DEVELOPING RURAL BASED TOURISM AS A STRATEGY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Every developing country of the world is adopting one form of development strategy or another to achieve the transformation of its economic structure or attain national development. Nigeria, being one of the developing countries of the world is not left out in this global struggle. Therefore, this study adopted literature review with the aim of assessing tourism as a spring board for National development from the historical perspective. From the study, it was evident that tourism plays an indispensable role in national and local economies, particularly in terms of promotion of employment and foreign earnings. Based on this, it was recommended among others that Nigeria government should encourage rural base tourism development, since much of these natural and cultural resources that constitute our heritage and at the same time tourist attractions abound in the rural areas begging for attention.

Keywords: Tourism, development, transformation

INTRODUCTION

In this twenty-first century, almost every developing country of the world is adopting one form of development strategy or the other to achieve the transformation of its economic structure or attain national development. One of such development strategies adopted to enhance national development is the development and promotion of the tourism sector. Countries such as South-Africa, Kenya, Tanzanra and some European countries are reaping the benefits accruing from tourism. This sector (tourism) though highly labour-intensive industry, has the potential to facilitate sustainable national development. For example, from 1996-2000, South Africa had an annual growth rate of 17% in international tourist visits and 27% in overseas tourists (Johan, 2003).

This development did not only enhance only its foreign exchange earning, but also creates sustainable jobs, encourages the growth of tourism-based enterprises, promotes infrastructural development, accelerates rural-urban integration, promotes even development and fosters socio-cultural transformation (Johan, 2003). For tourism activities to succeed in any area, the tourist, the business providing tourist goods and services, the government of the host community/area and the host community must have a positive attitude towards the industry, which the development of tourism will be hampered. However progressive governments in the world should be interested in tourism development, particularly in rural tourism development.

It is pertinent to note that tourism ranks as one of the programme initiatives

that contribute to national development. Tourism could contribute meaningfully to the economic development of Nigeria if properly harnessed (Da'silva, 1985; Atewologun; 1986) and Dalat, 2007). The Nigerian government is increasingly recognizing the need to develop this industry especially now that the country is trying to diversify her economy. The present government has called for the promotion and exploitation of other sectors that could contribute to economic development and tourism has been recognized to a high profile among them. Apart from petroleum and agriculture, tourism is another sector that could help in turning the Nigerian economy around. Da'silva (1985) projected an annual income of about two billion naira (today perhaps 46 billion) for Nigeria if her tourism industry is properly managed (Okpoko, A. and Okpoko, P. 2002). The government and private sector should look inward to develop tourism in Nigeria, having it in mind that the tourism industry is the highest employer of skilled and unskilled labour. This will also reduce drastically the issue of rural-urban migration reduce poverty, improve rural infrastructure and improve the life of the rural populace.

DOMESTIC TOURISM

According to Okpoko, A. and Okpoko, P. (2002), the word 'tourism' predates tourism in linguistic usage and has been a subject of long debate. Like any other concept, tourism is very difficult to define in absolute terms. Pearce (1989) is in agreement with Okpoko, A. and Okpoko, P. (2002) on the long history of debate on the definition of tourism. According to them, there have been many attempts to answer the question of what tourism is. Unfortunately, no definition has so far gained universal acceptance. The league of Nations in 1937 recommended that a 'tourist' be defined as "one who travels for a period of twenty-four hours or more in a country other than that in which he usually resides" for purposes of pleasure (including visiting a country on cruise vessel even if less than twenty-four hours for health, meetings or business. This definition, however, ignores domestic tourists who travel within their countries. In 1963, the United Nations Conference on International Travel and Tourism held in Rome considered the recommendations of the International Union of Official Travel Organization (now the World tourism Organization).

Ignoring domestic tourists; the conference agreed to describe a 'visitor' as "any person visiting a country (for at least twenty-four hours) other than in which he has as his usual place of residence either for leisure and/or excursion; other than following an occupation remunerated from within the country visited; (OOkpoko, A. and Okpoko, P. 2002). Pearce (1989) opined that tourism in its broad sense, is the sum of the phenomena pertaining to spatial mobility connected with a voluntary change of place, the rhythm of life and its environment and involving personal contact with the visited environment (natural, cultural and social). This in essence implies that tourism is synonymous per se to change of environment. For this purpose, "tourism is simply define as the movement of people from one place to another for specific purposes and for a given time period, this movement may involve people

traveling alone or in groups for one or more reasons earlier mentioned" (Okpoko, A. and Okpoko, P., 2002). This view is not complete if attention is not directed to tourism attributes. Tourism attributes include economic, psychological, social and cultural factors, among others. As an economic phenomenon, tourism develops according to economic forces, especially in relation to supply and demand. Tourism is also a psychological phenomenon. A tourist trip is preceded by a specific need(s) which generates a motive for travel and establishes a purpose for the trip. An image of the trip is created in the mind, comparison of which is made while travelling (Pearce 1989).

Tourism is a social phenomenon too, as a tourist assumes a social role during the course of a trip. Social contact (occasional or frequent) is experienced with such people as fellow travelers, trip organizers, guides and the local population. This may lead to the development of Social ties. It is a deceit to say that tourism development has been given adequate and needed attention in much (of not all) of West Africa and particularly Nigeria up to now. Indeed, the meanings and goals as well as methodologies of tourism are yet to be fully understood and appreciated by an average Nigerian (Ogundele, 2004). A distinction is often drawn between domestic or internal and foreign or international tourism. In domestic tourism, people travel outside their normal domicile to certain other areas within the country as compared to a country in international tourism. The basic difference between domestic and international tourism is that of jurisdiction of travel. The tourist activity of residents of a country within their own country (which does not cross the boundaries of the country) is thus described as internal or domestic tourism (Bhaitia, 2002).

Since the travel takes place within the limits of the boundaries of a country, the various travel formalities which are necessary in international tourism are not to be observed. Thus travel becomes an easy affair. This is because the barriers of currency exchange, language, passport, visa, and health documents are not to be faced by a domestic tourist. Tourists own language serves as a medium of communication and the currency in use everyday continues to be the medium of change. At Present, there exists no generally accepted definition of the term 'domestic tourist'. A domestic tourist is generally regarded as a person travelling for a purpose other than exercising a gainful activity or settling at the place visited. The XXIII General Assembly of International Union of Official Travel Organizations (IUOTO) held in Caracas, Venezuela in October 1973, recommended that a study be carried out at the international level with a view to arriving at a standardized definition of domestic tourism. However IUOTO in 1974defined domestic tourism as:

For statistical purpose, the term 'domestic tourist' designates any person who travels within the country where he resides to a place other than his usual place of residence for at least twenty-four hours or one night, for a purpose other than exercising a gainful activity and which may be classified under one of the following headings:(i) Leisure (recreation, holiday, health, study, religion and sport), (ii) Business, family, mission, meeting" (Bhatia, 2002).

The above definition however was not adopted as an official definition, but merely as a basis for discussion. There are three elements that are common to the definitions normally in use. These elements are (i) place of residence; (ii) geographical

setting of travel; and (iii) duration of travel. With regard to place of residence, most countries regard domestic tourism as travel by country's residents, within that country. The geographical setting is the national territory. Duration of travel is an important element in a number of definitions. The unit most often mentioned is the night spent at an accommodation establishment. By analogy with the accepted definition of 'international tourist', the domestic tourist is one who spends not less than twenty-four hours or makes an overnight stay away from his usual residence. Two elements are further common to most definitions of domestic tourism. These are (i) distance travelled and (ii) travel motivation. With regard to distance travelled, some countries specify a minimum distance in their definitions. This may vary between 25 and 100 miles/between 40-160 kilometres approximately. The concept of travel motivation is considered important by most countries. This is because a domestic tourist is generally considered as a person travelling for a purpose other than exercising a gainful activity at the place visited. Sometimes, domestic tourism is considered as including holiday or leisure travel only.

THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM PLANNING

Tourism literatures have recorded a number of development theories ranging from the classical econometric models through environmental theories to sustainability models. These are generally assumptions about the main components of tourism products and these influence and shape tourism planning and development. The econometric models anchor the demand for travel services on such factors as income, transportation costs, relative prices and currency exchange rate. The environmentalist sees tourism development as a function of the natural environment, the quality of which must not be destroyed. Many scholars share the belief that sustainability transcends environmental factors but include at the same time, economic and social aspects. Hence, tourism development can only be said to be sustainable if it is environmentally compatible, socially acceptable and economically beneficial to the host community. An understanding of these assumptions is invaluable if the use of and/or application of development theory/theories in the tourism industry is to be a promising and welcoming effort (Igbo and Okpoko, 2006).

Development as a concept has many meanings. It has a range of defining characteristics from narrowly delineated economic ones through broader social values to more general attributes such as self-reliance (Peace, 1989). Political scientists regard development as freedom from political rule (self-rule); they focus attention on the problems of nation building as modernization occurs (Ehizuelem, 1996). Economists view development as economic growth. That is, rapid and sustainable rise in real output per-head and the attendant shift in technological, economic and demographic characteristics, particularly of the developing countries (Ehizuelem, 1996). Sociologists and social anthropologists see development in terms of the process of differentiation that characterized modern societies (Ehizuelem, 1996). Whatever meanings and definitions ascribed to the concept of development, development has come to be agreeably associated to:

Material advancement, modernization, industrialization, scientific and technological advancement, the emergence of nuclear energy; the electronic and biological revolution; and new knowledge about man and the universe amongst others (Ehizuelem, 1996).

It can rightly be said judging from the above that development means urbanization, socio-cultural transformation, vertical and horizontal mobility, employment opportunity, mass literacy and the emergence of specialized and independent occupational roles. Based on the various definitions, development can be seen as a process through which a society's political, social and cultural institutions are transformed in order to improve the living standard and life chance of the people within the society. Failing to plan is planning to fail, the saying goes, this acert the relevance of planning in the development of anything at all, including tourism industry. Problems associated with the development of tourism can be eliminated and or reduced to the bearest minimum if tourism development is properly planned and executed. Planning is therefore crucial if we are to harness the huge heritage resources found in our rural areas in Nigeria. Planning has been defined as a "predetermined course of action which helps to provide the purpose and direction for members of an enterprise" or an organization (Appleby, 1982). It entails the selection of a desirable future out of a range of available alternatives in addition to identifying and implementing those strategies and actions that will achieve the desired results.

Planning is therefore future oriented and provides a framework by which policy is placed into a structure that enables implementation (Eagles, Mc Cool and Anyes, 2002). Appleby (1982) rightly noted that plans should: make use of available information in defining organizational objectives; consider factors in the environment that will help or hinder organizational policies and goals; take account of existing organizations and provide for control, so that performance can be checked with established standards; be precise, practicable and simple to understand and operate; and be flexible to enable them adapt to changing circumstances. In essence, a plan articulates organizational policies and goals and outlines the decision process and strategies for achieving them. It indicates how an outfit can be protected, used, developed and managed. Because of the crucial importance of planning in the development process, tourism planners in Africa and Nigeria in particular, should consider a number of issues that promote and inhibits tourism development. They must consider the social, political and economic conditions of the areas for which they plan so as to promote harmonious relationships between them and the host communities (Okpoko, 2006). Participatory planning, in which views of the host population are considered in the design and implementation of development of projects, is very vital in this regard. This approach provides opportunities for developers to exploit available markets and strategies that are acceptable to changing conditions (Eagles, et al, 2002).

ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND MULTIPLIER EFFECTS

Most governments in less developed countries like Nigeria are concerned with the need to increase the nation economic surplus: this surplus can then be used to facilitate development. Development is now regarded as a wider ideal than mere economic enhancement; hence countries are increasingly forced to rely on international aid to support development efforts. With greater emphasis placed on the provision of basic needs, tourism might be regarded as an economic absurdity a constant reminder of the gap between poles of relative affluence and poverty. To some degree, this review of tourism has gained some support because tourism is a highly visible activity. It is regrettable if this view is left unchallenged, or critically accepted. What we need to consider is not whether tourism confronts poverty, but whether it can help to relieve it (Igbo and Okpoko, 2006).

It has generally been noted that the major attraction to governments in supporting tourism is that it does earn foreign exchange; much of it is 'hard' currencies. The rural development impact of tourism is another economic dimension of tourism which the government needs to pay attention to. As tourism develops, particularly in the rural areas, it has a catalytic effect on demand for services and goods from other sectors of the economy. This linkage effect is also well organized in literature on tourism development. It does require specific help and encouragement to ensure that linkages take place. They are not instantaneous and have to be identified and encouraged as a potential benefit from tourism to the host community.

The scale of development is not only based on the availability of resources and of tourism potential. Bur these factors will have to be related to wider considerations of the proposal on the development location. It is not only economic potential which is to be evaluated, but also considerations be given to the impacts of the proposal (development) on the community, location, and the environment, though these aspects cannot be separated from the economic dimension, and although it might predominate, it should be viewed in isolation.

The economic effects of tourism are not limited to foreign earnings alone but also earnings from local tourist resources. Tourism is not an isolated economic activity - unlike the industrial sector, which benefits the wealthy alone, it has the capacity to trickle down the line, benefiting different categories of workers. The tourism sectors are composed of several branches. Thus, its immediate impact is usually more widespread than that of exports to many other goods or services. Exports of mineral products, for example, create income in the first place for persons engaged in mineral processing. Tourism, however, creates income for persons working in hotels, restaurants and cafes, travel agents, transport enterprises, places of entertainment, sports and recreation, and infact, wherever the tourist spends his/her money. This demonstrates evidently that tourism has linkages with other sectors of the economy. Such linkages must be recognized, their distinctive economic, financial and industrial characteristics ascertained, and areas of coordination identified for policy making and implementation (Falade, 2001).

BENEFITS OF RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT TO RURAL AREAS

For a successful rural base tourism development, there is the need for the involvement of the host communities in the planning and implementation of the policies of tourism development. This is because, if the rural communities do not participate in policy making and policy implementation, they cannot appreciate and value what is to be developed in their area. Despite the fact that most tourist attractions both cultural and natural are mostly situated in the rural areas, they are a times not aware of their existence and relevance, talk-less of appreciating and valuing what their environment inhabits. This therefore calls for concerted efforts involving the rural communities in the development of tourism in the rural areas. When this is done, the needed level of awareness would have been created and the host communities will go extra miles to identify and protect the attractions from further destruction. This is in view of the fact that some of the tourist sites, attractions and potentials are often destroyed by the residents because of the non-knowledge of the tourist value

It is pertinent to mention here that, it is wrong to assume that government policies on tourism industry coupled with the expertise of archaeologists, anthropologists/ethnologists, hoteliers and other professionals will produce a positive result without sincerely recognizing and appreciating the centrality of the grassroot people. Indeed, much of the tourism development efforts in Nigeria has failed to bring about desired results, this is basically because there remains a communication gap between the experts on the one hand, and the people (the custodians of most, if not all the resources) on the other hand. In fact, there are still many resources and/or potential tourist attractions in the rural set-ups, which are yet to be known, let alone harnessed, by the government and its agents therefore, each local government must form a tourism development committee made up of workers from the relevant arms of government (e.g. Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism and Community leaders) (Ogundele, 2002).

This in essence signifies the involvements of the people of the host communities (rural areas) in the planning, decision making and the executions of such projects. He also suggested that such a committee be headed by the paramount traditional ruler in the area. This is necessary for promoting a sentiment of belonging and recognition, after all the traditional rulers are the custodians of the cultural and natural heritage of their respective areas of jurisdiction. In many countries, tourism is based on scenic attractions, or on specific features, which can be part of the natural environment. Much of tourism activity will take place in rural environment, away from the main centres of population. Where there is tourism potential in regions, government and its agents should attempt to develop the potential. In the first place, tourism in a region may be the best way of encouraging or estimating existing levels of economic activity. In some areas, it may be one of the few options available. As employment and income are generated by tourism, these benefits will help to diversify the local economic structure, possibly increase income levels, and give rise to multiplier and linkage effects.

Rural tourism development can use the existing natural attractions found in

the local community, it does not need expensive and extensive infrastructures, which the urban centres or industrial development might require. Distance from main markets may be a positive advantage as tourists will 'consume' the products in the local community. In relatively compact regions, one can identify linkage possibilities arising from the introduction and development of local based tourism. Development of local skills and handicrafts is one possibility; use of local building materials and craftsmen is another. To make rural tourism viable and beneficial to the rural community, a careful inventory of tourist events and attractions should be drawn-up, especially to accommodate the various festivals that are celebrated annually by the various clans or communities that make-up the large community where the tourism industry is to be set-up, couple with the natural attractions available in the host communities and then related to the amenities required to serve the tourists such as good roads, electricity, pipe-borne water, police post, banks, restaurants preparing traditional dishes, sourvineer shops etc.

With this, residents will benefit directly from tourism, and to be seen to do so, policies should be made to create jobs and training. Efforts should be made to find local suppliers of goods and services to tourists such as tour guides, etc. These impacts may take time to develop, but should become policy objectives. Developing rural tourism will assist communities or rural areas with poor climate or soil conditions. Tourism may have strong advantages over other forms of development. The degree of benefits local government or rural area/community will derive from tourism is importantly dependent on the supply of resources available for tourism enjoyment. Cultural, historical and natural resources are included in this concept. Particularly when the geographical distribution of sites is considered, some areas are better supplied with natural and cultural tourist attractions than others and hence posses greater potential as tourist destination. It should be maintained that certain amount of social capital are needed to transform tourist potential (where they exist) into tourist attractions by providing infrastructures, mainly high ways, parks, hotels, etc. In this connection, strategic and systematic planning will certainly provide the essential pre-requisite to a successful development of the tourism sector of rural areas.

Furthermore, employment generated by tourism can be either direct or indirect. Direct employment can be defined as jobs created specifically by the need to supply and serve tourists. An obvious example is the jobs created by the opening of a tourist hotel. The hotel itself will have to buy in certain services e.g. laundry, taxes, etc, this will indirectly create jobs (Igbo and Okpoko 2006). Tourism creates multiple job opportunities such that it becomes difficult to estimate the employment impact impact. Even in the developed economies such as the United Kingdom (UK), the actual number of jobs in tourism is just but an estimate. This is because; tourism is often described as a labour intensive activity. At a simple level, this can be interpreted as meaning that per-unit of capital employed, tourism creates more jobs than a similar unit of capital invested in another sector. This relationship is often expressed as a cost-per-job in one sector of employment compared with another (Igbo and Okpoko, 2006).

In many developing countries with rapidly growing population and high levels of unemployment, productivity of labour may not be a prime consideration. As labour is in abundant supply, relatively a cheap and tourism employment has a low skills threshold, the industry is often seen as good source of employment opportunities. It should however be noted that tourism in many countries is a seasonal activity and this factor together with the initial low-skill jobs provided in tourism has been a continuing problem which can only be mitigated by the long-term policy initiatives relating to human resources development. The employment and income effects of tourism are interlinked; inturn, they are part of the total impact of tourism. Their singular importance is that, they trigger-off the multiplier effect, which enhances total economic benefit to the economy. Income and employment although treated as statistical concepts, have wider implications. The nature and type of tourism employment will have social and possibly cultural implications. The very fact of having a job in tourism may give rise to changes, which are essentially social in nature. These changes provide policy issues, which may be critical to further development in the sector (Igbo and Okpoko, 2006).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Tourism is a branch of human knowledge that is enshrined in unquestionable and/or unalloyed patriotism, unparalled dedication, financial discipline and civic pride. The broadness and apparent complexity of this subject is a testimony to the fact that it cannot be successfully embarked upon in a haphazard way, or within the framework of rugged individualism. It is quite unfortunate that a lot of people do not perceive that tourism goes beyond the habit of travelling for such things as pleasure, conference, religion and education. It is a narrow conception to reduce tourism to mere travels this is because travelling is just one component of tourism. Literature and field observations have revealed that Nigeria is yet to effectively harness the available tourism resources and/or attractions. Some of the basic problems of tourism development in this country are lack of relatively cheap, neat and well organized hotel facilities in most parts of rural Nigeria, where tourism resources are in abundance; closely connected to the above problem is the lack of good roads and rail network; and lack of tourism awareness among the people and even governments at different level.

This militates against the development of domestic tourism. Social and political instability in the country constitute a big hindrance to tourism development generally. No visitor would like to go to a place where there are communal clashes or religious roots almost a daily or weekly basis. Considering the diverse biogeographical landscapes, geomorphic and cultural features and beautiful sceneries that the rural areas are blessed with, each Local Government in Nigeria in collaboration with the States, has the potentials to even supersede the achievements of pioneer African States in tourism development. Most countries of the world are now looking to tourism as an important factor in national prosperity and as a vehicle for their economic growth. Developing rural tourism is a viable tool for achieving this. This will require useful feasibility studies and market research to assess the

potentials of the development of local tourist services and infrastructure as a planned basis in the local areas. It also requires a well designed and truthful publicity about the attractions in the rural areas and the creation of awareness on the part of the people of such area concerning the importance of welcoming visitors/tourists to their region.

Researching into and tapping the full potential of the tourism sector of any rural area will, however, depend on the existence of an appropriate tourism policy. Despite the fact that Nigeria is blessed with favourable and appealing climate, conductive to tourism activities, the country is still lagging behind in tourism development compared with other States of the world. Something positive should be done concerning rural based tourism development and promotion by making the best use of opportunities available. The reality in Nigeria is supported by the statement of the UNDPP Resident Representative in Nigeria, some years ago, describing the micro-economies of Tourism in Nigeria in stressing the potentials for tourism development:

Nigeria, indeed Africa, has a very rich cultural heritage and the potentials for a buoyant tourist industry are immense. Think of the different vegetational belts that make up the country, stretching from savannah lands of the North to the rain forests of the South and the richness of the firms. You hardly come across all that in a single country. Perhaps, it is important to mention that the cultural richness of Nigeria that is characterized by unity-in-diversity cannot but be a major interest to any visitor who cares to travel out of Lagos to Abuja. Everywhere you go, your attention is arrested by the aesthetic beauty of something you have never seen.

The tourism sector plays an important role in the national and local economies, particularly, in terms of promotion of employment and foreign earnings. Besides economic benefits, there are certainly social and cultural gains to be derived from rural based tourism. The in-ward looking and self-reliant policies of today cannot be complete with the elites of the society switching tourism and holiday preferences from the present focus on the countries of Europe and North America to one centred on our own country. Such intra-country pleasure trips, if encouraged, would enable us to know our country better, love and understand the cultures better, appreciate the qualities of our landscapes and sceneries better and indeed, help foster unity and integration among our diverse ethnic, social and cultural groups in the country. Before all these can be achieved, it will require the efforts and cooperation of officials and people from the grassroot (Falade, 2001). From the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

- 1. There is need for Nigerian government to encourage rural base tourism development, since much of these natural and cultural resources that constitute our heritage and at the same time tourist attractions abound in the rural areas and are begging for attention.
- 2. There is also the need for the formation of tourism development committees at the Local, State and Federal levels, coupled with long strong legislative measures. Such legislation must ensure financial discipline and commitment on the part of people concerned with the management of the abundant natural and cultural resources located in the rural areas.
- 3. There should be greater community participation on tourism policy formation

- and execution. This approach is empowering and seeks to change the community's behaviour to their environment. This is necessary because it will also enable the communities to tap their own resources and skills as well as providing them with the tools they may require to advance in the way they so deem fit.
- 4. There is need for rural based tourism seminars/conferences and workshops to create awareness on the relevance of tourism attractions in rural areas.
- 5. There is the need for public/private sector partnership to foster visible rural tourism development, since the State and Federal Governments cannot do all or meet all the yearnings of the people. This will assist in treating and identifying potential tourist attraction and how to translate such potentials into reality when the services of experts are brought to bear.

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