

Challenges of Tourism in Expanding Human and Economic Opportunities in Nigeria

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Abstract: *Over the years, governments all around the world have adopted the use of tourism as a source of economic diversification. This has in many ways helped them build an economic linkage with other sectors, creating employment and providing opportunities. Advanced nations like the USA have gained a lot as its tourism industry contributed approximately \$2.9 Trillion to their GDP in the year 2019. Nigeria is no stranger to the topic of diversification as several administrations have come and gone with a promise of the need to diversify. The Nigerian challenge of tourism is not the absence of tourist locations or captivating cultures, it is rather a case of poor infrastructure, insecurity, inadequate funding, corruption and the lack of implementation amongst other vices. It is a known fact that Nigeria is hopelessly dependent on crude oil, hence this article explores the opportunities that tourism presents to the country as well as recommendations on how to attain a state of sustainable tourism revenue generation.*

Keyword: Tourism, Diversification, Economy, GDP, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Millions of jobs and businesses are depending on a strong and thriving tourist sector in countries at various stages of development around the world. Tourism has also been a driving force in the preservation of natural and cultural heritage for future generations. Before we go any further it is necessary for us to understand what the word tourism means. Despite the fact that most of us have been "tourists" at some point in our lives, defining what tourism is can be challenging. Tourism refers to people traveling to and staying in places outside of their typical surroundings for less than a year for leisure, business, or other reasons. Tourist is a dynamic and competitive industry that necessitates the capacity to react to changing client demands and wishes on a continuous basis, as tourism organizations place a premium on customer happiness, safety, and enjoyment.

Tourism has been defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica as the act and process of spending time away from home in pursuit of recreation, relaxation, and pleasure, while making use of the commercial provision of services. As a result, tourism is a product of modern social structures, dating back to the 17th century in Western Europe, but it has roots in classical antiquity (Britannica, 2021).

Tourists follow an "established route," benefiting from existing systems of provision as befits pleasure-seekers, and are generally sheltered from difficulty, risk, and discomfort, which distinguishes tourism from exploration. Tourism, on the other hand, intersects with a variety of other activities, interests, and processes, such as pilgrimage. As a result, categories like "business tourism," "sports tourism," and "medical tourism" (international travel undertaken for the purpose of receiving medical care) have emerged (Walton, 2020).

Tourism has evolved into more than simply another business; it has become an integral element of many cities', regions', and countries' economic fabric. The number of people who participate in tourism activities and the amount of money they earn will always be on the rise. Tourism is one of the few industry that is susceptible to economic ups and downs while also rebounding swiftly from adverse economic conditions or environmental consequences. The impact on international tourism was not as severe as the decline in foreign trade and industrial production, despite a significant credit crunch, an economic recession, and political uncertainty (Smeral, 2010). Tourism has continued to expand and diversify over the last six decades, becoming one of the world's largest and fastest-growing economic sectors (UNWTO, 2015).

In 2019, the direct contribution of travel and tourism to global GDP was estimated to be at 2.9 trillion US dollars. When it comes to countries that directly contributed the most to global GDP, the travel and tourism business in the United States came in first with a total of 580.7 billion dollars. Meanwhile, Macau's city and special administrative area generated the largest share of GDP from direct travel and tourism of any economy worldwide, according to a ranking of countries with the highest share of GDP from travel and tourism (Lock, 2020).

African countries are surrounded by coastal line which makes them more attractive to tourist, such like the beaches in Lagos, Nigeria, the world's highest sand dunes in South Africa, the wild life experience in the safari of Tanzania. With these tourism potentials, tourism becomes very vital in developing countries, especially when considering the untapped natural resources found inside these African countries' coasts (Eruotor, 2014).

The richness and diversity of Nigeria's culture has long been recognized as a compelling justification for tourism to be a key source of foreign exchange. The country is naturally blessed with numerous tourist sites as the Osun Osogbo Groove, Sukur Cultural Landscape in Adamawa, Obudu Cattle Ranch, Ogbunike Cave, Oguta Late, Yankari Game Reserve, Olumo Rock, Idanre Hills, Ikogosi Waterfall, Mambila Plateau, and many more. Nigeria also has a plethora of festivals to offer. Almost every state in the

country hosts one or more festivals each year, from the Odi-Ogori Festival in Bayelsa State, to the Argungu Fishing Festival, to the Osun Osogbo Festival, Abuja Carnival, Calabar Christmas Carnival, Cross Rivers State Carnival, Eyo Festival, Igue Festival, Ojude Oba Festival, Badagry Festival, and Durbar Festival (Alamai, Kirfi, & Ladi, 2018).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Considering how tourism has become a major source of economic diversification for nations all over, this also cuts across the service sector and forging effective backward and forward linkages with the rest of the economy. While rich countries account for a larger share of global tourism, many developing countries are beginning to recognize the enormous benefits that tourism provides. Only developing nations with sufficient capacity and man-made tourism sustaining and boosting infrastructure have indeed been able to grow their tourism sectors and reap the benefits that come with it. As a result, most developing countries must diversify their economies. This is due to their distinguishing mono-cultural economic traits, in which only one or two products dominate exports and supply the bulk of foreign exchange needed to reconcile these countries' internal and external budgets.

Nigeria is attempting to promote economic development beyond oil and gas production in order to increase job and income prospects. Nigeria has enormous tourism potential, particularly considering its natural and diverse landscapes, but it lacks sufficient infrastructure to support and enhance tourism.

While tourism does give significant employment and revenue possibilities, its impact on the biophysical environment cannot be overstated, necessitating the need to discuss sustainable tourism. Indeed, most of Nigeria's natural landscapes are eco-sensitive areas and exploring them as tourist destinations must be done in a sustainable manner to enhance the carrying-capacity or regenerative capacity of these landscapes.

The purpose of this article is to assess the challenges that the tourist sector has in developing Nigeria's economic potential.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Let us look at some theoretical arguments in support of the tourism-economic development nexus. Tourism's notable benefits to economic development are a no-brainer.

1. **Theory of Absolute Advantage:** In 1776 Adam Smith (a Scottish economist, philosopher and pioneer in political economy and also known as the "Father of Capitalism") proposed this theory. He propounded that absolute advantage refers to an individual's, company's, regions, or country's ability to produce a greater quantity of a good or service per unit of time with the same number of inputs, or the same quantity of a good or service per unit of time with fewer inputs, than another entity producing the same good or service. An entity with an absolute advantage can provide a product or service at a lower absolute cost per unit by employing fewer inputs or a more efficient method than a competitor. Countries with an absolute advantage can choose to specialize on producing and selling a single commodity or service, and then utilize the funds generated by that good or service to buy goods and services from other countries. According to Smith's logic, specializing in the products in which they each have an absolute advantage and then trading those products can benefit all countries, as long as they each have at least one product in which they have an absolute advantage over other countries (Potters, 2021). The classical economist, David Ricardo, improved on Smith's notion of absolute advantage by proposing the theory of "Comparative Advantage."
2. **Theory of Comparative Advantage:** International trade, in Ricardo's perspective, is more likely to survive on the premise of comparative advantage than on the principle of absolute advantage. The trade connections between countries, according to him, are determined by comparative cost differences. The ability of an economy to produce specific commodities or services at the lowest possible costs than its trading counterparts is known as comparative advantage. A comparative advantage allows a business to sell goods and services at a cheaper cost than its competitors, resulting in higher profit margins (Hayes, 2020). In very simple terms, this theory shows that if countries specialise in producing goods and services where they have a lower opportunity cost then there will be an increase in their economic welfare.

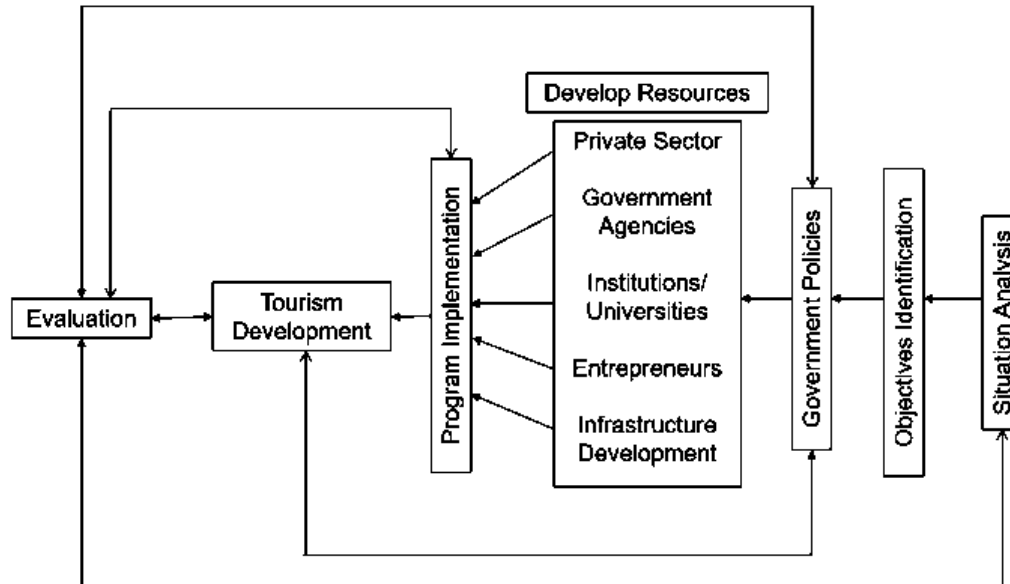
The nature of demand and supply for tourism products, as well as their determinants, are considered in the context of tourism's contribution to economic development. Demand and supply are multivariate notions, meaning they are influenced by a number of factors at the same time. For example, a distinct tourist product that is maintained qualitatively through time, improves the income levels in the place of origin of tourist destinations/attractions to tourism importing countries, these are all factors of tourism demand (Ovat, 2003).

As various researchers have pointed out over the years, the need for diversification of the Nigerian economy in order to achieve sustained growth cannot be overstated. Nigeria's government must push the country's economy to diversify. It's the only way to stay afloat in the current climate of global economic instability and oil price volatility. It is critical that the government recognizes that oil does not provide an infinite source of revenue. Nigeria's economy is a mono-economy, with oil being its sole source of revenue. A large proportion of Nigerians live in abject poverty, unemployment is high, and productivity is at an all-time low.

When it comes to diversity, Nigeria has over 300 tribes or ethnic nations, making it one of the most diverse countries in the world. That diversity is what gives it its unity and stability. It also has a wide range of climates, ranging from tropical rainforests and

swamps in the south-south through the moderate region around Jos and Obudu, to near-desert temperatures in the extreme north. And the various parts are also very well endowed in all sorts of mineral and other resources (Odife, 2004). Fig.1 shows a how all the variables come to play in a bid to achieve that state of tourism development.

Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework for Tourism Development in Nigeria



Source: (Oladele, Digun-Aweto, & Merwe, 2018)

All of these economic, social, and cultural benefits have inestimable values, which the government at various levels can exploit in their developmental programs (Uduma-Olugu & Onukwube, 2012) The essence of these efforts is geared towards:

1. Revenue generation.
2. Job Creation.
3. Infrastructural development.
4. Maintenance of cultural heritage.
5. Conservation of coastal and marine tourist attraction.
6. Stimulation of recreational and educational values.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

1. To examine the problems facing the Nigerian tourism sector.
2. To establish how the problems facing the tourism sector is affecting economic opportunities in Nigeria.
3. To propose solutions to the problems facing the tourism sector in expanding economic opportunities in Nigeria.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research focuses on the challenges that the tourism industry faces in developing Nigeria's economic potential.

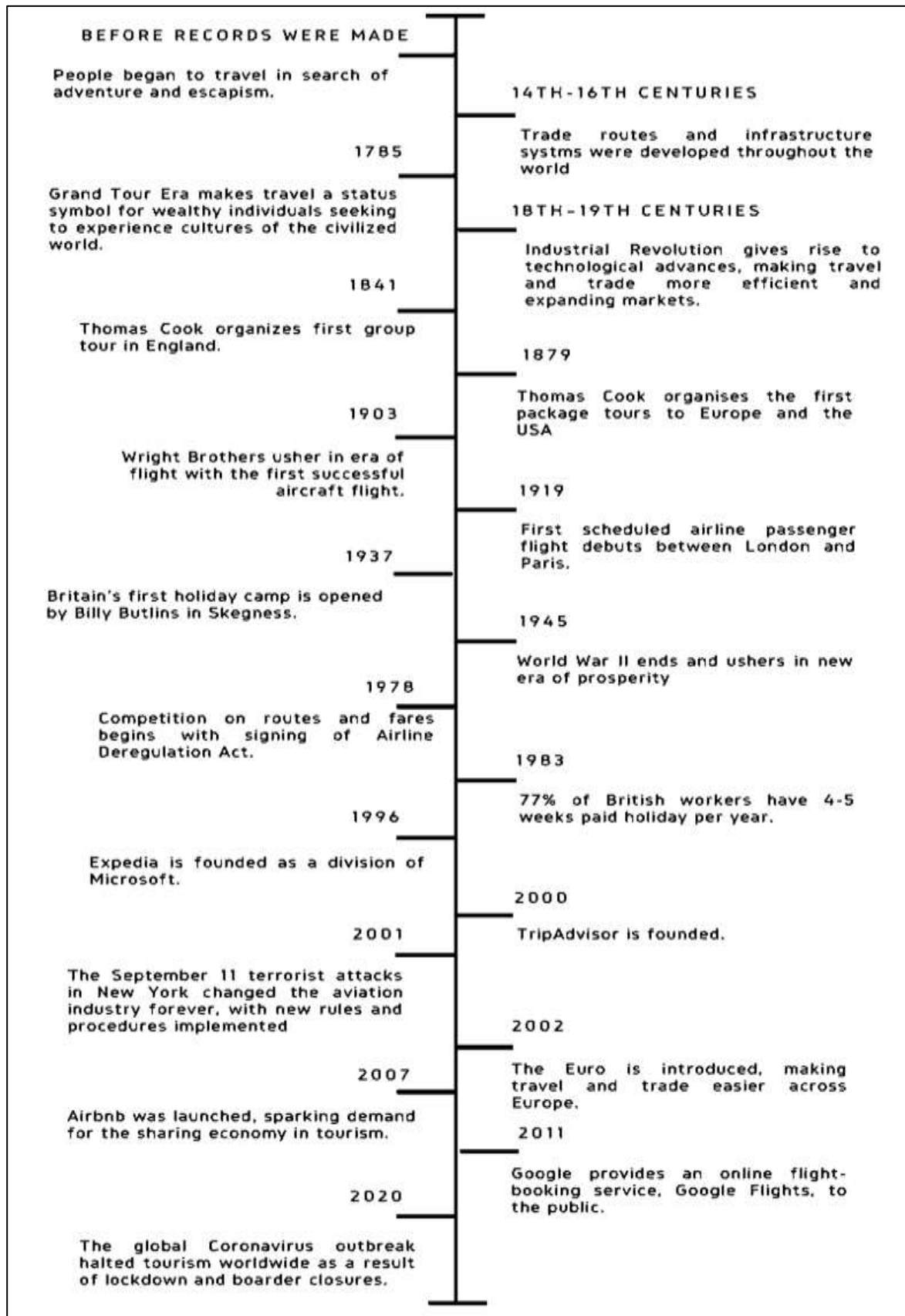
SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The importance of this work cannot be overstated, especially given the status of the Nigerian economy. If the nation's leaders are true to their statements and efforts toward reform and economic expansion, researches like this might be a cure for addressing the tourism sector's difficulties while also providing possibilities for citizens to get jobs and the government to generate revenue.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The history of tourism is a long one. While we may not have always had high-speed trains, planes, or sumptuous cruise ships, people have always wanted to travel. Tourism's history is intertwined with the world's economic, social, and political conditions. Someone who has a lot of money, for example, is more likely to travel somewhere for a vacation than someone who does not. Similarly, many tourists are unlikely to visit a country that is experiencing political unrest (Stainton, 2020).

Fig. 2. Major Developments in the History of Tourism



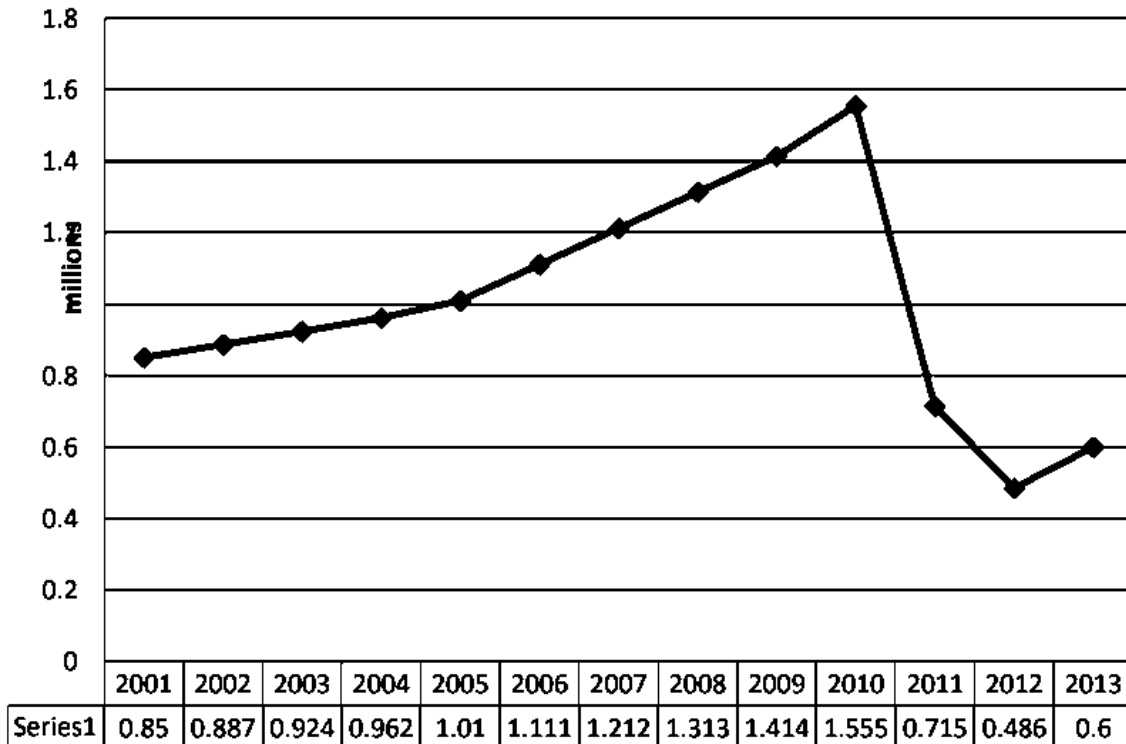
Source: (Stainton, 2020)

Back in 1472 Nigeria had its first major international tourist visit when the Portuguese merchants visited Lagos in search of trade opportunities. In 1962, the Nigerian Tourist Association (NTA) was created by the government with the mandate to promote domestic & global tourism in the country. This body also thrived so hard and became a member of the International Union of Official Travel Organization (IUOTO) in 1964 (Ukpanah, 1991), the IUOTO later transformed into what we now know as the World Tourism Organization (WTO). NTA was dissolved in 1976, and the Nigerian Tourism Board (NTB) was formed in its place. So when Ministry of Trade and Industry was established in 1990, and the NTB became a corporation, the sub-growth sector's was accelerated (Ashikodi, 2010). Another school of thought linked Nigeria's tourism development to the 1976 adoption of Decree No.54, which went into effect in 1978. This Decree empowered the Nigerian Tourism Board (NTB) to:

1. Encourage people living in Nigeria to take their holidays there in and people from abroad to visit Nigeria;
2. Encourage the provision and improvement of tourist amenities and facilities in Nigeria including ancillary facilities;
3. Provide advisory information services;
4. Promote and undertake research in the field of tourism;
5. Grade or classify hotels in such a manner as may be prescribed.

Tourism is one of the world's fastest expanding businesses, and while Nigeria is experiencing a few of the benefits of this development, it is still a modest participant in the country's economy. International visitor arrivals increased marginally from 850,000 in 2001 to 1,550,000 in 2010, before falling to 486,000 in 2012 (Fig2). The Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria's north has been blamed for this decrease. However, tourism activities picked up in 2013 with 23% increase over the previous year arrivals (Mulkat & Mukail, 2015).

Fig. 3. International Tourist Arrival in Nigeria



Source: World Development Indicators (World Bank , 2014).

Before we delve specifically into the problems facing the Nigerian tourism industry let us examine that challenges on a global scale. Table 1. Be expianates on the top 5 challenges of tourism in a global scale.

Table 1. Challenges Confronting Tourism & the Travel Industry

Globalization	Uniform standards and norms are being developed as a result of globalization. As a consequence, the travel business strives to provide items that enable the average traveller to do which they've never done before. In today's travel aspirations, novelty is a necessary component. Tourism organizations and travel businesses must understand how to communicate with international visitors. They must use translation services to produce multilingual websites, important travel information, and necessary signage that can properly advise travellers. Tourists must feel at ease and welcomed when away from home.
Taxation	Tourism is among the most heavily taxed industries. A simple examination of the taxes paid on plane tickets and hotel rooms reveals how taxation can have a significant impact on tourism. As a result, in order to balance the equation, the travel business must provide competitively priced services. Governments must also recognize that tourist purchases, travel shopping, and other tourism expenses already contributes to the local economy.
Travel Marketing	Travel marketing can be perceived as insufficient, false, or overstated by visitors and travellers. To overcome this attitude, marketing organizations must seek to build unique marketing strategies that will entice the new generation of discerning and informed travellers. Furthermore, technological changes and social media's influence indicate that this is a time of both opportunity and risks. To make their way into visitors' trip plans, travel marketers must use technology and ingenuity. They must, on the other hand, pay close attention to locally available materials.
Infrastructure	Many tourist destinations have antiquated and poor infrastructure. Governments, tourism organizations, and destination marketing groups must work together with forethought to improve the current infrastructure. Future issues in this area must also be addressed. Speedier immigration at airports, faster check-out processes in hotels, better public transit, and interpreting services at airports, stations, and ports might all be part of the answer.
Security	Tourism and travel industry players must work together to improve security infrastructure for tourists and travellers. Working with local police departments, city council, and local governments can help achieve this goal. To increase security and vigilance without suffocating the travel experience within in the country, governments must seek to find more personnel and economic resources.

Source: Compiled by Author

In 1992, the Nigerian Tourism Association (NTA), founded in 1962, became the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC), a parasternal of the Federal Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and National Orientation. The Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) is in charge of tourism planning, development, and marketing. NTDC's responsibilities include encouraging individuals who live in Nigeria to spend their vacations within the country and encouraging people from other countries to visit Nigeria, as well as encouraging the provision and execution of tourism infrastructure and services in Nigeria.

There are several challenges specific to the Nigerian tourism industry, (Dinim, 2021) listed some major problems as summarized below:

Poor Infrastructure

In order for tourism to grow in any country, certain requirements such as decent roads, reliable power, and drinkable water has to be available. In all three categories, Nigeria has failed to deliver. Movement will be hampered if the roads are terrible. T According to data, the majority of Nigeria's famous tourism destinations are in rural areas that lack these essential infrastructures. This lack of has proven to be a significant deterrent to potential tourists. As most of our tourist locations are inadequately managed, there is also a lack of management of existing infrastructure. Our beaches are overcrowded, and other tourist destinations lack basic amenities that ensure guest comfort and contentment.

Terrorism and Security Challenges

Nigeria has become linked with terrorism, robbery, and kidnappings over the years. These vices have exacerbated Nigeria's tourism-related concerns. Following similar difficulties, other countries have issued warnings to their nationals about the hazards of visiting Nigeria.

With the kidnap of about 276 Chibok girls on the 14th of April 2014 and that of Dapchi students on the 19th of February, 2018 where 110 school girls aged 11-19 years were abducted as reported on national dailies as well as TV and Radio houses. Most recently as

reported by Aljazeera Media Network on the 26th of February, 2021: The Nigeria Police force confirmed the abduction of at least 317 girls from a school in Zamfara state, and this was the second kidnapping within two weeks (Aljazeera, 2021).

Zamfara State actually has some breath taking tourist attraction such as the National Gallery of Art, Kwiambana Forest Reserve, Kiyawa City Walls, Bakalori Dam etc. however, considering the persistent issues of insecurity no one in his or her sane mind will opt for such a state and by extension that would have deprived the nation of prospective revenue generation.

Inadequate Investment and Funding

In 2016, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, the Minister of Information, Cultural, and Tourist, criticized President Muhammadu Buhari's budgetary allotment to the culture and tourism ministry, calling it a "mere tokenism." (Ovuakporie, 2016). Considering how we have focused mainly on oil and gas it is no surprise that even though tourism is a contributing factor to the GDP of the nation, in Nigeria it contributes less than 1.5% to Nigeria's economy.

Air Travel Problems

When compared to the average standard of airports around the world, Nigerian airports are subpar. Given that airports are often the first location a foreign visitor sees upon entering a country, it's discouraging to be met with consistently poor service, abrupt flight cancellations and delays, increased ticket prices, and a slew of other annoyances.

Corruption

Over the years the word corruption has become a body odor commonly associated to Nigeria. This is so because there are countless cases of corruption at top levels of government, stealing of public funds and budget padding.

On the 2nd of January, 2020 the Nigeria Premium Times reported that the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) had failed to return its unspent balance of ₦8.6 Million at the end of the 2016 fiscal year to Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF), this was revealed by the Auditor-General's report for 2017. Similarly, the audit report found irregularities in the expenditure of ₦8.67 million by the agency as training allowance in 2015 (Babatunde, 2020).

Limited Air Routes

Nigeria has a limited number of airports, as well as airlines and air routes. As a result, there are few flights linking Nigeria's major cities to the rest of the world. For many tourists, both local and foreign, traveling by road in a country like Nigeria is a tremendous turn-off.

Lack of Policy Implementation

The Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation is no exception to the fact that Nigeria has very strong legislative policies on paper. The difficulty has always been in putting the plan into action.

Back in 2016, the Hon. Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Information Alhaji Lai Mohammed had disclosed that the government plans to establish arts and craft centers across the 774 local government areas of the country, he also disclosed that the Federal Government had concluded arrangements to retrieve all artifacts and portraits stolen from ancient Benin Kingdom and sold abroad which were found at the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom (Ovuakporie, 2016). Fast forward to 2021 and your guess is as good as mine on the implementation of the above federal disclosures.

Health Care Concerns

Given that the wealthy upper class (mainly political figures, including the President) travel abroad for medical treatment on a regular basis. It is not unusual for tourists to be put off visiting Nigeria. There is a persistent dread that in the event of an emergency, the country will not be able to save a foreign national's life.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

Dr. Nonso Obikili, a Director at the Turgot Centre for Economics and policy research stated that:

"Nigeria is still hopelessly dependent on crude oil and so anything that impacts the price or demand for crude oil impacts us. And because we have no fiscal buffers or significant foreign reserves the impact will be significant".

This dependence has made the government turn a blind eye the challenges of tourism and consequently ignore the immense benefit that the tourism industry presents. In many ways we can blame the government of the day. However, the government isn't the only stakeholder. The private sector has also got a role to play in the development of tourism. Considering this, the major stakeholders such as the hoteliers, travel agents, tour operators, car hire service providers, government officials, and the general public also have roles to play by aiming to be at par in service delivery with what is obtainable in other tourist destinations around the world (Bankole, 2013).

On a final note if a country like Greece can depend on tourism solely to develop the economy, create employment, and reduce poverty (Andriotis, George, & Athanasios, 2008), then Nigeria also stands a chance at economic expansion through tourism. The following recommendations have been proposed to help the Nigerian tourism industry thrive and compete on a global scale:

1. Provide adequate infrastructure, such as standard hotels, electricity, good road networks, sea ports, and a better medical sector, to make it more dependable for both citizens and guests.
2. Tackle the current security issues within the country, if the citizen is not safe a tourist can never be safe.
3. The government should invest in our local media, give them the right tools so they can tell our stories the right way and not an interpretation of a foreigner whose views are based on assumption and secondary data.
4. Our tourist centers should be properly managed trained personnel's and not people employed based on how connected they are to the government of the day.
5. Tourism should move from the state of a mere tokenism to an adequately budgeted sector.
6. The standard of our airports should be upgraded to meet would best requirements.
7. Corruption should be curbed by the anti-corruption agencies like EFCC and ICPC, they should not be used as bulldogs to clamp down on only enemies of the administration in power. And when investigations are concluded defaulters should be made to face the full harms of the law.
8. Improve the air transport system by establishing new airports within the country and encouraging more airlines to fly in Nigeria.
9. Implement policies that are in favor of development of the country and tourism particularly.
10. Develop a more tourism friendly visa acquisition system.
11. All of the primary stakeholders should be working together all of the time. The Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC), the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Transportation and Aviation, the Ministry of Trade and Investment, and the heads of local governments in the areas where these tourist attractions are located must collaborate to improve the tourism sector.
12. The government should continuously educate the locals around the tourist attraction on how they can benefit and get them gainfully employed in the whole process.

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