

## REVAMPING TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA: TOWARDS WEALTH CREATION AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

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### ABSTRACT

*Travel and tourism have today become part of human reality. The need to travel to places outside one's environment for pleasure, business, medical checkup, education and for other purposes has become an irresistible phenomenon. In this era of globalization, the industry has become manna from heaven, a great employer of labour and a major means of economic diversification, wealth creation and sustainable development. What makes it unique is that it permeates every sector of the economy as regards the activities of those who serve tourists, such as travel agents, airlines, cruise lines, hotels, restaurants, shops, and so on. For Nigeria to sustain its effort towards economic management beyond recession, this research proposes that investing in and proper funding of the industry of culture and tourism should not be optional. A way forward is to revamp our existing cultural and tourist sites, create policies that will favour the effort of investors, appoint competent personnel in the ministry of culture and industry and above all, ensure that our nation is free from internal and external threats to tourism development such as insecurity, poor transport system, infrastructural deficiency, and unfriendly presentation of our nation to foreigners. In all, tourism is worth investing in. It represents a cheaper alternative for diversification of the economy. Its benefit is unprecedented. The best and right time to invest in this noble industry is now.*

*KEY WORDS: revamping, diversification, investment, sustainability, growth.*

### INTRODUCTION

It is on record that tourism industry is one of the largest global employers and a key sector for economic development throughout the world. In her groundbreaking book, Elizabeth Becker, (2013) uncovers how what was once a hobby has become a colossal enterprise with profound impact on countries, the environment and cultural heritage; employing one out of twelve persons and produces \$6.5 trillion of the world's economy. Leisure, which was seen as something peripheral to life's main concerns, such as working, farming and raising a family, struggling for status or power, has undergone a baptism. It has become a means of providing jobs, generating foreign exchange and economic development to

many nations. Its contribution to global economy and sustainable development cannot be over emphasized. For a country like Nigeria with its high rate of population of young people, tourism is like manna from heaven. It is a veritable tool for poverty eradication, children and youth empowerment and development of host communities.

However, a closer look at the country's approach towards this industry that has the capacity to open great business opportunities and economic osmosis from wealthy nations, one may begin to ask; why is Nigeria not investing adequately in this industry with great hope and conviction about the immediate and lasting impact of tourism industry in our country? Why

hospitality and tourism industry is still relegated to the background whereas other countries have turned to tourism as alternative key drivers of their socioeconomic development? Why are we still silent over the eloquent demonstration of the significance and share of tourism in the global economy by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)? Why do we live our cultural heritage and tourist sites undeveloped? A response to these and other concerns will be the focus of this write up.

### **TOURISM; MEANING OF THE CONCEPT**

Tourism has many definitions from so many experts and scholars, each defining it from different disciplinary perspective. Okoli, (2014) notes that due to its multi-dimensional, multidisciplinary and fragmentary nature, tourism was difficult to define.

Etymologically, the word *tourism* is formed from the word *tour*, which is derived from Old English *turian*, from Old French *torner*, from Latin *tornare*; 'to turn on a lathe,' which is itself from Ancient Greek *tornos* (τόρνος); 'lathe' (a circular movement at which one returns to its starting point). The word *tourist* was first used in 1772 and *tourism* in 1811, (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism>).

Ndajiya, (2014) notes that the concept of tourism has been defined by so many experts and scholars which he outlined as follows: Dada, (1986) defined tourism as Migration of people, families and groups to places outside their normal residential areas for a limited period of time and their personal choice. Ikwu, (1992), defined it as a temporary short movement of people to destination outside the place where they normally live and work. According to

Ndajiya, a clear definition adopted by the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (IASSET) reads that Tourism is the sum total of the phenomenon and relationship arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not lead to permanent residency" (Ladan, 2003).

Zurbito, (2014) gave a wide definition of tourism according to the letters of the word TOURISM. That is, "T - totality of duly organized service systems required by tourists, with O - objective to experience and enjoy, the U - uniqueness of an undisturbed environment, in a R - resting place complimented with activities, where I - income is generated from infrastructure, and S - sustained services rendered by persons, M -motivated to nurture and preserve the natural resources, in order to pamper people of today and the future". To harmonize multiple definitions of tourism by different scholars, The World Tourism Organization (WTO) came up with a consensus definition which states that tourism is the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (Okoli, 2007).

### **PROBLEMATICS OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA**

Tourism industry in Nigeria is faced with pitiable condition of instability and negligence. Despite the viable possibilities for greater exploration in this sector, it has not survived the damages of lack of political will and unfavourable policy from the government. With insecurity problems facing our country, bias, corruption, lack of funding, inexperienced and committed tourist managers, dilapidated attraction centres and recreation facilities, poor transport system, violence and hostile system, tourism industry will find it difficult to thrive. The

effect of these challenges is strongly present in our economy such that no much percentage is recorded as coming from the industry. The report of the contribution of tourism industry in the world economy motivated many nations except Nigeria, to wake up from their mono-economic slumber, leading them to diversify and invest heavily in the industry. Those appointed to head this industry sometimes are either inefficient or not supported by the government. No wonder this industry is faced with problems of lack of proper planning, unfavourable approach and dynamism. It will indeed be strange to talk about managing Nigerian economy beyond recession without putting tourism at the centre of the nation's economic plan. Thus, the industry of tourism deserves more attention considering the fact that Nigeria by population of young people and cultural

heritage, attraction centres, human and natural resources has all it takes to diversify her economy through tourism.

### **NIGERIA, A FERTILE GROUND FOR TOURISM EXPLORATION**

Nigeria is known as a nation blessed with vast and rich cultural heritage. It is a country whose cultural tourism is identified as an area of high comparative advantage. Those who have taken time to visit different points of attraction in the country testify to the reality that Nigeria has all it takes to maximize the benefits of this industry. Jiboku, (2010) in his reference to the research of Awaritefe, (2005), gave a detailed account of Tourist Resource Areas in Nigeria and identified eight tourist regions with 99 tourist attractions in Nigeria. Below are the details of the regions and tourist attractions.

### **TOURISM REGIONS IN NIGERIA**

<p><b>A Lagos Tourism Region</b></p> <p>1 – Bar Beach Lagos            2 – Lekki Beach Lagos            3 – Badagry Beach Lagos            4 - Whispering Palms Lagos            5 – Ekpe Beach Lagos            6 – Ereko Beach Lagos            7 – National Museum Lagos            8 – Takwa Bay Island Lagos            9 – Amusement Park Lagos            10- Lachampagne Tropicana L            11– Victoria Island Lagos            12– Eko Holiday Inn, Lagos            13– Trade Fare Complex Lagos            14– Ikoyi Cementary, Lagos            15– Federal Palace Lagos            16– Ikoyi Club Lagos            17– Apapa Club Lagos</p>	<p><b>B Western Tourism Region</b></p> <p>19 – Olumo Rock            20 – Ikogosi Warm Springs            21 – Ibadan Zoo            22 – Oni of Ife Palace            23 – Old Oyo National Park            24 – Idanre Hill            25 – Ilorin Park            26 – Owu Water Falls            27 – Itakpe Hill            28 – Osun River/Waterfall            29 – Esie Stone, Kwara State.</p> <p><b>E. East Central/South Eastern Tourism Region.</b></p> <p>51 – Obudu Cattle Ranch            52 – Igbo-ukwu Terra Kota            53 – Enugu Coal Mine</p>	<p><b>C. Edo/Delta Tourism Region</b></p> <p>30 – Abraka River Resort Motel            31 – Benin Museum            32 – Abraka Turf Club            33 – Okada Wonderland            34 – Ogba Zoo, Benin City            35 – Okomu Games Reserve            36– Bembo Games Village, Abraka            37 – Emotan Statue, Benin City            38 – River Ethiopie Source, Umuaja            39 – Edo Setinary            40 – Bomadi Carnival Beach</p> <p><b>F. North-Eastern Tourism Region.</b></p> <p>69 – Borgu Games Reserve</p>
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<p>18– Sura Market Lagos</p> <p><b>D River Niger/Benue Tourism Region</b></p> <p>41 – Kainji Park/Lake 42 – Makurdi Plaza 43 – Lugard Residential House, Lokoja 44 - Makurdi Zoo 45 – Shiroro Dam 46 – Mango Park Tomb, Bussa 47 – New Bussa 48 – Lokoja Town 49 – Zwanda Hotel Lokoja 50 – Ay Guest House, Lokoja</p> <p><b>G Middle Tourism Region</b></p> <p>79 – Yankari Games Reserve 80- Jos Museum/Zoo 81 – Jos Plateau/Sherry Hill 82 – Nicon Noga Hotel Abuja 83 – Aso Rock Abuja 84 – Sheraton Abuja 85 – Gorada Water Falls 86 – Zuma Rock 87 – Abuja Club 88 – Cocoa House Abuja 89 – National Abuja Tourism</p>	<p>54 – Oguta Lake Hotel 55 – Orji River Park 56 – Enugu Zoo 57 - Umudike Cave Reserve 58- Cross River Park Oban 59- Ogbunike Cave 60 – Bakassi Peninsula 61– Enugu Town 62 – Port Harcourt Culture Center 63 – Isaac Bpro Park, Port Harcourt 64 – Cross River Park, Okwango 65 - Ogbonkin Water Falls 66 – Mary Blessing Cave, Calabar 67 - Obubra Cattle Ranch 68 – Katsina National Park</p> <p><b>H Northern Tourism Region</b></p> <p>90 – Kano Museum/Zoo 91 - Chad Basin Park 92 – Kano Wall 93 – Agura Falls 94 – Argungun Fishing Festival 95 – Nguru Games Village 96 – Sultan of Sokoto Palace 97 – Liyafia Hotel Katsina 98 – Nguru Falls 99 - Katsina National Park</p>	<p>70– Gashaka Gumti Park 71 – Gorada Water Falls 72 – Mambilla Plateau 73 – Kwa Falls 74 - Kure Falls 75 – Sambissa Game 76 - Gurara Falls 77 – Koma Village, Gongola State. 78 - Gembu</p>
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*Source: Awaritefe (2005), Evaluating Tourism Resource Areas in Nigeria for Development; sited by Jidoku, O. J., (2010), Harnessing Tourism Potentials in Nigeria for National Development.*

In a recent publication of The Guardians Newspaper, Nwakunor, (2016) articulated the observations of the Culture and tourism workers who expressed that Nigeria stands a great chance of surviving the current economic depression ravaging the entire globe if it could focus more on cultural tourism. He further noted a concern that

many people want to know why after a decade, the Calabar Carnival, which got its inspiration from the world's biggest carnival, Rio de Janeiro, is still lagging behind in terms of revenue generation. The former yearly attracts a million visitors, and in 2012 generated a whopping \$3.2 billion in tourism revenues thereby contributed a 7 percent

growth in their economy while the later is still putting itself together. This challenge does not only apply to Calabar Carnival but other tourist regions in Nigeria as well. Thus, one of the ways to address the setbacks on revenue generation of tourism in our country is by revamping the industry to meet the needs and expectations of tourists.

### **REVAMPING TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA: THE NUTS WE MUST CRACK**

In the context of this write up, to revamp tourism industry in Nigeria means to give a new and improved form or appearance to tourism industry. It also means to renovate, redecorate, refurbish, recondition, rehabilitate, rebuild, reconstruct, overhaul, modernize, update, upgrade, brighten up, remould and to give tourism a face-lift. These are familiar words that the management, ministry of tourism and government must embrace in their approach to tourism.

It is true that Nigeria has a beautiful world heritage sites with rich and cultural diversity. However, for our country to enjoy the dividends of tourism as part of her resolution to diversify the economy away from oil, then certain nuts must be cracked. The first of it all is the need to redefine our identity and correct the poor international image of Nigeria by Nigerians and foreigners. If tourism entails a travel and activities of individuals who travel to places outside their environment for pleasure, business, education, health, etc., then the need to present a good image of our country and to create an environment of hospitality will not be optional.

Another concern that needs attention is the decaying infrastructure and historic monuments of our cultural heritage. This is where the concept of revamping and upgrading comes to limelight. Those who have visited tourist centres in Kenya, South

Africa, Europe and America would testify how much attention is given to the structural facilities of their tourist sites. Lack of culture of maintenance still reflects around our tourist located areas. The level of poor sanitation and environmental abuse discourage pleasurable trip. For us to succeed in this economic venture of tourism there must be a competitive environmental and structural rehabilitation.

The role of the government in the area of policy and investment is greatly necessary in this industry. Competent personnel for the management of this industry should be considered without which every effort as regards the viability and economic contribution will be a nightmare. Government should encourage partnership with foreign countries for culture and tourism collaboration. This will go a long way to promote patronage of local and foreign tourists and also give way for export of tourist products and attractions especially by talented Nigerians who travel abroad for music, cultural and film shows. As observed by *Awodiya (2016)*, countries that made so much money from tourism in 2015 include: U.S.A, \$177.20 billion; Spain, \$65.20 billion; China, \$ 56.90 billion; France, \$55.40 billion; Macau, \$50.80 billion; Italy, \$45.50 billion; United Kingdom, \$45.30 billion; Germany, \$43.30 billion; Australia \$42.20 billion; Hong Kong \$41.30 billion and Thailand \$38.40 billion. In Africa, South Africa grossed \$35.00 billion; Morocco \$34.00 billion; Namibia \$33.80 billion; Kenya \$32.00 billion; Tunisia \$31.80 billion while Nigeria trailed with a depressing \$2.79 million earning! Indeed, Nigeria ranks 131 out of 141 countries in tourism competitiveness index in 2015. According to him, we are still miles away from the countries that make the money from tourism development in terms of naira and dollars from 2015 to the present.

Security challenges today are another factor that militates against the progress of the industry. Every tourist looks forward to an effective security system that guarantees the security of lives and property. With the rate of killing in our country today, ranging from Boko Haram, herdsmen-farmers crises, tribal wars, religious intolerance, kidnapping, political turbulence, corruption, armed robbery, fraud etc, our progress and patronage by local and foreign tourists in the industry is greatly limited. Tourists detest an atmosphere of tension and if this industry must contribute to the nation's revenue, the government must address the challenge of insecurity in our nation.

Other areas that need attention include our transport system, quality service that ensures customer satisfaction, electricity distribution, accommodation facilities, leisure and entertainment centers. These are basic areas that determine the rate of patronage by tourists in a country. Those in these areas should be assisted to meet the professional standard required of them so as to render their services to the satisfaction required by consumers.

### CONCLUSION

It has been established that tourism has a great economic impact through the income and wealth it creates for the people and the nation. It is also considered as a measure towards diversification of the nation's economy to create job opportunities and to sustain her development beyond recession. The resounding approach proposed by this research is the need for revamping this manna from heaven called tourism and cultural heritage in Nigeria. The income this industry generates, the employment it creates, the benefits it gives to the local communities that house the tourist attraction, the recreation it enhances, the poverty it reduces as well as foreign

exchange it generates should motivate the commitment of the government and private investors towards ensuring the viability and patronage of this project. To facilitate its benefits therefore, the government should address the political, cultural, managerial, economic and environmental challenges faced by this industry.

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