



Research Paper

Benefits of Sustaining Tourism in Nigeria: The Bonny Island Tourism Hub Narrative.

Ibienebo Edith Pepple

School Of Business Studies and Management Technology
Federal Polytechnic of Oil And Gas, Bonny
Rivers State.

ABSTRACT

Over the years, tourism has become a popular global activity, it has been an important sector contributing significantly to the economies of many countries of the world such as Thailand, France, Mexico, Spain to mention but a few. Evidence shows that tourism is a great tool for development and poverty alleviation in developing countries. When sustained, tourism can lead to employment diversification on a local level which reduces the vulnerability of the poor. It is on this backdrop that this Article examines the benefits of tourism to the Nigerian economy, how sustaining tourism can benefit the community and culture preserved.

Keywords: Benefits, Sustaining, Tourism, Nigeria, BITH.

Received 25 Apr, 2022; Revised 05 May, 2022; Accepted 07 May, 2022 © The author(s) 2022.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism belongs to the tertiary sector of the economy generally known as the service sector. The service sector consist of the production of services instead of end products, this means that tourism is an intangible product and as such eluding or non-existent to many. That notwithstanding, the tourism industry has become an important source of income for many regions and even for an entire country. Tourism brings large amount of income into a local economy in the form of payment for goods and services needed by tourists, accounting as of 2011 for 30% of the world's trade in services and as an invisible export for 6% of overall exports of goods and services (UNWTO). Tourism also generates opportunities for employment in the service sector of the economy associated with it, such as the hospitality industry in terms of transportation services (airlines, cruise ships, trains and taxicabs); lodging (including Hotels, home stays, Resorts and renting our rooms); entertainment venues (such as Zoo, Museum, Recreational Parks, Restaurants, Casinos, Shopping malls, Music venues etc) and in addition to goods bought by tourists including souvenirs.

According to WTO (1993), "Tourism encompasses the activities of persons travelling and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes". Tourism as a socio-economic phenomenon comprises the activities and experiences of tourists and visitors away from their area of resident and serviced by the travel and tourism industry and host destination. Tourism can be categorized as International and Domestic tourism: international tourism simply put, is when people visit a foreign country. In order to travel to a foreign country, one needs a valid passport, visa, health documents; foreign exchange etc. Domestic tourism on the other hand, is the tourism activity of the people within their own country. Traveling within the same country is easier because it does not require formal traveling documents and tedious formalities like compulsory health checks and foreign exchange. In domestic tourism, a traveler generally does not face many language problems or currency exchange issues.

SUSTAINING DOMESTIC TOURISM IN NIGERIA: THE BONNY ISLAND TOURISM HUB NARRATIVE.

Nigeria is a populous nation of over 206 million people with well over 250 ethnic groups, diverse languages and rich cultural heritage. This in itself puts the country on a good pedestal for domestic tourism but it is most unfortunate that over the years we have concentrated so much on crude oil and neglecting the travel and tourism industry. Across the world, tourism has evolved to become one of the fastest growing industries.

This growth has been driven by advanced technology in travel and an increased holiday culture. With an endowed geographical landscape which comprises the coastal beaches, mountains, historical monuments, wildlife, UNESCO approved heritage centers and diverse culture, Nigeria should be able to create a niche in domestic and global tourism. Domestic tourism has the greatest capabilities of encouraging Nigerians to celebrate their own values, tourist attractions and cultural heritage thereby building a sustainable tourism industry that can attract investment.

Harnessing and sustaining the tourist attractions and destinations in Nigeria can contribute about 10% or more to the GDP, this will go a long way in improving the economy and the living standard of the people. Some of the most serene destinations located across the country are worthy of mention here: Azumiri, Blue River Rose, the long Juju Shrine of Arochukwu, Yola Municipality, Ibeno Beach, Ogbunike Cave, Rojemy Tourist Village in Anambra State, Pleasure Park Port Harcourt, Finima Nature Park Bonny, Igbo-Ukwu, Yankari National Park, Wikki Warm Springs in Bauchi State, the Hills of Benue located in the middle belt region of Nigeria, Ikyogen Hills, Ushogbo Hills, Bassa Hills, Lake Chad, Obudu Ranch, Silicon Hill, Mbari Cultural Centres, the home of Mbari sculptural houses, Eke – Nguru in Abia State, Oguta Lake Holiday Complex, Birnin, Kudu Rock Painting, NOK Village, Terra Cotta, heads of animals and man; and weapons of war are abundant on display (National Tourism Development Corporation NTDC). This list is by no means exhaustive as Nigeria has a lot to offer to the world of tourism.

The development of tourism in Nigeria cannot be achieved without the collective efforts and investment commitment of a Public – Private partnership with major efforts from local communities and state governments like the Bonny Island Tourism Hub (BITH) and other community based tourism organizations.

Bonny Island Tourism Hub (BITH) is a tourism organization base in Bonny Island. Bonny is one of the twenty – three Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. It is a riverine area with over 220 populations; it plays host community to some multinational companies in Nigeria among which are Shell SPDC, Chevron, Agip Oil Company, Nigerian LNG Limited and others. The BITH is the brain – child of the King of Bonny - His Majesty, King Dr. Edward Asimini William DappaPepple III, JP, CON, Edward I, Perekule XI, Amayanabo and Natural Ruler of Grand Bonny Kingdom and the Nigerian LNG Limited under the leadership of Mr. Tony Attah and Mrs. Enyofatai – Williams. The idea is to make Bonny Island a mini Dubai in the nearest future. BITH was created in 2021 with the training of some young minds to drive the process. Trainees were trained by a giant name in the tourism industry – Goge Africa who has over twenty-one years of experience in tourism; they were trained in both theoretical and experiential and have acquired wide range of knowledge in tourism. Today, we have the Bonny Tourism Ambassadors driving tourism in Nigeria and selling Bonny to the world. Since its creation, the BITH has hosted some tourist and tourism activities within the Island in conjunction with the Nigerian LNG Limited.

Bonny is a tourist destination with beautiful attractions and rich cultural heritage. Bonny played a major role during the Atlantic slave trade of 16th through 19th century because of its coastlines and location. Bonny is also known for housing the British Consulate Building in Nigeria which is now being rebuilt to be the Bonny Consulate. Some of the artifacts and tourist products in Bonny includes: Canon guns, Proto – Cathedral in Nigeria (1889), Bishop Crowther’s Chapel, Crowther’s boat, the Holy Bible given by Queen Victoria of England to the King of Bonny in 1861, Ancient wells, Bust of King William Dappa Pepple I, Manilas (ancient currency) etc. Other tourist attraction attractions are: the Finima Nature Park, the NLNG Ra Beach, Park Community and Light-house Beaches, Love Garden and Night Life in Bonny. Some seasonal activities that attract tourists to the Island includes: Bonny Fresh Fish Festival (Bonfest), Finima Beach Party, Bonny Cultural Carnival, Bonny Marathon, Christmas Funfair and others. These are tourist products that could be harnessed to world standard to sustain domestic tourism.

BENEFITS OF SUSTAINING DOMESTIC TOURISM IN NIGERIA.

The benefits of a community where a popular tourist destination is domiciled cannot be overemphasized. This is the more reason why stakeholders in the tourist industry have encouraged the government to revamp the many tourist destinations in Nigeria which are in dire need of attention. This will enable the host community to enjoy the many benefits of such an attraction. With several business-related activities associated with tourism, the industry has a tremendous potential of generating employment as well as earning foreign exchange. There are many countries in the world whose economies are primarily driven by tourism. For example; Mauritius, Malaysia, Singapore, Fiji and the Caribbean. Tourism can contribute to the economic growth of not only the host community but also the country at large. Some of the benefits of sustaining tourism include:

- Employment generation: tourism creates a large number of jobs among direct service providers such as, hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, tour operators, guide and tour escorts and also among indirect service providers such as suppliers, supplementary accommodation etc.

- Human Capacity Development: Tourism creates opportunities that enable an individual to be self-employed and useful to the society
- Increased Standard of Living: there will be nothing like capital flight because tourists are spending in the host community and the money made will be injected into the economy of the host community thus improving the standard of living.
- Tourism helps to preserve the culture and traditions of a people
- Improve Infrastructural development: The additional revenue that comes into a community also benefits the government. It means more money will be available to give these destinations much needed facelift. This also means the infrastructure improves with new roads being built, parts developed and public spaces improved, the better and the more visitors and investors
- Tourism stimulates profitable domestic industries, transportation systems, handicrafts (souvenirs) and others
- Tourism helps to protect and promote Nigerians cultural heritage as a resource for home grown socio-economic development.
- Tourism generated revenue can be used to fund capital projects in tourism and other sectors.
- Tourism creates jobs, new business opportunities and strengthens local economies
- Tourism protects natural and cultural resources which improve the quality of life for residents and travelers who participate in the services and attractions.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Finima Nature Park in Bonny Island should be upgraded to include a polo club – horse riding is an interesting tourist activity most tourists like to engage in when on tour.
- Bonny is an Island with many seas and lakes, kayaking will not only be a tourist attraction but also a revenue generating activity to the host community. I will therefore recommend that the lake at Finima Girls Secondary School and/or the lake at NLNG drive way to the industrial area (IA) be developed and equipped with kayaks for kayaking.
- Nigeria as a country should diversify its economy by channeling at least 20% of its resources to the travel, tourism and Hospitality sector.
- Insecurity and regular travel warnings by western countries have created global negative press around Nigeria leading to poor perception amongst foreign tourists. The government needs to allay the fears of prospective tourists by developing a strong political will to address these concerns rather than denying and then abdicating responsibility.
- Regular adverts and videography of tourist activities, attractions and destinations in all 36 states of the country on social and mass media will go a long way in boosting tourism in Nigeria
- Beaches and seashores should be developed to Resorts for better utilization and tourist purposes
- Nigeria needs to have a fully functional website which provides information to tourists on planning itineraries, visa requirements, applications and events among others.
- Every state of the nation should have an annual tourist activity/exhibition to sustain domestic tourism in Nigeria. For example: the Calabar Carnival of Cross River State, the Carniriv of Rivers State (now extinct) should be revived.

III. CONCLUSION

The benefits of tourism to a people cannot be overemphasized; more so in Nigeria where too much emphasis has been laid on the Oil and Gas sector. The Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Sector is one among many sectors in which education and skill is not much of a prerequisite; this means that anyone can function well in tourism. Tourism generated income can be used on a national and local level to better education, improve infrastructures, fund conservative efforts and promote domestic tourism.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Alagoa, E.J., & Fombo A. (1972). A Chronicle of Grand Bonny. Ibadan University Press
- [2]. Agosto, & Co. (2010). Tourism – Nigeria’s Untapped Goldmine: The Hidden Cash Cow. www.agusto.com/publication
- [3]. Jumia, Food. (2017, October 5). Benefits of Tourism to the Host community.
- [4]. Nwanne C. (2019, December 7). Abuja Jabamah: Promoting Domestic Tourism in Nigeria. Theguardian.ng
- [5]. Obuoforibo B.A. (2001). Topics in Bonny Church History. CSS Press, 50A Hospital Road, Port Harcourt
- [6]. Tourism Notes. (2018). Industries Related to Tourism. www.tourismnotes.com
- [7]. World Economic Forum. (2017). The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report