

THE EFFECTS OF TOURISM IN NIGERIA AND THE ATTENDANT CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Tourism is said to be one of the world's fastest growing industry. It generates about 10% of the world's total employment, and has become one of the major sources of foreign exchange earnings for countries whose tourism potentials have been fully developed. The Tourism industry has advantage over other industries because it is consumed at the point of production so that it directly affects the community. It enables communities that are poor in material wealth to use their cultural resources for income generation, it creates a network of different operations such as, Restaurant, Hotels, Sports and many others. Consequently, most stakeholders are aware of these operations and are anxious to enhance tourism development. However, tourism development should be sustainable so as to continuously reap the accruing benefits. To achieve this goal effectively, there is the need to examine tourism effects and problems, with a view to proffering strategic solutions to identified challenges. This study is therefore, not only significant but also imperative. Tourism development should be guided by the potential impacts and problems of tourism development. It was recommended therefore that the host communities should be involved in the management of tourism enterprises under the supervision of the professionals. That the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should do more in rebranding the image of the country and also that, there should be enhanced policy formulation and implementation to enhance the sustainable tourism development.

Key Words: Sustainable Tourism Development, Tourism Effects, Tourism Problems, Tourism Entrepreneurs, Strategic Solutions.

Introduction

Tourism can be referred to as temporary movement of people from their permanent places of residence to other destinations and their wholesome activities in their host area. Such activities include leisure, recreation, entertainment, religious activities and so on. Tourism has become one of the fastest growing industries of the world (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2014). The significance of tourism are numerous and include; employment generation, enhancement of urbanization, conservation, and mutual understanding among different ethnic groups, source of revenue, promotion of local industries among others. (Okpoko & Okpoko, 2002; Iwuagwu, Alex & Lynda, 2015), stated that tourism generates about 10% of the world's total employment. Today, many countries of the world such as the United State of America, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Kenya and many other countries are earning large sums of foreign exchange from tourism activities. Consequently, most stakeholders that are aware of these tourism activities are anxious to develop tourism. However tourism development should be sustainable to ensure the continuous reaping of its benefits. There is therefore, the need to examine tourism effects and problems with a view to proffering strategic solutions to attendant challenges of tourism development, hence this study is not only significant but also imperative now that the government is eager to enhance general economic diversification, youth empowerment and employment generation for sustainable growth and development for the country.

Effects of Tourism

Since the second half of the twentieth century, tourism has been gaining momentum and in 2011, the total revenue from tourism activities stands at 1000 billion dollars (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2012). Compared to other industries, tourism has superior capacity to distribute wealth, promote regional development, and generate goods and services, and higher multiplier effects. However several scholars and researchers have found several examples of negative effects of tourism on the host regions. Positive and negative effects of tourism will be presented in this paper from three points of view; economic, socio-cultural and environmental.

The Economic Effects of Tourism

Tourism business is associated with unique and fragile destinations. It is becoming clear that in some cases, the economic benefits can be shadowed by negative consequences on the community, which were not previously estimated (Dayer, Forsyth & Spur 2004). According to the scholars, although the local communities enjoy the benefits (mainly financial) from tourism activities, they are also the ones who have to face the hidden costs which tourists leave behind. Such hidden costs include expenses on clean up activities, maintenance and repair of physical and

environmental damages caused by tourists' activities. Archer, Cooper and Ruhanen (2005), stressed that increase in local tourism can provide incentive for local products such as agricultural products or souvenirs, and may have greater effect on the welfare of the residents of the local population compared to a more developed region in the same country. Also Okpoko (2002) opined that tourist influx will increase the propensity to import as the host areas strive to satisfy the needs of the tourists, whose needs might not be locally available. In a study (Tosun, Timothy & Ozlurk 2003), noted that although tourism is an economic development strategy, and increases the rate of economic growth, it has however created inequalities between some classes and regions. The inequalities were caused by economic incentives for some sites as tourism destinations at the expense of rural areas. This is a problem of allocation of resources.

Muller and Iansson (2007), Arainru (2017), opined that tourism jobs are mostly seasonal, with low wages and limited opportunities for promotion. Ironically, the objectives of the local communities should be to obtain higher results than the cost they have to pay. Other negative economic effects of tourism include displacement effect, inflation and higher land value (Archer, B., Cooper, C. & Ruhanen, L. 2005)

The Socio-Cultural Effects of Tourism

Tourism is associated with contact between cultures, behaviour, values and traditions. It is a framework where hosts and tourists can learn better from each other through direct interaction. For tourism to flourish, the host communities are to be more responsive and educated to provide quality services to tourists. The interaction between the locals and the tourists generates new ideas, values and motivations for social and economic progress (Bersales 2005, Nyaupane, Morais & Dowler 2006). According to Mason (2003), tourism can revitalize a community's cultural life as art and traditions are attraction for foreign visitors. The socio-cultural effects of tourism cannot be complete without mentioning the fact that tourism enhances globalization and consumerism. Thus tourism generates increase in demand for consumption. This results in emergence of variety of products and services, characterized by modern urban lifestyle, and expectation for high level services (Resinger 2009). However, Resinger pointed out that tourism destroys cultures and generates environmental and social problems such as traffic congestion, unhealthy competition at tourist destinations or centres of attractions.

Globalization is accused of destroying socio-cultural identity of the local communities, indigenous values, traditions and lifestyle (Okpoko, 2002, Odibo, 2017). In many communities, tourism has lead to loss of local traditions, land and coastal areas are being purchased by investors who transform farming and fishing communities into resorts, replacing farms and forests with apartments and shopping centres. This distorts the ecosystem and can lead to pollution, global warming etc.

However it has been argued that tourism alone is not the cause of loss of cultural identity and traditions. According to Liu (2003), the media, by means of modern communication and information technology often play more important role in reengineering the values, opinions, lifestyle and fashion of the world.

Environmental Impact of Tourism

The negative impact of tourism on the environment is the most evident and has become a subject for studies and research recently (Holden, 2009). The development of tourism consumes resources and creates wastes which can lead the degradation of the environment and the ecosystem. Obviously, the environment would suffer the effects construction of hotels, amusement parks, shopping malls, etc. The most common consequences of tourism on the environment include the following; pollution of water, air and soil, depletion of natural resources, soil erosion, changing structure of flora and fauna, traffic congestion, visual impact etc. The natural environment has however benefited from tourism in the following ways: conservation actions, protection of national parks for recreation and protected areas, environmental beautification, awareness creation among others.

Tourism Problems in Nigeria

Tourism problems are the problems that can hinder the development of tourism. Tourism problems are similar to the problems hindering general development. They include the following:

Poor Infrastructure: For tourism to thrive, some infrastructures such as good roads, constant power supply, potable water, good hotels and good communication systems must be made available. Most of the tourist sites in Nigeria are located in rural areas that lack basic infrastructures. This has continued to discourage potential tourists and tourism development. The Nkalagu Obukpa spring site in Enugu State which lacks good road and power supply, the water fountain at Kings Square Benin City which also lacks power supply to keep it working and so on.

Security Challenges: Insurgency, robberies, kidnapping, violent demonstrations and terrorism contribute to the problems of the tourism sector. This problem seems to be worse in the Northern part of Nigeria due to Boko - Haram activities and Fulani cattle rearers in other parts of the country. The insecurity issues can discourage tourist's visitation to the country.

Misrepresentation of Nigeria in Diaspora: Nigeria loses many inbound tourists due to her international image. Nigeria is internationally portrayed as being prone to poverty, illiteracy, hunger, internal displacement, epidemics, robbery, and killings. All these scare away potential tourists visiting Nigeria. To worsen the situation, the international media such as Cable News Network (CNN), BBC,

Aljazeera, and others constantly keep the world abreast with the gory tales of Nigeria's challenges and vices.

Lack of Proper Management: Most of our tourist destinations are poorly managed and the indigenous communities are hardly involved in their management. Our beaches are overcrowded while most of our tourist destinations lack necessities to provide the comfort and satisfaction of tourists. The problem of poor management is worsened by the absence of relevant and accurate data. Porter and Salazer (2005) opined that tourism destinations, if not well managed can create tension and conflicts among the different stakeholders.

Poor Funding: A closer scrutiny of Nigeria's annual budget and considering the fact that tourism is one of the largest employees of labour all over the world, its funding leaves much to be desired. Nigeria seems to have focused on oil and security at the detriment of other relevant sectors such as tourism and agriculture. This has caused development in tourism to be at very slow pace. The poor funding has affected the National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR) in executing her mandate of providing professional training in tourism and hospitality sectors of the economy.

Corruption and Political Unrest: Corruption is said to have eaten deep into Nigerians. Stealing of government fund and budget "padding" has continued to abate. Also, political unrest especially prior to, during and immediately after elections has become endemic. All these make the potential tourists to lose confidence in Nigeria.

Other problems of tourism include poor policy implementation, poor weather conditions especially within the southern Nigeria, lack of sufficient awareness among others. All these are part of the challenges confronting tourism development. Since the benefits of tourism far outweigh the negative effects and problems, there is the urgent need for some strategies to be adopted to solve the problems challenging tourism (Goeldner & Litcher, 2012).

Strategies and Solution to Tourism in Nigeria

Most of the strategies and solutions to tourism problems lie with the government. The numerous benefits of tourism such as economic boost, creation of jobs, would not be attainable if necessary actions are not taken quickly. Some of these measures include the following:

Provision of Adequate Infrastructure: Adequate infrastructure that supports tourism should be provided (Odibo 2017). Such infrastructure include uninterrupted electricity, good road network, sea ports where necessary, enhancing

the medical sector. This will create confidence in the minds of tourists and enhance their satisfaction.

Tackling Security Issues from the Roots: One of the most significant considerations of tourists on their journeys is security issues (NIHTOUR, 2017). No tourist will like to visit destinations where his/her life is endangered. Today, our National Youths Service Corps members are rejecting North-eastern parts of Nigeria because of security issues as it concerns the Boko-Haram insurgents and other religious crises. The root of this crisis can be traced to poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and politicians using the vulnerable youths to achieve their selfish ambition. To enhance security, poverty alleviation programmes should be vigorously pursued. Free and compulsory education embarked upon, and gainful employment opportunities created. The condemnable ‘use’ and ‘discard’ practice which the selfish politicians are subjecting the vulnerable youths to be discontinued.

Rebranding: Concerted effort should be made to create positive image for our country (Nigeria). The strategy to do this effectively should involve the following. Giving honorary awards and reward to dedicated and honest Nigerians, mandating and empowering the National Orientation Agency to create more awareness on the need for patriotism and discipline. In addition the mass media should be mandated to emphasize positive achievements and virtues of Nigerians. All these and more will enhance Nigeria’s international image and inbound tourist visitation. Nigerians should realize that every country has his own bad eggs and that it is our responsibility to make Nigeria better.

Proper Management: The management of tourist destinations should no longer be an all comers’ game. Management is an intellectual specialized activity and should be left for the professionals (Agbadudu,; Agbonifo & Iyayi, 2015). The management of tourist destinations should be handled by trained and experienced professionals. Such professionals will always appreciate the need to involve the local communities where possible so as to create harmonious relationship with the operating environment. This will enhance the peace that is needed for every business to thrive.

Proper Funding: Odibo (2017) opined that there is dismal poor funding of the tourism sector by the Nigerian government. This problem is worsened by infrastructural decay with its consequent greater burden on private tourism developers. Even the National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism established by the Federal Government in 1988 and mandated to ensure professional skill training in tourism and hospitality (NIHOTOUR 2017) is financially handicapped. There is

need for improvement in the areas of instructional materials and teaching environment. The onus lies on both the government and the private sector to remedy the situation to enhance tourism development.

Tackling Corruption: Corruption exists in various forms such as bribery, embezzlement of funds and stealing of government funds. Although the Nigerian government seems to be ready to tackle this problem, everybody should be involved. Also the issue of corruption fighting back should be addressed. A corrupt free society enhances budget implementation, promotes good image and encourages tourism business. Other strategies and solutions to tourism problems include proper policy implementation on tourism sectors, creation of awareness on the need to use tourism to create wealth and abolition of all barriers to tourism etc.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Positive and negative tourism effects can be economic, socio-cultural and environmental. However, there are hidden costs of tourism activities on the host communities. Such hidden costs include clean up expenses, maintenance and repair of physical and environmental damages and so on. The socio-cultural effects of tourism include interaction between people of different cultures which can lead to hybridization of ideas, values, motivation, and pollution among others. The environment might be degraded in the process of constructing infrastructure and superstructure, however infrastructure and superstructure can enhance urbanization and development. Tourism problems include poor infrastructure, security challenges, poor management corruption, poor notion of the country etc. Solutions to tourism problems include; massive provision of infrastructure, tackling security issues from the roots, proper management, rebranding, creation of awareness etc. The following are therefore recommended

Tourism entrepreneurs should take precautionary measures to minimize the hidden cost of tourism activities on the host communities. The host communities should be involved in the management of tourism enterprises. Also, the government should invest more on the provision of infrastructure such as good road network, improved electricity and so on. Moreover, security challenges should be tackled from the root through moral re-orientation and creation of gainful employment opportunities for the people.

Furthermore, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should do more in rebranding the image of Nigeria. There should be enhanced policy formulation and implementation to enhance sustainable tourism development.

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