

# TOURISM CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN NIGERIAN: A CASE STUDY OF BENIN CITY

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Tourism encounters many challenges which need to be identified and addressed. This study was carried out to identify the various challenges to tourism in Nigeria with Benin City as the case study. Questionnaire copies were designed and administered in the various locations of Benin city, addressing the study objectives and hypotheses. Data were subjected to statistical analysis. Results showed that touristic activities in the area are at low level due to economic hardship and this is rubbing the city of its contribution to the national economy. Tourism in Benin City is grossly affected by factors such as lack of preferred destination, lack of consistency in policy, erratic power-supply, bad road networks, insecurity and perennial conflicts, investor and tourist unfavourable environment, among others. It is recommended that the government should create an enabling environment for both investors and tourists, as this will fasten the development of tourism in Nigeria*

**Keywords:** *Tourism, Nigeria, Bencity City.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism in Nigeria is quite diverse due to rich culture, oil scenery, nature, lifestyle, religion, and IT and telecommunications. However, culture is the

strongest segment in the Nigerian tourism industry known to be a multi-cultural country with over 500 ethnic groups (Oladele and Koyi, 2002). Nigerians are also involved in out-bound tourism and tend to visit overseas countries like United Kingdom, United States of America, South Africa, Dubai and recently Ghana for reasons such as proximity, friends and relatives, leisure, social status, education and business. In-bound tourism in Nigeria could be traced back to early and mid-1900s during the time of missionaries followed by the discovery of oil, leading to the arrival of business tourists interested in our oil (Lanre, 2006).

Nigerian culture has recently received some acknowledgements from both the public and private sector resulting in events like Calabar Carnival, Abuja Carnival, Argungu Festival, among others. The industry is generally opening up to the global tourism trend and developments. Today, we see international brands like Nokia, Swatch, Tm Lewin, and Nandos evolving in cities like Lagos while already existing international hotel brands like the Hilton, Sheraton, Protea and Le Meridien are going all out to uphold their brand image and identity in the competitive industry (Giwa, 2010).

Top attraction in Nigeria for both domestic and international tourists include the Transcorp Hilton in Abuja, Obudu Cattle Ranch in Cross River State, Le Meridian in Uyo, Tinapa in Cross River State, and Silver Bird Galleria in Lagos. Shopping is fast becoming a thriving sector in Nigeria and poses an encouraging consumer psychology for the industry. It tends to be influenced by a certain desire to attain some form of social status and value for money (Wole, 2007).

Most countries in the world make millions of Dollars from tourism by developing and maintaining their natural and man-made sites. Despite the numerous advantages accruable to cities with tourism potentials, not much attention was paid to the development of tourism in Benin City. For tourism to flourish in developing cities, like Benin City, the government of the state must commit to ensuring the living standard of such a state

citizenry be improved upon. This will go a long way in creating motivation for leisure travel (Shaibu, 2004). Tourism potential needs to be harnessed, packaged and marketed to generate income for physical development and for the improvement of the welfare of the citizenry.

Benin City has a lot of tourist attractions but these tourist centers are faced with enormous challenges that have made them to be under-utilized, thereby, bringing little income to the city, state and country. The full potentials of these industries need to be fully employed. This study was aimed at identifying the various tourism centres in Benin City, examining their challenges, ascertaining the impact of tourism in developing the economy, examining the tourism challenges and establishing the prospect against the backdrop of the Nigeria's experience.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Characteristics of tourism**

Four main characteristics of tourism may be identified conceptually:

- (i) Tourism arises from a movement of people to and their stay in various destinations.
- (ii) There are two elements in all tourism, the journey to the destinations; the journey and the stay taking place outside the normal place of residence and work.
- (iii) The movement to destinations is of temporary, short term character, with intention to return within a few days, weeks or months.
- (iv) Destinations are visited for purposes other than taking up permanent residence of employment.

### **Primary factors, nature and opportunitie of tourism in Nigeria**

How important any geographical unit is as a tourist destination or how important it is potentially is determined by four primary factors: attraction, accessibility, amenity, and organization (Medlik, 2006). Nigeria offers a

wide variety of tourist attractions such as extended and roomy river, ocean beaches ideal for swimming and other water sports, unique wildlife, vast tracts of unspoiled nature ranging from tropical forest, magnificent waterfalls, some new rapidly growing cities and climatic conditions in some parts particularly conducive to holidaying (Ogilvie, 2005). The lack of required modern infrastructural facilities and in some parts of the country, acute conditions of underdevelopment and poverty can be seen which many potential Nigeria-bound tourists may not like to be confronted with (Shadare, 2007).

A tourism policy was produced in 1990 with the basic objective of making Nigeria the ultimate tourism destination in Africa. The main thrust of the government policy on tourism is to generate foreign exchange, encourage even development, promote tourism-based rural enterprises, generate employment and accelerate rural urban integration and cultural exchange (Bolade and Eghene, 2006).

#### **Problems associated with tourism in Benin City**

According to Ojo (2002),

- a) Tourism is the fastest growing economic sector in Benin City, but it is faced with factors or challenges that militate the growth.
- b) Tourism in the city is at low level, not only because of the economic hardship, but because of “all the ingredients like a national carrier, good hotels and others that make for a preferred destination are not there.
- c) Lack of consistency in policy has militated against the city becoming a preferred tourism destination.
- d) Benin City also has erratic power supply, bad road network, insecurity and perennial conflicts, magnificent slums, investor or tourist unfavourable environment, lack of enabling environment for the private sector involvement, lack of pipe borne water supply, issue of insecurity or poor safety reputation, economic hardship or no

adequate fund for tourism development, lack of consistency in policy, lack of development and packaging of tourist products, and shortage of trained manpower.

Some of the many tourist centers or centers of attraction in Benin City are Emotan Statue, Museum, the tomb of Aroso, Igun Street, EgbegeNokaro, the Benin Moat (Iya), Chief Ogiamien’s house, and Holy Aruosa Cathedral.

**METHODOLOGY**

Five hundred copies of questionnaire were distributed randomly among selected groups of people in Benin City. Four hundred and seventy five were returned and the respondents co-operated positively. Each number in the frequency as tabulated in the band and their percentage.

**Table 4.1: Distribution of respondents by sex**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	300	63.2
Female	175	36.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: *Field Survey, 2015.*

**Table 4.2: Distribution of respondents by age group**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18-27	124	26.1
28-37	319	67.2
38-47	24	5.0
48 and above	8	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: *Field Survey, 2015.*

**Table 4.3: Distribution of respondents by marital status**

<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Single	202	42.5
Married	164	34.5
Widowed	84	17.7
Divorced	25	5.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: *Field Survey, 2015.*

**Table 4.4: Distribution of respondents by occupation**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Students	120	25.3
Self employed	110	23.1
Civil servant	245	51.6
Unemployed	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: *Field Survey, 2015.*

**Table 4.5: Do you think that tourism in Benin City is faced with enormous challenges?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	305	64.2
No	170	35.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

**Table 4.6: Is the government of the city doing anything about it?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	161	33.9
No	314	66.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2015*

**Table 4.7: Are the tourist attraction in the city worth visiting?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	95	20
No	380	80
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2015*

**Table 4.8: Is tourism contributing to the development of the city?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	74	15.6
No	401	84.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2015*

**Table 4.9: Is there any plan to the Challenge of tourism in the city?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	67	14.1
No	408	85.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2015*

**Table 4.10: Are there investors who are ready to invest in tourism potentials of the city?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	74	15.6
No	401	84.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

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Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

**Table 4.11: Can the tourist attractions in the city yield returns if they are developed?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
High	380	80.0
Moderate	77	16.2
Low	18	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

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Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

**Table 4.12: Is Nigeria a preferred tourist destination?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	113	23.8
No	362	76.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

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Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

**Table 4.13: Can tourism contribute to the national economy?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	360	75.8
No	115	24.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2015.**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Table 4.1 showed that 300 respondents representing 63.2% are male and 175 representing 36.8% are female meaning that the work force is dominated by male. The implication of this is that there are more male in the work force of Tourist Centre in Benin-City.

Table 4.2 revealed the distribution of respondents by age group and its showed that the respondents are between 18-27 years are 124 and from 26.1%, 28-37 years are 319 in number and forms 67.2%, 38-47 years are only 24 in number and forms 5.0% and have the smallest percentage of the total population. This implies that the majority of the staff of tourist centre in Benin city are youth that have agility to work.

Table 4.3 showed that 202 respondents representing 42.5% are single, 164 respondents representing 34.5% are married and 25 respondents representing 5.3% of the divorces. The implication of this is that majority of the workers in Benin City Tourist centre are single.

In Table 4.4, the percentage of the respondents that are students are 120 which form 25.3% the self-employed, 110 which form 23.1% and the civil servant 245 which form 51.6% while the non-employed is zero percent. This implies that the percentage of the students and the civil servant was higher compared to the self employed.

From Table 4.5, it can be seen that 64.2% of the respondents identified that tourism in Benin City is faced with enormous challenges. The implication of this is that tourist centre in Benin City is facing a lot of challenges

Table 4.6 showed that 33.9% agreed that the government of the City is doing something about it while the other 66.1% disagreed that the government is doing something about it. This implies that the government of Benin City does is not doing anything about the problems the centre is facing.

In Table 4.7, it can be seen that 20% of the respondents identified that the tourist attractions in the City is worth visiting and the other 80% respondent identified that the tourist attraction is not worth visiting. Therefore tourist attractions in Benin City are not worth visiting.

Table 4.8 shows that 15.6% of the respondent agreed that tourism contribute to the development of the City, while 84.4% of the respondent disagreed that tourism contributes to the development of the City. The implication of this is that tourism does not contribute to the development of Benin-City.

Table 4.9 showed that 14.1% of the respondent identified that there is plan to proffer solutions to tourism in the City, while 85.9% of the respondent identified that there is no plan to proffer solutions to tourism in the City. This implies that there is no plan to proffer solutions to the challenges facing the Tourist Centre in Benin City.

From Table 4.10, it can be seen that 15.6% of the respondent identified that there are no investors who are ready to invest in tourism of the City, while 84.4% of the respondent agreed that there are investors who are ready to invest in tourism of the City. The implication of this is that there are investors who are ready to invest in the tourism of Benin City.

Table 4.11 showed that 80.0% of the respondents identified that tourism potential can only yield moderate returns if invested on, while 16.2% identified that tourism potential will yield high return if invested on, only 3.8% identified that tourism will yield low return if invested on. This implies that tourist potential in Benin city can yield moderate returns if invested on.

Table 4.12 showed that 23.8% of the respondents identified that Benin city is a preferred tourist destination while 76.2% of the respondent identified that Benin city is not a preferred tourist destination. This implies that Benin City is not a preferred tourist destination.

### **Summary of finding**

It was discovered that tourism is essentially the industry that provides tours and services to tourists, and for tourism to flourish in a developing economy of the any City, the government of such society must take it upon itself the responsibility of ensuring that the living standard of such citizenry is improved upon as this will go a long way for leisure travel.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study revealed that, apart from the challenges such as poor road network which the present government is attended to, there are also low investment, low patronage and poor awareness of the existence of these destinations. Benin city is blessed with many tourists centres which if they are adequately harness and develop could lead to total transformation and development of the city. In light of this, I hereby conclude that the impact of tourism cannot be over emphasized on both the citizens and economy of the city.

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended for the growth and development of tourism in the City.

1. Government has to come in and create an enabling environment both for investors and tourism (which includes provision of infrastructural facilities, harnessing of the tourist attractions in terms of packaging and marketing) etc.
2. The people of Benin City should see tourism as a castor that fastens the economic growth of a City and embrace it.
3. Investors, both foreign and local should come invest in the abundant tourism potentials of the City.

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