourism as well as their impact on economic growth in Sierra Leone. The time series from which the data used in this investigation are sourced is the calendar year 1997-2022. One explanatory variable used was the tourism industry's annual increase, while both the degree of employment as well as the gross domestic product (GDP) were chosen to serve as the dependent variables. Regarding the analysis, the Johansen cointegration method and bivariate regression were used. A positive correlation has been identified between the yearly increase of tourism, employment as well as financial activity. Conclusions drawn from the research indicated that the expansion of tourism is a pivotal factor in the economic development of the nation.

6.2. Aims for Further Research

The Sierra Leone economy is driven by tourism. The expansion of the tourism sector is a source of considerable optimism for the economy, with potential benefits regarding earnings, gross domestic product (GDP), the creation of jobs, and the expansion of the economy. Sierra Leone is a well-liked vacation spot. The region is characterized by its diverse natural beauty and rich cultural heritage will

undoubtedly play a pivotal role in Sierra Leone's future. The future of the tourism industry will depend on its systematic development and the provision of adequate support. Both innovative talent and well-built infrastructure are needed in the tourism industry. The study suggests the government should implement policies to generate money, jobs, and revenue for locals, promoting economic activities through tourism development. Strategies include providing excellent roads, airports, and transportation, as well as tax breaks for businesses involved in the tourism sector, like hotels. Establishing stability in politics and guaranteeing tourist security are crucial for enhancing Sierra Leone's global image. Sustainable tourism policies are needed to ensure stable demand. The priorities of state lawmakers should be school quality and law and order. Sierra Leone is currently seen as a high-risk destination for travelers, highlighting the need for improved stability and security. During the rebel war (Services et al., 2023) years ago. Despite the prevalence of economic instability, unemployment, inflation, and infrastructural development, they continue to attract the highest number of visitors in comparison to other neighboring countries like Guinea and Liberia. Thus, an international tourism marketing strategy must be put into place in the neighboring regions with the objective of reducing poverty and improving living standards.

6.3. Study Limitations

It should be noted that this study is subject to certain limitations. These limitations present an opportunity for additional investigation. Firstly, the most recent research utilized secondary information. Consequently, in the future, research could be directed towards the collection of main data to look into how the tourism industry affects the economic expansion. Second, the current investigation is carried out within the framework of Sierra Leone. It would be beneficial for upcoming investigations to be carried out in other emerging nations in order to evaluate the generalizability of the conclusions. Further research could also employ an approach focused on specific sectors with the goal of differentiating between the employment effects of tourism, both directly and indirectly. Lastly, among revenue, foreign exchange earnings, and additional dependent variables should be further examined in future research. Additionally, further study is required to determine the immediate correlations using the Vector Error Correction Model (VECM) and Johansen Cointegration.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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