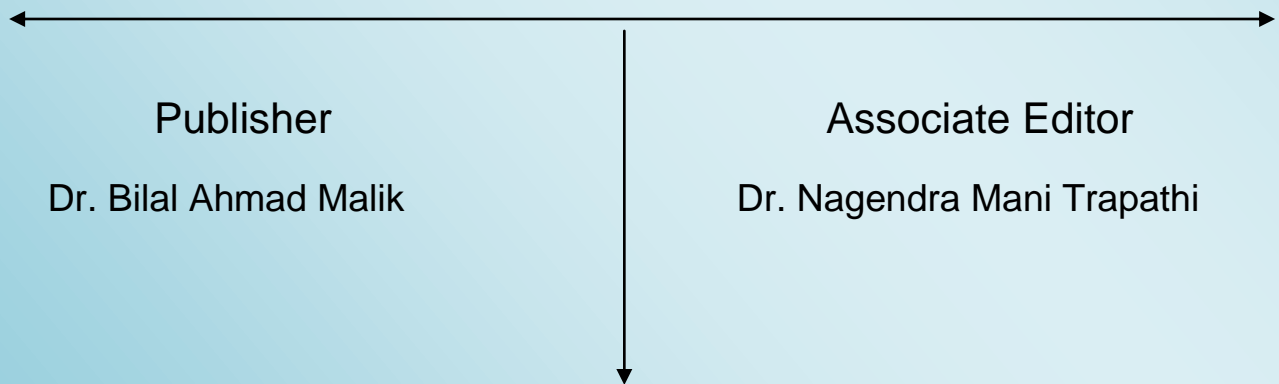


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FOSTERING NATIONAL UNITY THROUGH TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Many countries of the world are adopting various forms of developmental strategies for their progress and unity. The use of tourism is one of those strategies adopted because of its rich and enormous contributions to humanity. In view of the above, the paper is focused on fostering national unity through tourism development in Nigeria. Tourism in Nigeria has been neglected to a large extent. This is shown in the poor or insignificant infrastructural facilities in this fruitful sector. The paper also discovered that tourists' attraction locations are not well developed. Insecurity situation in tourist locations is also a problem. It is however recommended that proper funding in form of loan facilities should be encouraged, policies that enhance tourism development should be fostered and community sensitization for greater participation in tourism development among others is emphasized. If these are heeded tourism would serve as a tool for unity and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: *National Unity, Development, Income, industry, Infrastructure, Strategy, Tourism and Economic growth.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been playing an increasing vital role in the socio-economic development and promotion for Nigeria as one of the fastest growing economies in the world today. Business Day One Line (2015) reported that, in 2014 tourism generated 2.5% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) accounting for 866,000 jobs, 1.3% of the total employment. It has resulted in the employment of tourism as a vital tool for achieving optimum urban integration, steady nation, rural—urban economy, employment generation, and revenue for the government and cultural exchange for internal and external understanding (Ajadi, 2012). Dalat (2010) stated that every developing country of the world is adopting one form of developmental strategy or another to achieve unity, transformation and integration. These are paramount to its economic growth as well as the cultural development. Oluwatoyin

(2011) also observed that tourism is vital for many countries, due to the income generated by economic activities and the opportunity for employment. In the same vein, Kapoor (2011) opined that tourism is one of the valuable attributes to most developing nations of economic growth and as the pivot of the vehicle for economic development. Due to its tremendous economic potentials it has been described as a “smokeless Industry” without serious environmental damage, providing only economic gain without much Stress on the social lives. Against this background, tourism is widely considered to be the world’s largest business enterprise, involving tens of millions of employees and hundreds of millions of customers (Karen 2014). Many people travel to visit friends, in-laws. Grandparents, others travel to visit exotic and interesting places where the natural environment can stimulate their interest, enrich experiences and stabilize their emotions. Many countries of the world are already reaping the fruits of tourism and Nigeria should not continue to miss out of this great opportunity to use her vast lands, unique environment cutting across the thick mangrove forest to the beautiful savannas.

In view of this, the paper is set to examine the impact of tourism development on the nation’s economy for national unity and integration.

TOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Tourism should be considered in terms of the multi-dimensional context of development and it should be managed effectively if it is to optimize the developmental needs of the society. It is therefore necessary to create a general overview of possible implications and impacts that tourism will have on economic and social life of the citizenry (Kapoor, 2011).

In the same way, McAreavey and McDonagh (2011) asserted that tourism brings many benefits including employment, increased social interaction, economic and cultural prosperity in addition to environmental conservation. However, increasing levels of tourism in various areas can potentially harm the environment which attracted the tourists at first instance and conflicts may result. For tourism to truly contribute to sustainable development, its economic benefits must be used to protect the environment and culture of the area. It is however opined that development found in several parts of the world is promoted through integration of different cultures, maintaining landscapes, protecting biodiversity that opens window for employment. Tourism development guide stated that the first step in establishing a viable tourism operation for sustainability is planning. A clearly defined, and evaluated tourism projects have greater chance of success.

Taylor and Bande-Thole (2013) strongly supported that, tourism is a complex phenomenon that covers all movements of People outside their own community for different purpose except migration or regular daily work. However, it is not a single industry but a demand force. Its dynamic nature has led to the continuous modifications and evolution in the industry. The activities engaged in by tourist and the impacts are not only on the economy, but on infrastructure, historical heritages, cultural belief and the environment.

Ayeni (2012) observed that the tourism industry can be transformed to provide economic opportunities to all the stakeholders in the tourism industry which is the kind of economic diversification that mono-culture economies like Nigeria needs at this stage of its development. The indirect effects on the quality of life for a country such as Nigeria where poverty level is high especially as tourism can boost the provision of basic amenities particularly in areas where the tourists attraction are located. As earlier stated, the environment can either facilitate or discourage a tourist from visiting, thus tourism needs to be promoted through the development of attraction areas. The development of those destinations requires the ability and instructional capacity to integrate multiple policies in these areas; considering a variety of culture and human assets. A destination cannot successfully implement the principles of sustainable tourism strategy without the right laws and regulations in place. Legislations should protect all public resources used in tourism industry as prime tourism can offer (Rezarta 2014). Ayeni (2013) stated that tourism is widely acknowledged as having huge financial gains and other benefits. These benefits are largely unexploited and untapped. Nigeria is richly endowed with vast variety of natural and cultural resources ranging from Natural Security, historical relics, and a diversity of cultural attractions.

Today, the vision of beautiful nature is seen on television and electronics. It has become the standard medium for people to view the world tourism resources. This exposes people to images of the world's biodiversity in ways that were impossible generations ago.

TOURISM AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Tourism is emerging as a potent factor in the developing economies, especially in traditional societies. The attraction of tourists both from within a country and outside to visit different parts of the country is mainly because of leisure, recreation, sports, health and historical cum religions (Kapoor, 2011). World Economic Forum (2012) observed that, in recent decades the Travel and Tourism (T & T) sector has increasingly become an important driver of economic prosperity.

According to Vanarith (2013), tourism can push economic growth through foreign exchange generation, alleviation of negative trade balance, a sector less subject to trade restrictions or barriers, a sector with relatively high elasticity of demand compared with primary products labour intensiveness, reduction of regional disparities in income and employment, contribution to government revenues and promotion of image which in turn leads to foreign direct investment. Olorunfemi (2014) supported that tourism travel for predominantly recreation or leisure purposes has become a popular global leisure activity. Tourism is vital for many countries, due to the income generation by the consumption of goods and services by tourist as well as opportunities for employment through hotels, bars, testament hospitality industries among others.

Eja, Otu, Aghor and Inyang (2012) asserted that the need for tourism development was suggested by numerous stakeholders and scholars in this great industry. However the driving mechanism towards this challenge is predicated upon the unavailability of other sub-systems that will pilot this laudable industry and making it more viable. In the same, Akwara, Bin, Abutu und Okwelume (2014) stated that, for proper harnessing, planning, positioning and repositioning our time contributes enormously to the economy of the country. The extent of having vast returns on investment in the tourism industry at any given period is anchored on facilities and polices connected with the industry and adequately trained manpower to manage the sector effectively. Tourism is therefore a business of human relations. It is therefore the availability of competent personnel's in the industry that translates to socio-economic development.

Ayeni (2013) stated that Nigeria has a vast tourism potential ranging from mountains, beautiful landscapes, waterfalls, serenity, and wildlife, among others. She stated that some of these tourism potentials have been converted into income generating sources while others are still left to fallow without any conscious effort by the government and private individuals towards its development. However, Nwankwo and Agboeze (2013) observed the neglect despite the economic relevance of tourism to national, regional and community development. The role of tourism to nation's building is yet to be appreciated, looking at the high rate of unemployment which is having devastating implications on Nigeria economy.

Akwara, et al., (2013) opined that tourism in Nigeria has developed through various phases of our national history. At the governmental level, the development of tourism facilities was taken in a planned manner from the colonial era. This was followed up with the colonialist laying the general groundwork to preserve our national arts and cultural heritage as well as our national forest and games reserves. They emphatically stated that attraction of

people to any tourist destination any where lies on multiple factors. The factors may range from nature of the roads, healthcare system, hotels, recreational facilities and social infrastructure such as peace and security of the destination. All there fosters the rate at which people desire to visit. There are many accruable benefits to the nation's economy when considering tourism as an economic diversification strategy (Odeleye and Oyekanmi, 2013).

Business day online (2015) reported an observation made by the director of Eagle tourism in Cape Town, South Africa, that Nigeria is blessed with tourism potentials that could boost its annual GDP. He said "...in 2014 tourism contributed 2.5 percent of Nigeria's GDP while in South Africa; it contributed 12 percent of GDP in the same period". This is a clear indication that Nigeria still has much ground to cover in terms of reaping from this already ripe tourism industry.

Adeleke (2008) emphasized that Nigeria has several potentials in tourism. He also stated that, about 370 ethnic groups, cultural heritage and abundant natural wonders, unique wildlife and the favourable climatic environment has placed Nigeria in a vantage position among League of Nations currently benefitting from this fruitful industry. Tourism if properly developed to incorporate the society could help promote peace and unity. In addition, it would diversify the economy thereby reducing over dependence on oil for sustenance. Nigerian Tourism Development Co-operation NTPC (2014) emphasized the desire to increase the level of partnership with stakeholders to identify, develop and market Nigerian's diverse tourism opportunities. Mbanefo the director general of the co-operation stated that they are ready to offer diverse world class tourism products geared towards contributing 10 percent to Nigeria's GDP.

Total export earnings generated by international tourism in 2013 reached US \$1.4 trillion, receipts earned by destinations from international visitors grew by 5% in 2014 to reach U S \$ I 159 billion, while an additional US \$218 billion was earned by international passenger transport (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2015). Europe accounts for 42% of all international tourism. Receipts saw the biggest growth in 2013: up to US \$35 billion destinations in Asia accounted for 31% of all tourism receipts, increased earnings by US \$30 billion. The America's has the share of 20% accounting for US \$16 billion while Middle East 4% and receipts of US \$47 billion. Africa accounted for 3% share and US \$34 billion (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2015). The story of Nigeria's tourism is one of the unfulfilled potentials.

THE PLACE OF TOURISM IN THE UNITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

Globally, tourism destination with beautiful and attractive scenery is known to create pleasing experience for tourist (Ayeni 2013). It fosters bonds between the location of visit and the visitors. These encourage business transaction as well as creating other development ties. The United States Institute of Peace,(USIP, 2009) emphasized that tourism can promote unity, peace and stability in developing countries, through the provision of jobs, generation of income and diversifying economy, protecting the environment and promoting intercultural awareness.

Recent numerous development trends as enhanced by tourism have made the propulsive economic work areas with manifold multiplication effects possible. Tourism is the pioneer of integration on level of macro region (Zivorad and Jelena 2009). Tourism is not exclusively a factor of growth and development but a means of communication which engenders co-operation and unity. Interaction between tourists and residents/locals enhances social exchanges. The rich cultural heritage provides a lot of opportunity for tourists to explore and experience Nigeria's vast endowments. Nigeria has so many fabulous cultural celebrations that create interaction between people for unity. Some of them are; Eyo festival in Lagos, Calabar Carnival in Cross rivers state, Oshun Festival in Osun state, Sango festival in Western Nigeria, Ojude Oba Festival in Ijebuland, Ofala festival in Anambra, Argungu fishing festival in Kebbi State (Travel start. 2015). Many people from different places, cultural backgrounds and religion get employed to work together in this industry. Top vacation and sightseeing attractions destination in Nigeria also provides the opportunity for interaction between visitors for instance, Tinapa business resort situated in Calabar, Obudu Mountain Resort, Yankari National Park, Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort, Idanre Hills, Mambilla Plateau, Owu waterfall among others (Infonubia, 2013). However, Vannarith (2013) opined that, regional co-operation for national development and promotion of tourism is recently receiving more political and economic attention, particularly in the context of globalization and regionalization. The country is a major factor in crystallizing regional cooperation and integration while private individuals and developmental partners are supporters of implementing projects that fosters developments and unity. In that light Anny, Eja, Out and Ushie (2009) supported by saying many nations in recent times embrace tourism. Tourism development has urgent benefits ranging from physical indices to economic gains. Socially, it promotes world peace and exposes people to new environments.

Ijasan and Izobo (2014) observed that tourism does enhances community cohesion and promote peace within the host community. This is to say tourism needs a high level of planning and this has to involve the local community in order for them to have a sense of attachment to the sites of visit.

Olorunfemi (2014) supported the argument by saying tourism is not only beneficial to the state's economy rather it focuses on the expansion of international trade by way's of cultural exchanges that will promote better harmony and understanding between the nations. It can be denoted that the tourism industry fosters unity, peace and integration as a result of interaction among parties involved.

BENEFITS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

UNWTO (2004), Odeleye and Ogekanmi (2013) and Naijaedu (2015) highlights the major benefits of tourism as;

- Provision of employment opportunities as a result of the establishment of service stations, car rentals services, restaurants, hotels which creates different levels for employment.
- It fosters national and international cooperation because it brings people from different parts of the world to together in the same atmosphere. For instance, Olumo rock, Tinapa, Yankari games reserves, Obudu hills, Idanre hills etc.
- Tourism industry creates room for foreign exchange earnings in Nigerian economy.
- Tourism has educational value as people that visit Nigeria would have the opportunity of getting firsthand knowledge of places they visited and experience the vast value of African venture of hospitality and warm welcome.
- It enhances and improves the quality of life of host community as it facilitates the building of more houses and other infrastructures in the area.
- Tourism conserves wildlife for good: Some animal species that are almost gone extinct would be preserved and conserved for tourism.
- Tourism is mostly people oriented and it encourages relationships between to foreigners and the locals. For instance all guides in a tourist attraction area are majorly citizens of that particular area.

Vellas (2011) and (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC] 2015) stated that tourism has impact on the economy are which direct, indirect or induced. Direct impacts are expenditures and services rendered in the

sector. Indirect impacts are considered with intermediate Consumption for the production of goods and services that tourism companies purchase from the suppliers in the supply chain. It is particularly important for the production of local products.

Induced impacts deals with expenditure by employees from wages paid by companies in direct contact with tourists. It also includes consumption company's direct and indirect beneficiaries.

CHALLENGES OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The need for sustainable tourism development has been advocated by various stake holders and scholars in this great industry. The driving mechanisms towards this challenge are predicated upon the unavailability of other subsystems that will pilot this laudable industry and make it more viable (Eja, Otu. Agbor and Inyang, 2013).

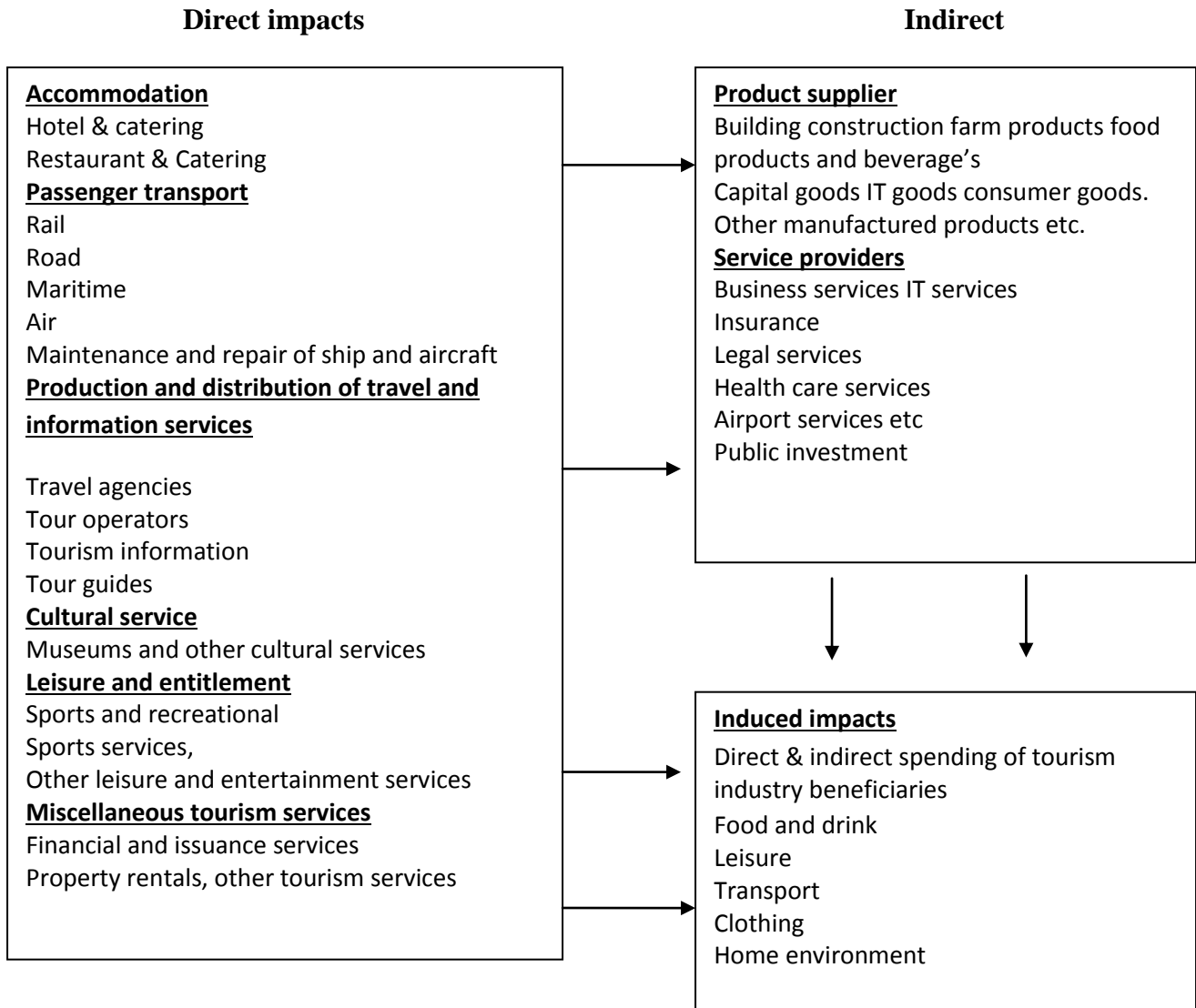
Constanta and Gabriel (2012) stated that tourism benefits and competitive advantages as well as disadvantages and negative values are found simultaneously. It can be that insufficient and inadequate facilities, lack of qualified personnel, lack of diversity, low capacity utilization can be subdued and have minimal impact on future tourism development. A major problem to tourism development is lack of finance and chaotic management practiced in most establishments of its kind in the area.

Against the foregoing, UNWTO (2015) observed that, key challenges must be addressed if peace enhancing benefits from this industry are to be realized. Investments in infrastructure and human capacity development should be encouraged alongside the development of comprehensive natural strategies and adoption of robust regulatory framework mechanisms to maximize in country foreign currency carryings and efforts to reduce crime and corruption.

USIP (2009) emphatically stated that "thriving in tourism requires more than just an absence of conflict". It can be noted that several other structural problems within Nigeria has contributed a great deal towards complicating effort of building a strong and efficient tourist sector. These are poor infrastructure ranging from badly maintained roads, rails, air and water transportation. This will definitely increase the stress of tourists traveling from one destination to another. Some locations in the Niger Delta regions are almost completely cut off from the rest of the world. Another major barrier to tourism development in Nigeria is high rate of neglect and lack of strategy leading to difficulty in coordinating developmental plans. In the same vein, the governments do

not posses accurate and complete figures of the number of international arrivals and departures in the countries. These problems deter prospective tourists from visiting Nigeria. If drastic measures are not taken to curb these problems, the sector may remain unsustainable.

SUMMARY OF DIRECT, INDIRECT AND INDUCED IMPACTS OF TOURISM



Source: adapted from Vellas (2011): the indirect impact of tourism

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the foregoing:

1. The communities where tourist's attraction features are located should be encouraged and empowered through training to enhance greater participation in tourism development
2. Awareness and sensitization should be organized through public private partnership to foster tourism. This will aid in revealing the importance of tourism to the citizens as well as efforts in transforming some potential sites.
3. Proper funding of the sector by the government should be encouraged to facilitate establishments of new and rehabilitation of old dilapidating structures.
4. Policies that facilitate tourism development should be implemented to foster the income generated from tourism.
5. Schools, churches mosques and other social organizations should facilitate excursions/fieldtrips to tourist attraction areas. This would go along way in arousing the interests of students in the sector.
6. Small scale industries should be encouraged to establish their businesses around the tourist attraction areas to enable direct services for tourists.
7. Employment of professional personnel's should be encouraged in the sector to enhance better condition of service output.
8. Hotels and hotel staff should provide sound service to ensure visitors are motivated to visit as often as possible.
9. Provision of adequate security in hotels and tourists attraction areas to ensure safe environment.

CONCLUSION

The State of tourism in Nigeria when compared with the global trend has not been encouraging. It is supposed to be a source of peace, income, and prosperity. Tourism has been playing increasing vital role in socio-economic development though on a small scale as one of the fastest growing economy in the world today. It was discovered that this sector is however neglected and plagued with numerous challenges ranging from poor transportation network, bad hotel facilities, and poor nature of sites among others. The authors noted that for Nigeria to be among the League of Nations benefiting from this sector, pragmatic economic approaches towards tourism development should be taken.

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