
ANNEXING TOURISM POTENTIALS AS A TOOL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Tourism industry is a rapid growing sector which if well managed can accrue resources that can be used for the development of host communities and the country at large. It is therefore important to appraise the extent at which this development affects other sectors of the economy. Unfortunately, there problems which hinder the full development of tourism and its potentials from full utilization. This write-up studies problems being faced by tourism in Nigeria. These problem include neglecting of the tourism sector by the government, lack of adequate awareness of tourism destination, lack of accessibility, poor infrastructures, lack of skilled personnel, lack of exploration and development of under developedof tourism potential. Furthermore, the research focuses on the development of tourism in term of tourism resources to be tapped and attempt to develop these potentials by recommending for their proper utilization.

Introduction

In an effort to improve the level of social and economic prosperity, developing countries in general and Africa countries in particular, have in recent times been considering tourism as an economic tool for development, whose potentials must be tapped, developed and adequately managed. To many the developed countries of the world tourism has made a major input to their developmental process (Tourism seminar organized by Nigeria Tourism Board Abuja 2001). Development is a concept, which has many meanings; for most countries, it is essentially, seen as a measure of economic progress and a control of economic meltdown. Development indications centres on changes in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Product(GNP) or per capital income , although these concept are usually quite difficult to quantify, especially in developing countries as statistical data is scarce and usually unreliable.

Tourism is a great industry to be tapped because the oil industry which is responsible for about 90% of the nation's income is the fluctuating in fortune in the international market with adverse consequence on the nation's foreign exchange earnings, had more than ever before necessitated the need for alternative source of income for the nation. The federal and state governments are now showing concern towards the development and management of tourism, which would be an opportunity to diversity the revenue generation base of the country.

Tourism could be seen as a relationship and phenomena arising out of the journeys and temporary stay of peoples travelling primarily for leisure or recreational purposes.

Many writers have highlighted some aspects of tourism and recreational or leisure activities. Some gave the definition of tourism based on the contemporary nature of the movement of the tourist.

Diegues (1997) Describes tourism as one of the world's fastest growing industries. He explains further that estimates suggest that it currently generate \$423 billion in revenue annually and this figure is expected to rise to \$6.3 billion by 2007 which will account for roughly 11% of the global economy.

Diegues (1997) furthermore, sees tourism as “ a metaphor for wealth creation as different from money creation”. Tourism will create wealth because it requires creativity, that is, the ability to prove cash flow in terms of cultural festivals. It is not diminishing asset as oil for so long as man continuity to express himself as a cultural being, tourism will continue to grow. Tourism is becoming an important industrial and commercial sector in Nigeria. Ukpanah (1999), emphasizes that tourism has been influenced by improved communication, education, higher income improved weekend activities and retirement benefits.

Government policies on tourism and budgetary allocation on sites and activities associated with recreation in Nigeria has boosted the socio-economic importance of tourism industry in Nigeria.

Jafari (2000) identifies tourism as being more than almost any other branch of industry both as an expression and instrument of Globalization which goes hand in hand with structural adjustment and structural change. This means that there is a close interrelationship between the international tourism industry and the structural changes of the nineties.

Ailmen(1988) states that tourism development is a dynamic process and is conducted in an ever changing environment, a blend of economic, political, cultural, technological and geographical realities of events. The central task of development is to keep fit between the development opportunities and industrial capabilities, both of which are determined by its external and internal environment respectively.

The duration of these stays may vary. For statistical purpose, a four night (4) minimum is commonly accepted for domestic tourism but stays of only twenty-four hours are universally recognized in the case of international tourism (Diegues 1997). Tourism primarily involves people who are visiting a particular place for sightseeing, enjoying beautiful scenery, seeing interesting peoples, enjoying historical and geographical sources of attraction, taking vacation and having good time. They may spend their time engaging in various activities such as sports, singing and taking rides, touring and reading or simply savouring the beauty of an environment.

The development of tourism in Nigeria is at its infancy; hence, tourism has only recently become a known factor that the provision and development of facilities at the tourist centers are lower ebb. The non-availability of infrastructure and non-updating of the existing ones especially, transport facilities and accommodation services, should be property cared for. Hence for effectiveness, the following will be reviewed, the type of people visiting the tourist centers, the problems militating against the development the linkage of these problems with the patronage, the effect of these to tourist resort centers on the development of various regions.

The concepts of tourism have been broadened to include various forms of “Businesses” and vocational travel which will attract remunerated employment, sources of income and catalyst development within the destination.

Poon (1999) claimed that sustainable tourism would lead to the management of all resources in a way that the economic, social and cultural integrity, essential ecological processes biological diversity and the life support system would be sustained. Bayowa (1993) in a presentation that was laced with much statistical data, highlights the product of some

selected countries with France having a share capital of 605 Billion in year 2000.

To this tourism is considered to be one of the industries capable of generating and offering a good number of employment opportunities for the people. In other words, it is an integral part of the socio-economic development projects necessary to improve the revenue base on the nation.

Afolabi (1993) identifies the lack of promotional funds as a constrains to the development of tourism in Nigeria. Ndaiye (2002) has also remarked that because of low level of development, tourism is an area where planners and tourism promoters in the continent must meet and jointly find out how to promote and develop the image of African and the tourism industry.

Okoro (2000) concludes that tourism is a complex and vulnerable industry, which depends on the development of a positive urge to succeed.

Economic Importance of Tourism to Host Country

1. Provision of employment opportunities

The provision of job is one of major beneficial effect of tourism as people are directly and indirectly employed at tourist resort centres. According to World Tourism Organization (W.T.O) (2004), Tourism is regarded to as a real source of employment for a significant number of people, of which 130 million people are employed in the sector worldwide.

In Ekiti State Nigeria for instance, despite the fact that most people are engaged in farming, a proportion of the people are employed at various tourist centres, either as skilled or unskilled workers. Some work as tourism professionals while others are employed to provide support service for the industry e.g the restaurants, bars and traders. Since Tourism industry provides employment opportunities for

people, it is therefore a source of income generation to individuals who are directly and indirectly employed in the sector.

2. Contribution to Government Revenue

Tourism is a great income generation force, not only to individual but also to the government; it has been regarded as a money-spinner (World Tourism Organization (W.T.O), (2004). Revenue generated by the government from the tourism sector that can be categorized as direct contributions are those originating from taxes in income from tourism employment and tourism business, and by direct levied or departure taxes indirect contribution are those originating from tax and duties on goods and services supplied to tourism.

In Nigeria (2003), the minister of culture and tourism stated that, Nigeria made an excess of two billion Naira (₦2,000,000,000) in tourism during the Commonwealth games held in Abuja, from sources such as hotel accommodation, transportation, sales of arts and crafts equipment hiring etc.

3. Boost in Foreign Exchange Revenue

The promotion of tourism in developing countries like Nigeria offers prospect of substantial foreign exchange earning that reduces the nation's dependence on petroleum and other primary exports, no wonder, the Atlantic Provinces economic Council (APEC, 1987) describes tourism as Export that does not go anywhere.

Tourism expenditure are the export and import related goods and services that generate income to the host country and can stimulate the investments necessary to finance growth in other economic sectors.

4. Stimulation of Infrastructural Development

Tourism can induce the government to make infrastructural improvements, such as water and sewage, roads, electricity, telephone and public transport networks, which can improve the quality transport networks, which can improve the quality of life of residents in the adjoining area, as well as facilitate tourism.

Some individual investors in the Tourism sector like multi-national Hoteliers often take it as their civic responsibility to provide public infrastructures to the community where they operate.

5. **Contributions to Local Economy**

Tourism can significantly be an essential part of the local economy, by improving the standard of people living in the environment. As the environment is a basic component of the tourism industry's assets, tourism revenues are often used to measure the economic value of its area of location. Tourism also projects host communities to limelight e.g.lkogosi town is one of the most popular town in Ekiti State, simply because of its warm spring tourist attraction.

6. **Promotion of world Peace and Ethnics**

Tourism is capable of promoting world peace and Ethicist. For instance, President OlusegunObasanjo (2004) explained that "if we are going to have outstanding personalities as tourists, we must ensure peace, love and hospitality, so that they will be most welcome, without which tourism can never flourish.

7. **Increase in General Standard of Living**

Tourism industry provides job employment and a source of income generation to people, as well as contribution to government revenue and source of foreign exchange. It therefore indirectly ensures an improvement and increases in the general standard of living of the people, since all resources derived from tourism is used for the improvement of man and community.

8. **Re-Distribution of Opportunity for Investment**

Within the tourism industry, there are lots of investment opportunities like hotel, picnic centres, holiday inn etc, which can be distributed all over desired regions.

9. **Aids Land Use Diversification**

Recreational land use under which tourism falls, is one of the various land uses which Tourism planners include in land allocation. Proper land use planning helps to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in the compact ability, functionality, comfort as well as convenience in various elements within the environments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are here projected:

1. Government should provide necessary infrastructure and other investments, incentives Publicity and regulations, while the private investors should be allowed to develop and manage various tourist destination sites.
2. Tourism Board should not hesitate to explore and imitate current innovations on the development and management of all the tourist centres in the country. As well as seek innovative ways by which the underdeveloped tourism potentials can be developed and put to use within the nation.
3. Adequate and effective publicity should be carried out within and outside the country showcasing to the world all the tourism potentials in the country.

This can be through jingles in the media, souvenirs distribution of brochure and pamphlets.

4. Accessibility as well as transport facilities should be adequately provided by the government for the concerned investors in order to
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encourage the exploration and development of new tourism potentials.

Conclusion

The importance of tourism all over the world, no doubt is great. It generates high level of revenue, employment opportunities, contributes to local economies and stimulate friendly relationship. These potentials are yet to be appreciated in Nigeria, this may be attributed to general incompetence of the tourism officials or due to low level information about the attribute of tourism. This study of no doubt has succeeded in appraising the potential inherent in tourism and the attributes associated with it.

Tourism has the potential of exercising vested influence over world peace, understanding and certain degree of prosperity. If adequately planned, controlled and well-coordinated, it can be useful mechanism to development and control economic problems.

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