

Corruption and Sustainable Tourism Development in Nigeria: An Interrogative Discourse

Oryina Joel Andzenge

Department of Public Administration,

Akawe Torkula Polytechnic,

Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria.

andzengeo@gmail.com, +234 706 4978 385

Abstract: *The focus of this paper is on the dangers that corruption has on the sustainable development of tourism sector in Nigeria. While countries like South Africa, Kenya and USA etc. are proud of the contribution of tourism to the economic growth of their nations, Nigeria is still far from realizing it – owing to the problem of corruption. The consequences of these are; slow pace in tourism development, poor community perception of tourism, ineffective workforce, poor infrastructure development, and use obsolete facilities/equipment for tourism activities. Hence, the tourism sector of Nigeria has continued to remain among the most unattractive in Africa and with very low patronage from local to foreign tourists. Despite the call for the diversification of the Nigerian economy by the government, the political-will to implement government policies particularly in the area of tourism has remained a failure. Therefore, it is on this premise that this paper seek to interrogate the problems corruption has posed on the tourism sector of Nigeria. This finds out that the effect of corruption in the tourism sector of Nigeria is high and thus, suggests that the government should give more attention to the tourism sector by increasing financial allocation to the sector to bust its development. There should therefore, be a closer watch on the activities of the sector by making sure that the anti-corruption agencies like Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) pay more attention on the activities of the sector. Non-governmental agencies and tourism stakeholders should also begin to checkmate the activities of the sector.*

Keyword: *Corruption, Tourism, Destinations, Economic growth, Sustainable development, Nigeria.*

Introduction

The major challenge facing the sustainable development of most countries of the world - particularly the developing/under-developed nations is corruption. The adverse effect of the phenomenon on development as well as democracies has largely become widespread in the recent times. No country can be said to be corruption free although the percentage differs from one nation to the other. And so, the majors developed by each country towards tackling corruption also differ. In Nigeria, the problem of corruption is actually seen as a general condition in many public sectors of the country (Odo, 2015; Adagbabiri, 2018, Nomishan *et al.* 2021). Therefore, the tourism sector also has its fair share of the problem. To this end, there have been several academic conferences, seminars, and even public protest in the country aimed at achieving attitudinal change among public servants and citizens for better productivity. The fight has also been extended to our educational institutions as a way of nipping the problem from the bud through the introduction of anti-corruption related courses, clubs and societies.

However, factual data reveals that despite these efforts and those of successive government to curtail corruption in the country, no significant difference has so far been affected. And unlike other “countries such as Israel, Malaysia, Singapore, UAE, China, USA, Britain, France, South Africa, Uganda, and Kenya” (Nomishan *et al.*, 2020, p. 3; Gubam and Nomishan, 2020) where tourism has been developed to attract sustainable development, the tourism sector of Nigeria is still struggling to be attractive to the rest of the world. This has manifested in form of poor labour performance at all levels tourism sector.

More so, government policies on tourism are often unstable. The inadequate funding of the sector also has a lot of adverse effects such as lack of procurement of necessary equipment, lack of proper training and recruitment of personnel and poor infrastructure development among others (Amusa, 1988). However, even when monies are channeled for the development of the tourism sectors, such monies are not proper appropriated.

To this end, the high corruption rate in the tourism sector largely contributes to the poor quality of facilities, infrastructure and services provided by the sector, thereby making it one of the most unattractive in Africa (Abubakar, 1991). The development of facilities and infrastructure as well as good service provision is one of the major pillars for a good recreation and tourism (Abubakar, 1991). The basic systems and structures that a country needs in order for recreation and tourism to function properly is the development of facilities and infrastructures such as hotels, transportation, communication and the banking system. Another area that is affected by corporation in the leisure and tourism sector in Nigeria is the recruitment of unqualified individuals (Igbanugo, 1986). It is worthy of note that personnel are the major figure on whom all factors in recreation and tourism depends. Weak

management, low efficiency, poor quality of service delivery and lack of political relevance are the major outcome of such negligence.

Conceptual Clarification

Corruption: this is a multifaceted phenomenon which by nature has both ethical and normative dimension thereby making it difficult to reach a consensus to what constitutes a corrupt behavior. The Encyclopædia Britannica (2014) defined corruption as improper and usually unlawful conduct intended to secure a benefit for oneself or another. Corruption is often associated with wrongful application of power and authority by those in a special position of trust (Tanko, 2006). It is commonly applied to self-benefiting conduct by public officials. There is widespread concern about the devastating effect of the menace on democracy and economic development. This has therefore stimulated a growing literature on the extent, sources, consequences and the panacea to corruption.

This led Gboyega (2003) cited in Olasupo (2009) to states that corruption involves giving and taking of bribe, or illegal acquisition of wealth using the resources of a public office, including the exercise of discretion. In this regard, it is only those who have one business the other with government officials that made to provide inducement to be granted undeserved favours. It occurs when two or more parties interact to upturn the structure and processes of a society. This is usually blamed on the behaviour of functionaries which promote deviant characteristics in public places.

Corruption in Nigeria manifest in different forms such as graft, bribery, fraud, extortion, nepotism, favouritism, stealing of state's or private assets and misappropriation of state funds and money laundering among others. The most frequent practice of corruption among Nigerian public officials is the diversion of public assets and funds (Gubam, 2013). Odekunle (2010) opined that any of the following can be classified as corruption;

"asking, giving or taking a fee, gift, or favour in exchange for the performance of a legitimate task; the perversion or obstruction of the performance of such a task, or the performance of an illegitimate task, hoarding, collusive price-fixing, smuggling, transfer-pricing, inflation of prices, election rigging, illegal arrest for harassment or intimidation purposes, abuse/misuse/non-use of office, position or power, dumping of obsolete machinery or outdated drugs, illegal foreign exchange transactions, legal but in obvious unfair and unjust acquisition of wealth, 'gilded crime' certificate forgery, false accounting and claims, diversion of public, corporate or offer persons money or property to indirect personal use" etc.

One can however distinguish between public corruption and private corruption. When an individual misuse entrusted power for private gain, it is public corruption. For instance, if a police fabricate evidence out of a misplaced sense of justice, it is corruption of a public office but not for a private gain. And if ordinary citizen lie when they give testimony in court, this is corruption, it is corruption of the criminal justice system (Ibrahim and Amoor, 2009). For Olusegun (2009), corruption has two categories; the demanding point and the supply point.

Tourism: the term tourism has been too subjected to different definitional perceptions (Okpoko and Okpoko, 2002). As result tourism experts have not been very precise on the usage of the concept. This is because a researcher's interest may affect his perception. However, because tourism has witnessed a lot of transformation over the years, it has acquired more meaning as more people becomes interested in different aspect of social life as man's leisure time improved. Therefore, tourism is a complex phenomenon as it touches all aspects of man; social, political, economic, cultural, historical and physical environment (Okpoko and Okpoko 2002).

Thus, tourism can be defined as travel that results in one or more nights being spent away from home (Dieke, 2006). The purpose of travel follows the United Nations statistics commission's definition; encompassing leisure, business and other night and who does not engage in any paid employment in the destination (Okpoko & Okpoko, 2002). And a tour can be domestic, regional or international.

When properly exploited, developed and managed, tourism has the ability is contribute meaningfully to national development. In Nigeria however, the high level of corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation, and have continued to stagnate the nation's quest for greatness as well as the development of tourism sector.

Sustainable Tourism Development

UNEP and UNWTO (2005) noted that, sustainable tourism is a concept that covers the complete tourism experience, including concern for economic, social and environmental issues as well as attention to improving tourists' experiences and addressing the needs of host communities.

Sustainable Tourism refers to sustainable practices in and by the tourism industry. It is an aspiration to acknowledge all impacts of tourism, both positive and negative. It aims to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive ones (GSTC, 2021). Further, the negative impacts tourism can have on a destination include economic leakage, damage to the natural environment and overcrowding to name a few, while positive impacts include job creation, cultural heritage preservation and interpretation, wildlife preservation landscape restoration, and more (GSTC, 2021). Sustainable tourism is therefore, the form of tourism that meets the needs of tourists, the tourism industry, and the host communities today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Tourism Notes, 2021).

According to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (2021), Sustainable tourism is defined by the UN Environment Program and UN World Tourism Organization as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.” Additionally, they say that sustainable tourism “refers to the environmental, economic, and sociocultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability” (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, pp.11-12).

Based on the establishment of (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005), sustainable tourism should take care of the following features:

- i. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential
- ii. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance
- iii. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socioeconomic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Therefore, “Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them” (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p. 11-12).

More so, Niedziółka (2012) identifies basic principles of sustainability in tourism to include:

- i. Takes a holistic approach to planning and strategy;
- ii. Protects the environment (biodiversity) and man-made heritage;
- iii. Preserves the essential ecological processes;
- iv. Facilitates and engages public participation;
- v. Ensures that productivity can be sustained into the long-term future.
- vi. Provides for a better level of fairness and opportunity between different countries. (Cooper *et al.* 2008).

Forms of Corruption in Nigeria’s Tourism Sector

Igbanugo (1986) observed that corruption in the tourism sector can take the forms of bribe paid by individuals to visit tourism destination, bribe paid by worker or personnel to get preferred posting promotions, and embezzlement of funds allocated to the sector by government official (political office holders and civil servants). Monies meant for procuring office equipment and maintenance service are embezzled. There are also situations where government officials collected bribe to allow private individuals encroach into reserved places for tourism either through building private houses or farming as well as hunting. Nepotism in procurement, privatization, and recruitment of personnel are other forms of corruption that are very common in the tourism sector. The causes and mechanism of corruption in the tourism sector are quite enormous.

Table 1: Some Forms of Corruption in the Leisure and Tourism Sector.

S/N	Categories	Embezzlement	Bribery	Fraud	Extortion	Favouritism
1	Definition	Theft of public resources by public officials	Payment (cash or in kind) giving or taken in a corrupt relationship	Economic crime that involve some kind of trickery, swindle or deceit	Money and other resources extracted by the use of coercion, violence or threats to use force	Mechanism of power abuse implying privatization and highly biased distribution of resources
2	Family of terms	Misappropriation, diversion leakage, capture of funds	Kickbacks, gratuities, pay-offs, speed and grease money	Forgery, smuggling, counterfeit	Blackmail, informal taxation	Nepotism, cronyism, clientelism, bias
3	Example from tourism sector	Leisure and tourism funds need for political campaigns or diverted for private interest – this could be allocation or internally generated revenues.	Bribe paid to be recruited as personnel, bribes paid to access tourism facilities.	Ghost workers	Sexual harassment for promotion	Recruitment of officials base on favoritism/ nepotism

Field survey: 2021

The above table illustrates categories of corruption in the tourism sector, related terminological groupings, and the relevant examples of corrupt activities in the sector.

Effect of Corruption on the Tourism Sector of Nigeria

A number of studies conducted in recent times have revealed negative impact of corruption on Nigerian public institutions. Be it economic, political, religious, cultural or social; the effect of corruption seems the same. The problem of corruption has largely travelled beyond selected public sectors in the country (Odo, 2015; Adagbabiri, 2018). Consequently, this increases transaction cost, reduces the efficiency and quality of service, distorts decision-making process and undermine social values (Ibrahim & Amoor 2009). Furthermore, it causes the diversion of allocation and depletion of internally generated revenue from tourism sector; which tend to affect the general performance of the sector.

Also, the planning, execution and sustainable management processes in tourism sector of the country becomes affected. This leads to phenomena such as poor information system, poor infrastructure development, and the recruitment of unqualified personnel, illegal promotion/appointment of personnel, and the supply/distribution of obsolete or irrelevant and/or substandard equipment in the sector among others. The opportunities for corruption within each of these areas are not necessarily the same; but however, related to each other. Also, the global impact of the contribution of tourism sector of sustainable development is not same in all nations. These impacts could range from financial or human costs, or the efficiency of the system, or to detrimental effects of corruption on the ethical values that relate to tourism.

This paper observed that the corruption in the tourism sector has led to a strain in the tourism budget which deprives the general public access to quality leisure, tourism facilities and services; allowing less qualified personnel and administration to occupy underserved positions, while widening the gap between the rich and the poor. Other consequences include the loss of confidence in the legitimacy of service providers and the entire system.

It is quite unfortunate that while nations like Egypt, Kenya, Britain, United Arab Emirate, and Saudi Arabia among others have invested so much in tourism and are using the dividend of this investment for the development of their countries and wellbeing of their people, Nigeria is yet to make a head way in this direction.

Panacea to Corruption in Nigeria's Tourism Sector

For Nigeria to have an effective and productive tourism sector, the following must be taken into cognizance:

- i. There should first of all be a well-structured inventory and proper identification system for the tourism attractions in Nigeria. All tourists' attractions in the country should be developed to a world standard status. This will attract investments (internal and external), provide jobs through increased cultural tourism, brings better/improved infrastructure, and promotes patriotism amongst the community members (Nomishan *et al.* 2020, 2021).
- ii. Tourism planners have to develop innovative ways of following effective, accountable and transparent system that are able to deliver services both efficiently and equitable. In this case a new research project devoted to 'ethics and corruption in tourism' with the aim of improving decision making and the proper management of the tourism sector by integrating governance and policy-making in tourism planning and administration must be pursued with vigour.
- iii. There should be sound laws guiding tourism activities, accompanied by strict sanctions for those found violating tourism laws. Rules and codes of conduct should be enforced and strictly adhered to by all stakeholders. To achieve this, tourism sector should be given some political independence.
- iv. Another vital aspect that should be considered if the battle against corruption in the tourism sectors must be tackled appropriately is that of access to useful information. The general public should have adequate information regarding the funds allocated to the tourism sector of this country, and how such funds are appropriated. Effective complaint mechanisms should also be made available and active.
- v. Stakeholders as well as civil society groups should be involved in tourism planning because public participation build ownership and provides room for accountability.
- vi. There is high need for ethical orientation as well as anti-corruption education. Awareness campaigns about the bad effect of corruption on the tourism sector are also necessary step to be taken. This is because such awareness will increase the level at which stakeholders in the tourism sector perceives how much corruption largely denies the sector a sustainable growth.
- vii. More so, the anti-corruption agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) should step-up their fight against corruption in this Nigeria particularly in the tourism sector.
- viii. Further, Public Private Partnership is also a significant means to fight corruption in the tourism sector. The Private organizations and groups should largely liaise with the government to bust funding of the tourism sector. This because the tourism sector is a big industry that cannot be funded by the government alone.

Conclusion

The tourism sector of Nigeria has been vulnerable to corruption despite the great potentials it possesses. In some countries, tourism contributes a lot to the national treasury and therefore among the highest items in annual budgets. Such countries believe in long term than short term investment. For the fact that corruption has eaten deep into the various sectors of Nigeria, the tourism sector has been left undeveloped and unattractive. This is seen in the decayed infrastructures and obsolete tourist facilities (with only little standard or manageable ones), poor personnel performance, and lack of ethical practices among others.

Thus, this paper notes that there should be a general upgrade of the already existing tourism facilities in the country, while those completely lacking should be provided. Tourist's attractions that are left unharnessed should be development. There is also need to maintain standards in ethical practices and the maintenance of laws guiding tourism operations in the country. The government, anti-corruption agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders in the tourism sector should closely engage in the scrutiny and monitoring of all activities in the sector. Though, the capacity of government in managing and combating corruption in the country in general remain weak especially in the tourism sector, it is still possible to transform the sector and make it very attractive to visitor from all parts of the world.

Without any consideration of context, it is very helpful if countries undertaking anti-corruption crusade first asses the functionality of their system "by comparing established rules with the actual practice" (Ibrahim and Amoor, 2009). Thus, it is difficult to see these changes take place within a short time. However, if the above ways of ending corrupt practices in the tourism sector of the country are curtailed, the tourism industry of Nigeria will receive great busts in its development and sustainability.

References

- Abubakar, J.A. (1991). Faculty Planning Management: An Overview. *Manual of Nigerian Academy of Sports Administration*, 1(1), 73.
- Adagbabiri, M.M. (2018), "Corruption and the Challenges of Insecurity in Nigeria's Fourth Republic", *Journal of Political Science and Leadership Research*, 4(3), 41-56.

- Amusa, L.O. (1988). *Recreation: A pathway of Health and Recreation Education (for Health and Natural Challenges)*. Ibadan. University press Limited.
- Cooper, C., Fletcher, J., Fyall, A., Gilbert, D., & Wanhill, S. (2008) *Tourism Principles and Practice*. England: Pearsons Education Limited.
- Dieke, P.U.C. (2006). Understanding Tourism Economics. In Pat Uche Okpoko (Ed.) *Issues in Toourism Planning Development*, pp.49-69. Nsukka. Afro-obis publishing co. Ltd.
- Encyclopædia Britannica, (2014). Corruption. *Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*. Chicago.
- Global Sustainable Tourism Council, (2021). What is Sustainable Tourism? Available at: <https://www.gstcouncil.org/what-is-sustainable-tourism/>.
- Gubam, D.S. (2013). Corruption and Security Challenge in Nigeria in the 21st Century. *Journal of Social and Policy Issues*, 10(1), 144-148.
- Gubam, D.S., & Nomishan, T.S. (2020). Archaeology and Tourism in Nigeria: an Overview. *Journal of Tourism and Heritage Studies*, 9(1), 90-101. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.33281/JTHS20129.2020.1.7>.
- Ibrahim, A, & Amoor, S.S. (2009). Corruption and Education Programme in Nigeria Education System and Way Forward. *Journal of Educational and Researched Development*, 4(2), 39-43.
- Igbanugo, V. (1986). Effective Organization of Study in Relationship to Performance. Proceedings of Guinness NUGA 86 Sports Clinic.
- Niedziółka, I. (2012). Sustainable Tourism Development. *Regional Formation & Development Studies*, 8, 157-166. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/3-540-25815-9_16.
- Nomishan, T. S., Tubi, P.K., & Gubam, D.S. (2021). Cultural Heritage Management and the Effect of Corruption in Nigeria: Hampering Sustainable Development via Cultural Heritage Destruction. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, ahead-of-print, (ahead-of-print). Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCHMSD-12-2020-0175>.
- Nomishan, T.S., Andzenge, J.O., & Aarga, I. (2020), “Interrogating the Tourism Industry of Benue State: the Past and Present of Makurdi Zoological Garden and Ikyogen Cattle Ranch, Benue State, Nigeria”, *Journal of Tourism and Heritage Studies*, 9(1), 1-14. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.33281/JTHS20129.2020.1.1>.
- Odekunle, G.F. (2010). Fighting Corruption in Nigeria Social Structure: A Roadmap to Quantum Development. *Journal of Administration*, 3(3), 112-125.
- Odo, L.U. (2015), “The Impact and Consequences of Corruption on the Nigerian Society and Economy”, *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp.177-190. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v4i1.13>.
- Okpoko, A.I. & Okpoko, P.U. (2002). *Tourism in Nigeria*. Nssuka. Afro-Obis Publications Ltd.
- Olasupo, F.A. (2009). Due Process Corruption in Public Services in Nigeria: Local Government as a Case Study. In O. Aborisade, & I.O. Aransi (Eds.), *Public Administration in Nigeria*, p33. Charlotte, NC: Catawba Publishing Company.
- Tanko, P.B. (2006). Corruption: Its Source and the Way Forward. *Journal of Education Research and Development*, 2(2), 82-88
- Tourism Notes, (2021). Sustainable Tourism. Available at: <https://tourismnotes.com/sustainable-tourism>.
- UNEP and UNWTO, (2005). Making Tourism More Sustainable - A Guide for Policy Makers. Available at: <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>.