

## **EMERGING SECURITY CHALLENGES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: EFFECT ON THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY**

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### **Abstract**

The economic potential of the tourism industry in Nigeria is enormous. Tourism is an increasingly important source of income, employment and wealth in many countries and its rapid expansion has been considered as an interesting possibility for sustainable development, including poverty reduction, in Nigeria. However, the industry faces numerous challenges such as civil unrest, kidnapping for ransom and, recently, terrorism. This paper examines the consequences of terrorism and insecurity on tourism with particular reference to its adverse effect on the Nigerian economy. It equally attempts to proffer measures aimed at eliminating the negative influences of insecurity in Nigeria so as to increase the possibilities of increased international tourist arrivals. In the process, the analytical research methodology is applied and recommendations offered. Tourism development depends totally on the circumstances of lasting peace and security. Therefore, it is recommended that stakeholders in the tourism industry should adopt every available rational means to tackle these security risks in order to guarantee sustainable tourism in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *insecurity, terrorism, economy, tourism development, poverty reduction.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout the world, the tourism industry has been significantly affected by threats of terrorism and instances of terrorist attacks in the modern era. Safety and security are vital to providing quality in tourism. More

than any other economic activity, the success or failure of a tourism destination depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors.

Terrorism is an issue of a disputed concept which is open to different interpretations regarding motives and

causes. However, it can be broadly defined as “premeditated, politically motivated violence against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience” (US Department of State, 2004). While violent aggression appears to be the preferred method, there is scope for other types of terrorism such as hacking into computers, food poisoning, kidnapping for ransom and release of toxic chemicals.

Another trend has been an expansion in the role of terrorism in the name of religion, illustrated by Al-Qaeda and its actions (Henderson, Chew, Lee, and Lee; 2010) and, recently, the Boko Haram sect, as well as the Niger-Delta Militants in Nigeria.

Tourists and the tourism industry have exhibited resilience and some researchers assert that tourists may not be unduly worried about terrorism (Larsen, Brun and Øgaard; 2009). However, Henderson et al (2010) assert that opinions and recovery from a terrorist-related tourism crisis depend upon the way affairs are managed and subsequent developments. Repeated cases and an official failure to act decisively will seriously depress demand in the long run. In other circumstances, society may indeed be more tolerant of the threat of terrorism because of familiarity and adaptation as well as the desire to demonstrate defiance. Common sense additionally tells us that the chance of an individual tourist being caught up in terrorism is extremely remote and risks should be put into perspective, although this can be difficult in view of the intense media attention to any such stories which heightens feelings of danger with a lingering effect.

Despite a degree of popular resistance, terrorism constitutes a possible crisis of great magnitude for the tourism industry. It has the potential to

unsettle a country’s government, precipitate widespread fear, disrupt daily operations and provoke negative emotions and unfavourable destination images. There are also practical problems of insurance. Planning to avoid such situations, or at least minimize damage should they occur, thus becomes imperative.

### **THE ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF TOURISM IN NIGERIA**

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. It is an increasingly important source of income, employment and wealth in many countries and its rapid expansion has been considered as an interesting possibility for sustainable development, including poverty reduction, in Nigeria. The economic potential of the tourism industry in Nigeria is enormous as it can assist in diversifying the nation’s mono cultural economy. In the principal analysis of the impact of tourism on the economy of Nigeria, according to Dantata (2011), Company Income tax generated by the hospitality sector in the year 2005 was recorded at ₦313m. Spending by international tourists in that year has a direct impact on the national economy estimated at US\$280/~~₦~~36b. Downstream economic impacts from the export revenues of international tourists spending generated additional gross revenue of US\$224m/~~₦~~29b in the same year.

Another major benefit of tourism is its capacity to stimulate infrastructural development. The benefits from infrastructural development, perhaps, justified the primary reasons for implementing tourism programmes and activities in most states in Nigeria (Adora, 2010). Recently, most state governors in Nigeria, like Donald Duke, former Cross River State Governor, embarked on the development of new

infrastructures and improvement of the existing infrastructures such as airports, roads, water supply, electricity and hotels. Tourism stimulates employment creation in Nigeria (Okey, 2003; Okpolo, Emeka and Dimlati; 2008). Globally, the tourism trade is a valuable source of employment (Bhatia, 2002). In the case of Nigeria, the development of new infrastructures provides opportunity for job creation. Certainly, the tourism sector and its sub sectors employ a large number of people, and provide a wide range of jobs ranging from the skilled to the highly specialized. As Adora reported, “the construction of roads, airports or airport maintenance, water supply, electricity, construction and renovation of hotels and other accommodation units create jobs for thousands of workers, both skilled and unskilled.”

Tourism is an important medium for promoting international goodwill and friendship between Nigeria and other nations of the world. Since tourism is a cultural phenomenon promoting the varied cultures and lifestyle, it helps to foster regional understanding, cooperation, social education among Nigerians and different regions of the world, especially in Africa.

Above all, the cost and benefit of tourism development are obvious in Nigeria. If tourism is linked to the development of Nigeria, and its very existence depends entirely on adequate peace and tranquility, then, it would be right to study the constraints and adopt measures to counter them. It is imperative, therefore, to identify some of the hazards that may impede tourism development in order to suggest measures aimed at removing or reducing their negative influences.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY ISSUES IN FOCUS**

Safety and security have always been indispensable condition for travel and tourism. But it is an incontestable fact that safety and security issues gained a much bigger importance in the last two decades in tourism. Changes in the world during the last two decades were enormous. István and Krisztina (2010) observed that due to terrorist acts, local wars, natural disasters, epidemics and pandemics, security has significantly decreased. The travel and tourism industry could not avoid the negative impacts and consequences of these events. Moreover, some of these events manifested the vulnerability of tourism both on global and regional levels (István and Krisztina).

Safety and security issues have been treated as important conditions of tourism. It is a well known fact that the Ancient Olympic Games were so important to the Greek ‘Polises’, that all warfare was suspended for its duration. (There is still something that could be learnt from the Ancient Greeks). The great extent of risks contributed to the decline of travel in the Middle Ages (István and Krisztina, 2010).

Safety and security issues in travel and tourism came to the front by the evolution of the mass tourism from the beginning of the 1950s. The evolutionary process of mass tourism development, according to István and Krisztina (2010), include;

1. Travel and tourism is not any more an activity of a narrow social class but the whole widening middle class is getting progressively involved into it.
2. Tourism scope covers more and more countries and regions in the world. Not only highly developed countries enabled to generate out-going tourism flows are getting

involved in tourism but also countries from the so called third world. For them, tourism is part of their economic development strategy.

3. The rapid and scenic development of transport (aviation, automotive industry) contributed to the rise in (geographical) mobility.

Due to these reasons, the safety and security issues gained a bigger importance as tourism itself became one of the largest industries in the world economy (contributing to the GDP, number of people employed in the sector, extent of investments into the tourism industry, etc).

#### **SECURITY HAZARDS IN NIGERIA: EFFECT ON TOURISM**

Security has been a major problem for the growth of tourism for a number of years. Terrorist attacks or political unrest in different parts of the country have adversely affected the sentiments of foreign tourists. Crime, violent acts and civil unrests that impede national security and socio-political and economic progress are common features of Nigeria societies. However, the statistics of crime in Nigeria is far from being a reliable index. This is because many crimes occur in Nigeria but are either not reported or are unknown to the police and other security agencies. Therefore, they are not on the official crime statistics. Dambazau (2007) acknowledges the manifestation of crime in Nigeria. He argues that in addition to the conventional crimes of armed robbery, murder, assault and so on, Nigeria has been on the global crime map since the 1980s. Kidnapping, drug trafficking, advance fee fraud (419), human trafficking and money laundry, have been particularly identified with Nigerian transnational criminal syndicates. Crime is a threat to Nigerian

national security because its impact is felt on all aspect of human activity such as food, health, environmental, personal, political and social activities.

According to the Economists Intelligent Unit (EIU), out of 59 countries evaluated, Nigeria is rated the riskiest country for business in the world (Dambazau, 2010). The author further reported that: "Nigeria is an insecure environment for commercial operations. Security risk arises at three levels. The first comes from rising violent crime, (from) simple armed robbery (to) carjacking and violent attacks... second, companies can be subjected to direct attack or blackmail... facilities can be vandalized and staff kidnapped. Third, incidence of inter-communal violence has risen... Nigeria's ill equipped police force... has been ineffective in stemming crime wave."

Several ethnic and ethno-religious conflicts have occurred in Nigeria between 2001 to date. Adora (2010) observed the Oyadama and Nko (Cross River) war in 2009 in Maiduguri. The Boko Haram crisis has lingered since 2009, while the Jos ethno-religious crisis has also persisted since 2010. It is pertinent to note that reasonable numbers of our tourist products are found in these states and communities. Jos, the capital of Plateau State has tourist attractions ranging from beautiful sceneries, spectacular rock formations, waterfalls, lakes, game reserves, exquisite hotels, zoological gardens, wildlife park, museum and so on. Unfortunately, the recurrent ethnic and ethno-religious crisis has turned Plateau State, Nigeria's foremost tourists' haven, into the home of unrest, hate and a deadly sanctuary – this makes tourists jettison the city. The implication is that the pace of tourism development will nose dive unless the ethnic and ethno-religious crises and tribal wars are stopped.

As a result of these social unrests, international tourism receipts have fluctuated negatively. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, Compendium of Tourism Statistics and data files (2006 – 2010), and IMF and World Bank export estimates for year 2011, international tourism receipt in Nigeria went down to 0.96% (\$738,000,000) in 2010. This was against 1.36% (\$791,000,000) in 2009, 1.09% (\$959,000,000) in 2008, and 1.41% as at 2002 (WTO, 2012). Henderson et al (2010) confirmed that safety and security issues, as well as civil unrests are factors that discourage both local and international tourists from visiting tourist destinations and patronizing hotels. The fluctuation in Nigeria's international tourist receipts is surely as a result of the local security challenges over the years.

### **Vulnerability of the Hospitality Sub-Sector**

Stafford, Yu and Armoo (2002) warned that terrorist incidents at tourist destinations can have very harmful impacts on the hospitality sector as a whole if, there are dramatic falls in arrivals, financial and less tangible costs to individual properties are acute when they are the scene of the outrage. Hotels and relaxation centres have a history of being targeted; some in popular holiday centres and others in troubled states where guests are mainly citizens and foreigners travelling for business or official purposes. Notable examples are the coordinated bomb explosions at a Military Relaxation Centre and the twin bomb blast at the Eagle Square in Abuja Nigeria during the 2011 (50 years) Independence Day celebration.

The susceptibility of the hospitality sub-sector was made apparent following the Boko Haram attacks in Borno and Yobe States in October, 2011.

The US Embassy had received information that the Boko Haram may plan to attack several locations and hotels in Abuja during the Sallah holiday. All US government personnel were instructed to avoid these locations and previously scheduled events were cancelled. The locations, according to Nze (2011) include; the Nikon Luxury, Sheraton Hotels Abuja and the Transcorp Hilton Hotel. Fears of the immediate impact of the security situation on the tourism industry in Abuja, in particular, came during the Moslem Sallah holiday when the media was awash of reports of low patronage recorded by most, if not all hotels in Abuja and other parts of the Federal Capital Territory. The insistence by the United States Embassy on the earlier warning threw the seeming recovering Nigeria's tourism sector into relapse!

Reasons for targeting hotels are that they offer a high degree of access, usually 24 hours a day (Henderson et al, 2010). Larger hotels have many public spaces, entrances and exits and foreigners may gather there (Horner and Swarbrooke, 2004). Meetings and conferences are hosted and there are restaurants which might be frequented by prominent businessmen and government officials. Properties which are part of large international chains are symbols of their country and government, hence the envy of terrorist groups.

### **POSSIBLE SECURITY REMEDIES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

Security is an uncomfortable issue for many tourism businesses, including hotels, with a feeling that publicizing measures could negate their effectiveness. There are also reservations about inciting unfounded fears and losing customers as a result. Nevertheless, risks awareness and the importance of security amongst tourism practitioners and the

larger society have risen since September 2001. For example, Henderson et al (2010) observed that the civil aviation industry has been compelled to take unprecedented steps at considerable inconvenience to passengers in a bid to thwart terrorism in the air. There is an appreciation in other tourism sectors that tourists are cognizant of hazards and want assurance that safeguard have been installed. In an indication of the changing climate, hotels have borrowed ideas from airlines and airports such as checking of vehicles, inspection of luggage and screening of people by metal detectors.

In the case of Nigeria, in particular, the hotels sub-sector, which remains the only private sector driven industry in the travel and tourism sector in Nigeria, may not on their own have the capacity to handle an improved security system to tackle the latest security threat. Therefore, stakeholders in the tourism industry should liaise with the Federal, State and Local Governments should form a Joint Security Tourism Task Force (JSTTF) that consists of the armed forces, the police, private security agents, civil defence and local vigilante groups. The importance of the vigilante group is monitor infiltration into the local communities by suspected terrorists where the security arrangement of the government may not be able to cover. Where security hazards are identified by vigilante groups and private security agents, government agents and the armed forces will therefore provide rapid response to arrest such security situations.

Security techniques such as proper identification of employees at tourist location, protective barriers, alarm systems, surveillance are essential. It also should not be forgotten that terrorists too are becoming sophisticated in their methods and harnessing technologies. As a result, it is imperative to incorporate

potent security stratagems into building designs that would suggest that the environment is welcoming and secure against assorted manifestations of criminality.

Organizers of tourism events should always evaluate security hazards and pay attention to all security risks that may likely occur and cause any amount of damage to tourists and the destination. Consequently, the local community should be involved in organizing these events to ensure collective responsibility in the protection of local and community resources by local stakeholders through creation of checkpoints at strategic points on connecting roads within the tourist destination, where motorists and travellers would be routinely searched for firearms, explosives, bombs and for the purpose of apprehending suspected terrorists.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Security challenges seem to continue in the progress of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the tourism industry remains vulnerable. The quantity and quality of security provided for tourism is a function of the amount of fund allocated to that effect. Hence, security for tourist destinations and tourism in general, should be given a financial priority by government to reflect its importance.

For the hospitality sub-sector, investment in the recruitment of specialist staff, employee education and training, and particularly, technological improvement will determine how well hotels respond to terrorist threats. In cases of construction of new hotels, especially in higher risk locations, security should be given due consideration by planners and architects in their designs.

Since tourism is becoming a national ideology for most developing

nations, it is imperative for the Nigerian education system to incorporate tourism studies in its educational curriculum at the primary and secondary levels, as well as make tourism a general study at the tertiary level in, at least, a semester. This will go a long way in inculcating the (yet lacking) recreational attitude and tourism culture among the mass of the middle and low class Nigerians.

The media have a crucial role to play in promoting emerging destinations. The relationship between tourism and the media is vital and complex. Tourism is

highly dependant on media reporting because the vast majority of travel decisions are made by people who have never seen the destination first hand for themselves. The powerful effects of media communications can bring sweeping changes of attitudes and behaviour among the key actors in local, national and global tourism for peace, security and sustainable development. The social, cultural, economic, political and environmental benefits of tourism would usher in monumental and historic changes in the country.

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