

MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM SERVICES IN NIGERIA: A PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ONDO STATE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

Governments across the Globe have been made rich through active participation in tourism activities. Hence, nations over the globe are beginning to see the need to promote tourism activities because of this and other obvious advantages derived from such exercise. Investing in its development in Nigeria, particularly in Ondo state, would be a rewarding experience to the investors. Tourism potential in Nigeria is likened to gold littered in a field and literally waiting to be picked. This paper tries to identify ways in which sustainable tourism can be introduced in Ondo State of Nigeria. It recommends sustainable strategies for marketing and developing tourism services, including Game Reserves, Parks, Holiday resorts, Camps, hotels of different types, Protection and conservation of wildlife and establishment of conservation areas for use by tourists.

Introduction

Learning about the impact of tourism has led many people to seek more responsible holidays. These include various forms of alternative or sustainable tourism, such as nature-based tourism, business tourism, education tourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism. According to Groth (2000), sustainable tourism is becoming so popular that what we presently call alternative will be the mainstream in a decade. Hall and Lew (1998) saw tourism as one of the world's fastest growing industries and a major source of income for many countries. Being a people-oriented industry, tourism also provides many jobs, which have helped revitalize local economies. Tourism is no doubt an important aspect of the commercial entity of a nation. It is the harnessing of God's gifts to mankind – "Dress the earth and keep it" (The Holy Bible).

All tourism activities of whatever motivation – holidays, business travel, conferences, adventure travel, and ecotourism - need to be sustainable. Sustainable tourism, according to Groth (1998), is tourism that respects local people and the traveler, cultural heritage and environment. It seeks to provide people with an exciting and educational holiday that is also of benefits to the people of the host country.

Sustainable development is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present but in the indefinite future. The field of sustainable development can be conceptually broken into three constituent parts: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and socio-political sustainability.

There is the need to identify ways in which sustainable tourism can be introduced in Ondo State of Nigeria, bearing in mind that nations are beginning to see the need to promote tourism activities because of the obvious advantages derived from such exercise. This paper tries to explore the characteristics and objectives of sustainable tourism through series of inferences.

Literature Review

According to Hall and Lew (1998), Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries. In some states, the United States of America (U.S.A.), for example, there were about 25.3 million international tourism arrivals in 1969. By 1990, the figure rose to 425 million, 17 times the earlier figure. By 1997, it rose to 613 million. The world Tourism Organization (WTO) forecasts that this figure may be more than doubled to 1.6 billion people in 2020.

The three top receiving regions will be Europe (717 million tourists), East Asia and the Pacific (392 million). The Pacific, South Asia, the Middle East and Africa have forecasted records of growth rates.

The importance of this growth in tourism can be seen by the fact that travel and tourism generated 11% of the world GDP in 1999; spending on international tourism reaching US \$ 453 billion. In addition, the tourism industry employed 200 million people or 8% of total world employment. In 2002, the United Kingdom (UK) ranked the 7th country in international tourism earnings, after the USA, Spain, France, Italy, China and Germany.

According to Harrison (1992), tourism is a major source of income and employment for many countries particularly in Africa where it can assist in addressing problems of poverty.

Factors for the rapid development and growth of tourism include:

- Rising living standards and especially increased leisure time, which has allowed many people in Europe to take longer holidays and travel to distant parts of the world. Many industrializing countries, like Asia and Latin America, are also becoming international tourism targets.
- Advances in transport technology following the introduction of the first passenger jet services in the 1950s and the development of the jumbo jet, which allow for relatively inexpensive long-distance journey/travel.
- Long period of relative political stability have made people feel safe venturing to new and unknown places.

- Advances in communication technology – Televisions, movies, and other media have stimulated interest in other parts of the globe by showing attractive and exciting images of distant places.
- The tourism industry has become highly professional and has promoted travel holidays through well financed advertising campaigns.

The world's largest tourism organization, the World Tourism Organization (WTO), had 138 countries as members as at 1999 and over 350 affiliates from local government, tourism associations and private companies such as airlines, hotel groups and tour operators. WTO is an affiliate of United Nations (UN) with responsibilities for the promotion and development of tourism with a view to contributing to economic growth, international understanding, peace, prosperity and universal respect for and observance of human and fundamental freedom for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language and religion. It has also expanded its charter to include both social and environmental responsibilities. At the 1998 conference, the Secretary General of WTO, Francesco Frangialli, said that:

Through tourism, WTO aims to stimulate economic growth and job creation, provide incentives for protecting the environment and heritage destinations, and promote peace and understanding among all nations for the world ... tourism is a labour intensive sector that can alleviate poverty through its capacity to create jobs especially in rural areas and among women and indigenous people. There will be a huge need for infrastructure and for systems that protect the environment (WTO, 2000).

Relevance of Tourism to a Nation's Economy

Everyday that passes by witnesses a massive movement of people from one place to another either for business, leisure or sight seeing. These movements have become the most performed activity of mankind. The need to make such movement interesting and business-like is the

essence of tourism. Harrison (1992), France (1997) and Umaisha (2001) posit that tourism has no doubt assumed an important position in a nation's economy. Since tourism has become an important business, efforts must be geared towards developing the tourism sector in order to ensure that it is properly marketed.

This will bring about the following gains among others:

1. It will improve the standard of living of the people.
2. It will bring in more revenue to the government and organizations
3. It will create greater awareness for the state.
4. It will create more job opportunities for the people and help to minimize unemployment, restiveness and acrimony.
5. It will also help shifting the people's mind – set from rural – urban drift to urban – rural drift
6. It will help promote the people's potentials in the area of culture, monument, beaches and arts.

Tourism in Nigeria

Nigeria is a country of tremendous tourism potential with dramatic scenic beauty, incredible history and cultural diversity. Therefore, investing in tourism development in Ondo State in particular and Nigeria in general would be a rewarding experience, especially in the development of game reserves, parks, resorts, holiday homes, camps, hotels of different types and the development of conservation areas for use by tourists, protection and conservation of wildlife, natural resources management and so forth. Examples of nations that have developed its tourism potentials which derived benefit from Nigerians through positive patronage include Israel, Kenya, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Dubai. Today, they are still gaining from this patronage as it contributes to the growth of their economy while some of these nations live wholly on the proceeds from tourism.

In his mission statement, Kayode (2008) alludes to the fact that appropriate policies and programmes are already in place to ensure the growth of tourism industry. He said if the right approaches to issues are addressed and adopted, Nigeria will be on the path to sustainable

development in tourism. He noted that effective contribution of the sector to national development depends on the re-engineering of agencies under the tourism ministry. According to him, government had drafted policies designed to promote and market tourism in Nigeria, but the only economic strategy remaining to enhance its revenue base is market. However, the problems militating against the sector are man-made, one of which is the development of strategic infrastructure. Some analysts call for an urgent need to address security concerns, epileptic power supply, poor state of roads and unreliable public transportation system.

There is also the need to tackle poor public sanitation in most towns and cities in Nigeria. Inadequate infrastructure in Nigeria precipitates to making tourism sites located outside the cities not only expensive to reach but also risky coupled with the incessant kidnaps occasioned by the activities of the so-called militants in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria that is gradually spreading to other parts of the country. These in essence deter some visitors and maintaining tourism centres/sites in the country. Government should take the bull by the horn to ensure that sanity is maintained in our society. Certainly the government cannot solve these problems alone; there is the need for partnership to optimize its potential and have a clearer picture of the needs of the sector and areas that need to be developed. This partnership will offer a vista of opportunity for people to experience in current tourism development in the world.

To create more awareness and to successfully market tourism in Nigeria, certain strategies mentioned below should be designed and put in place:

Provision of Infrastructural Facilities

Tourism is an industry that depends on adequate infrastructural facilities. Therefore, basic infrastructures, such as regular electricity supply, water, telephone and good road networks to all tourism sites, should be put in place.

Formulation of Policies and Guidelines

Nigerian government should formulate and pursue tourism policies towards achieving the three elements that underlie all tourism policies. These elements are:

- i. Visitors satisfaction
- ii. Environmental protection, and
- iii. Adequate reward for developers.
- iv.

Also, the following acceptable most beneficial and least destructive to the community guidelines for the development of tourism should be recognized:

Economic: Tourism should create jobs and income for local residents and government.

Subsistence: Tourism should not conflict with resident's use of subsistence resources.

Social: Tourism should be controlled to minimize impact on the present way of life

Cultural: Tourism should emphasize respect for and knowledge of native culture.

Environment: Tourism should maintain the existing level of environment quality.

Tourist offices should be set up in all the states and local government headquarters to create awareness of what tourism is all about and where these products are located so that citizens should be friendly and accommodating to visitors. The tourism office should educate and motivate the tourist about tourism beauty of the country and in the same vein guards and drivers are to be properly trained.

Tourism operators are to participate with the organized private sectors to develop the sector. Promotional strategies should be vigorously mapped out on how the tourism products could be marketed. Such strategies could be achieved through advertisement on televisions, radios, newspapers, and so forth. Audio visual aids are

media of expression capable of informing, entertaining and educating their viewers about cultures and beliefs of their destinations.

Each ethnic group of the state has unique culture and tradition, history, arts and handcrafts. These need to be tapped and advertised to the outside world to attract international tourists. Mobile films should be shown at every local government headquarters and state capitals. The films could be sold as souvenirs at international hotels, on-board national aircraft operating international routes and the souvenirs could be sold at various high commissions and embassies all over the world.

Organizing cultural festivals at specific period to attract both local and foreign tourists and participation in both national and international trade fairs, where the nation's tourism products could be displayed, should be exploited. Already, Nigeria is endowed with various cultural troupes across the country that entertain visitors occasionally in their various states and localities.

Printed promotional materials, like brochures, maps, postcards, GSM recharge cards on the tourist products of the country, should be made available for distribution within and outside the country through liaison officers.

One of the most common forms of sustainable tourism is ecotourism, the term most country use to describe any form of holiday or recreation in natural surroundings. Ecotourism society adds the concept of social responsibility in its definition of ecotourism as purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the culture and history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people. Therefore, ecotourism is a form of tourism to relatively undisturbed natural areas for the main purposes of admiring them and learning more about their habits. It also seeks to reduce its impacts on the area visited. It contributes to the conservation of natural areas and the sustainable development of adjacent areas and communities, generating further awareness among resident and nearby populations and visitors. Although, ecotourism is a relatively new part of tourism industry, it has spread rapidly throughout the world. The most popular ecotourism destinations are spread relatively even throughout the world and

include cities in Central and South American, Canada and USA, Antarctica, Asia and Africa (rain forest).

Tourism can have beneficial and negative consequences for the environment. Tourist development can contribute to substantial upgrading of recreational resource base, and so add to visitor and local resident enjoyment. It can also lead to improved transportation systems through advances in vehicle and route way design (Gunn, 1994). Improvements in transportation networks, water quality and sanitation facilities may have been prompted by the tourism industry but benefit other sectors of the economy.

According to Vanhove (1997, 2005), an international airport provides improved products, but its impacts can be devastating for people living in nearby areas, in terms of dispossession, noise, traffic congestion, pollution. Tourists help spread among other things AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and flu. Tourists themselves face health risks and may transmit diseases and illness on their return home. Prostitution has strong links with tourism.

The World Tourism Organization, WTO (2000) argues that with care and proper policies, the cultural and environmental heritage of an area can be protected. One requirement is that tourists themselves act in ways which will sustain rather than damage host culture and environments and follow an appropriate code of conduct.

Recommendations

As individuals can learn to be enlightened, so travelers, governments and tour operators can support and encourage sustainable tourism through appropriate policies and regulations in the following ways:

- Tourism development projects can be required to include local representatives on planning teams.
- Tourism development projects should be compatible with the needs and practices of local communities.
- Planning controls can be designed to ensure regional dispersal of tourism development to avoid over concentration and regional inequality.
- Good agricultural land can be made off limits for tourism
- Hotels can be required to install effluent treatment plants

- Minimum levels of local employment and resources should be enforced
- Codes of conduct can be formulated and distributed at tourist outlets

For effective promotion and marketing of tourism in Nigeria, the ministry of tourism and culture should embark on the sensitization of Nigerians and the various festivals such as the Eyo masquerade in Lagos, the Calabar Christian Carnival, the Boat regattahas of the Niger Delta, the Argugu Fishing festival, the Enugu New Yam Festival, the Osun Osogbo Groove, the Abuja Carnival among others. These festivals and other tourism sites can be modernized to meet international standards bearing in mind that the role of tourism in national economy development cannot be quantified.

Conclusion

Nigeria's tourism potential can be likened to gold littered in a field and literally awaiting to be picked. Tourism is a spearhead for Nigeria economic growth.

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