

## The Task, Challenges and Strategies for the Marketing of Tourism and Relaxation Services in Nigeria



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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper was to examine the tasks, challenges and strategies for the marketing of tourism and relaxation services in Nigeria. For the achievement of this objective, a documentary research approach, which involves a review of secondary data from past and current literature relating to the economic benefits of tourism, the Nigerian tourism industry, the process of tourism marketing, the strategies for an efficient tourism marketing and finally, the challenges of marketing tourism products in Nigeria was carried out. Findings indicate that Nigeria is blessed with a variety of tourism potentials that could make it a globally competitive tourism destination. However, various social, cultural, political and technological challenges serve as an impediment to the achievement of this feat. In the light of the above findings, suggestions and recommendation that borders on creating a conducive atmosphere for vibrant tourism industry were made.

**Keywords:** Tasks, Challenges, Strategies, Marketing, Tourism, Relaxation services.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to [Dabour \(2003\)](#) tourism comprise of the activities of person travelling to, and staying outside their usual permanent places of residence for not more than one year for leisure, business, and other purposes. Put in another way, tourism industry includes all socio economic activities that are directly and indirectly involved in providing services to tourists which includes services to the transportation sector, hotels and lodging, food and beverage, cultural and entertainment, banking and finance, promotion and publicity services. In a report by [World Tourism Organization \(2004\)](#) tourism is today, one of the largest and dynamically developing sectors of external economic activities. Its high growth and development rates, considerable volumes of foreign currency inflows, infrastructure development, and introduction of new management and educational experience actively affect various sectors of the economy which positively contribute to the social and economic development of a country on an overall basis. Furthermore, most highly developed western countries, such as Switzerland, Austria, and France have accumulated a big deal of their social and economic welfare on profits from tourism ([WTO, 2004](#)).

As argued by [Dukic & Stankovic \(2009\)](#) the economic and financial benefit of tourism can range from foreign exchange earnings, employment generation, stimulation of infrastructure development, and contribution to local economy. They positioned tourism as an economic activity that has a growing importance for the development of not only a particular region but also the national economy as a whole. According to them, in the last 50 years tourism revenue in the EU increased with the average annual growth rate of 11% and has a ¼ share in the total service export. Furthermore, tourism is the most important sector and major source of foreign exchange earnings in Thailand, Australia, and New Zealand. It is second in Hong Kong, Malaysia and the Philippines, and ranked third in Singapore and Indonesia ([World Tourism Organization, 2004](#)). In the area of employment generation [Antonsen & Marie \(2010\)](#) revealed that approximately 4% of the total numbers of employees in the EU work in the tourism sector and that in the countries belonging to the group of 20 most developed, the percentage is higher and totals 5% with Employment growth in the sector above average for the whole economy. In their analysis, the share of tourism in gross domestic product (GDP) in these countries is 4% while the industry contributes about 7.6% of the world's total employments which is a number of 219,810,000 jobs in 2009. They further predicted that this number is expected to grow to 8.4%, or 275,688,000, by 2019. Similarly, tourism can contribute to the enhancement of regional areas through public and private sector investment in new infrastructure and facilities. This view was fully supported by [Meredith, Dredge, Cox, Buultjens, Holick, Lee, Pearlman, & Lacrois \(2010\)](#) who revealed that as at December 2008, 52 percent of expenditure by domestic overnight visitors, 58 percent of domestic day visitors and 20 percent of international visitor expenditure was spent on the regional areas of Australia and amounts to \$23.2 billion, \$8.2 billion and \$26.4 billion respectively.

The countries in the gulf region of the world, with a reputation of having the highest deposit of crude oil have discovered their economic vulnerability. This in addition to the volatility of oil price and limited employment generation have been key factors driving these nations to diversify away from oil and gas industry ([Shankman, 2012](#)). With the depletion of oil reserves and limited gas reserves in countries such as Oman, Bahrain and Dubai, these countries have been shifting their focus from oil to the non-oil sector. As a part of this shift, the governments of the GCC nations are strengthening their respective tourism sectors and developing the infrastructure to facilitate it. This is not only likely to aid leisure demand for hotels but also business demand as the development of other service sectors is likely to make the business environment attractive for corporate players ([Shankman, 2012](#)). Dubai's tourism figures are at an all-time high as new figures reveal that the sector contributed 31 per cent of the emirate's GDP in 2011 ([Rai, 2012](#)). The direct contribution of travel and tourism to Saudi Arabia's GDP was about \$14.9 billion or 2.9 percent of GDP in 2012 up from \$10.4 billion or 2.7% in 2009 as a result of the Kingdom's efforts in providing the necessary travel infrastructure to boost religious, business and domestic tourism. As posited by ([Rai 2012](#)) the country is spending more than \$500 million on expanding its existing airports and is planning a new \$7 billion airport in Jeddah in the same year. Nigeria is a country of 148,093,000 inhabitants ([UNDATA, 2009](#)). The Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba tribes are the major ethnic groups and constitute over 50 per cent of the population. The other ethnic groups are Tiv, Ibibio, Ijaw, Kanuri, Nupe, Gwari, Igala, Jukun, Idoma, Fulani, Edo, Urhobo and Ijaw. Aside the population disparity and its associated tourism potentials, Nigeria has a vast and varieties of tourism attraction all over the country and possess all the ingredients that can attract tourists from across the world and thus, ensure an efficient and productive tourism industry. Such attraction scenes includes the Yankari

game reserve in Bauchi, the Bagauda lake resort, the Ikogosi warm spring in Ekiti, the Obudu cattle ranch in cross river and the Olumo rock in Abeokuta, Lekki conservation centre, Lagos State, Cross Rivers National Park in Cross Rivers State to mention a few. All these can make significant contribution to the national economy if adequately explored by the government. However, harnessing these potentials for the development of its tourism industry has been an almost impossible feat for concerned stakeholders. This is as a result of the fact that the Federal, States and Local governments, which are the three tiers of government places more emphasis on the oil generated revenue (World Bank, 2009) and the national sharing formula (Adejokun, 2009).

The World Bank has allocated over \$3.5 billion (USD) to tourism development projects in developing regions (Hawkins & Mann, 2007). Whilst the World Bank investment is indicative of the tourism industry as a viable industry, its development and sustainability still remains unclear in countries that have benefited from such investment including Nigeria (Ashikodi, 2012). In other words, contrary to the anticipated turnaround as a result of these huge spending by external donors, the country's tourism sector remains under-developed and continues to lag behind their counterparts in Asia, Europe and America. Against this backdrop, this study is set out to examine the process involved in tourism management, the challenges of marketing tourism and relaxation services in Nigeria and the strategies for achieving an efficient tourism management system. It is anticipated that findings will uncovered will serve as a framework for informed public policies that can aid in the rejuvenation and sustainability of the tourism Industry for economic benefits in Nigeria.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. The Nigerian Tourism and Relaxation Industry

As a result of the decline in the oil revenue and fallout from the global financial crisis, many erstwhile oil producing countries including Nigeria have identified the need for a diversification of the economy and thus make provision for income generation through the non oil sectors. Hence the Tourism sector has been earmarked as one of priority sectors crucial to the survival of the economy and the achievement of the government seven point economic growth agenda and its vision 2020 economic program (Nigerian Institute for Tourism and Hospitality, 2010). This is in anticipation that repositioning the sector will make it a major source of revenue generation (NIHOTOUR, 2010).

Nigeria is composed of 36 States including the Federal capital territory Abuja and 774 Local government councils (NBS, 2015). Each state implements policies and directive from the Federal Ministry of Culture and tourism. The States are also responsible for initiating projects and regulating land allocation for tourism projects and for tourism development within their respective boundaries and also regulate the operations of hotels and catering outlets in line with the Federal government National Tourism Policy (NIHOTOUR, 2010).

### 2.2. The Tourism System

The functional tourism system according to Weaver &Oppermann (2000) is based on supply and demand factors. The demand factors indicate that there must be a tourism market which could be in form of existing or potential customers. Such market may be international, national and local or a combination of all these. Equally, customers within markets could be general interest customers, such as holiday makers or leisure seekers, while others may be special interest customers with specific interest to satisfy (Weaver &Oppermann,

2000). The supply factor stipulates that attractions and activities must be available to induce tourists to the area and such attraction may be natural in form of parks, beach, marine, archeological sites, and historical places. Cultural features such as arts and entertainment, crafts, traditional architectural sites, economic activities, traditional customs and ceremonies, man-made features, such as theme parks, casinos, special events such as festivals, fairs and sport competitions. According to [Ducik & Stankovic \(2009\)](#) these two major factors must be combined in a tourism and relaxation marketing process to provide for a match for different customer segments.

### **2.3. The Tasks Involved in Tourism and Relaxation Management**

According to [Carey & Font \(2005\)](#) many entrepreneurs fails to understand the nature of the tourist industry as a marketplace and assume that because they have an authentic and exciting tourism product, clients will find them. Underestimating that the challenges, as well as the cost of distributing tourism products is a key reason why new tourism ventures fail. Thus the process and tasks involved in an efficient tourism and relaxation management as identified by [Carey & Font \(2005\)](#) are first, conducting a thorough analysis of the market resources, competitors, and the tourism business environment. Second, borders on taking decision on the strategic choices of how to segment available tourism markets, determining the markets to be targeted, planning an appropriate product positioning and lastly, determining the marketing mix, which in the basic sense means how the product will be offered to tourists, the price that will be charged, how the product will be communicated, and how it will be distributed. The processes involved in these tasks, are comprehensively examined below.

#### **2.3.1. Analysis of Market, Resources, & Competitors Environment**

This according to [Kotler & Keller \(2009\)](#) is the act of monitoring key macro environment forces such as demographic, economic, natural, technological, political- legal, and socio cultural, and such microenvironment factors as customers, competitors, suppliers, distributors and dealers that affects the profit generation potentials of the industry. The internal environment consists of the resources available to manage efficient tourism activities. Such resources could be in form of the skills or expertise available, financial resources, organizational cultures. All this must be appropriately analyzed to acquire that information that will aid in goal and strategic formulation in addition to making decisions related to market segmenting, targeting and positioning of available tourism products and services [Kotler & Keller \(2009\)](#)

#### **2.3.2. Market Segmenting, Targeting & Positioning**

Market segmentation according to [David \(2010\)](#) is the process of dividing the total market for a products/services, or products/services categories into a relatively homogenous groups or segments with the aim of creating groups where the members of a particular group have similar likes, wants, needs, preference, attitude and tastes. In other words, the members within each of the group are similar while each of the groups created are unique and different from each other. These bases of similarity could be in form of culture, age grade, income or educational level to mention a few.

Market targeting is the process by which after dividing the market into different segments, marketers attempts to decide on which of the segments to choose. Ideally, he is expected to choose the segments that

present the best marketing and financial opportunities based on existing organizational capabilities and potentials while positioning deals with presenting one's product or service on an attribute in relation to that, being offered by competitors within the same industry (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Once this is done, it is expected that appropriate marketing mix for each unique segment groups be taken.

### **2.3.3. Strategies for an Efficient Tourism and Relaxation Management**

According to Middleton & Hawkins (1998) marketing strategies for tourism and hospitality industries and the nature of decisions to be taken by marketing managers are enshrined in the four Ps of product, place, price and promotion which are controllable tactics that could be blend to produce a desired response from a target market (Kotler & Keller, 2009). In addition to the four Ps, Cooper & Mellram (1993) highlighted six more Ps of packaging, programming, people, process, physical evidence, and partnership and concurred that they are equally paramount in designing a successful tourism marketing strategies. He posited that the starting point for the creation of a successful marketing mix strategy is to ensure that the target market, in terms of domestic, local and external, holiday makers and recreationist is clearly defined and matched to available tourism products/services. In his opinion such definition can be based on factors such as socio economic group, geographical location, age, gender, income level, visitor type, benefits sought, purchase behavior and attitude.

As argued by Middleton & Hawkins (1998) product covers the shape or form of what is offered to prospective customers. Price relates to the published or negotiated term of exchange transaction for a product between a seller and a consumer. Promotion includes advertising, direct selling, direct mailing, sales promotion, public relation activities and merchandising. Promotional activities are used to make potential customers become aware of a product in order to stimulate their demand and also provide a means to information that could aid prospective customers in making purchase decisions. Place refers to all the point of sales or channels that provide prospective customers with an access to tourism products while people, are the tourism industry staffs in terms of training, appearance, behavior, commitment, and customer contact. He suggested that all this must be provided in excellent form in that tourism is a people business and no amount of physical infrastructure would complement for a poor tourism service. In addition, local residents must be made to have hospitable attitudes towards visiting tourists. Further, Process, according to Mill & Morrison (1998) refers to corporate policies and procedures including employee's empowerment and customer involvement and the general procedure in tourism services delivery. Physical evidence in their opinion refers to the environment in which the service is delivered. This includes such factors as layout, noise, furnishing, color, light. It virtually includes all the tangible evidence that reminds one of the product or service to be used. Partnership is an important concept to be considered in product promotion while programming refers to the way in which the marketing mixes may be co ordinate and offered to target market. Packaging on the other hand, is an integral part of the product to be offered. All these are to be modified in accordance to the requirements of target customers (Mill & Morrison, 1998).

### **2.4. The Challenges in Marketing Tourism & Relaxation Services in Nigeria**

According to Ashikodi (2012) some of the major constraints and challenges that limit the effectiveness of the tourism sector In Nigeria are incidents of violent crimes, financial constraint, lack of managerial know-how,

infrastructure decay, slow policies development and implementation, security concerns, effective legislation and lack of effective tourism publicity. Regrettably some of these constraints have been used as negative propaganda against Nigeria by such western nations as Britain, America, and the European Union and these countries have warned their citizens against travelling to some specific regions of the country for instance the Niger delta region and the northern parts of the country (Ashikodi, 2012).

#### 2.4.1. Insecurity

Dambanza (2007) admits the manifestation of criminal activities in Nigeria. He maintains that crime is a potent threat to the National security of Nigeria. As reason by him, the impact of crime is felt by the development of tourism, because it is a major underdevelopment factor. He further argues that there are three levels of security risk that Nigeria faces. The first level comes from the increased violent crimes, from simple robbery to armed robbery, carjacking and violent attacks, second is direct attack or blackmail, which include kidnapping for ransom and vandalizing of facilities, and the third is the incidence of inter-communal and religious clash. For instance Plateau state, equally known as the tourist haven of Nigeria and one of the 36 states in Nigerian, is one of the major tourist attraction sites location in the country: waterfalls, lakes, game reserves, Wildlife Park abound in the state but Unfortunately, ethnic and religious conflicts has turned plateau state into a state of unrest and killing that tourists shy from (BBC, 2010). In addition, the Bagauda lake resort is a popular tourism resort in Bauchi state that can command both national and international attention. However, the recent escalation of terrorism activities within the Northeast region of the country has ensured it becomes a shadow of what it used to be as an important tourism destination.

#### 2.4.2. Inadequate Policies & Legislations

According to the Nigerian High Commission (2010) all visa applicants including independent tourist application must be lodged at the embassy or high commission in the country in which they are resident and can take up to four working days to be processed. This is quite a contrast to other countries that have been recognized globally for their in-depth competencies in the tourism industry. For instance any potential tourist can lodge a visa application at any Thai Embassy and get it the next day to day of application. In addition, the Nigerian government is noted for formulating good and brilliant policies however, the implementation of these policies continues to undermine all sectors of the economy including the tourism sector. For instance it is enshrined in the National Tourism Policy that financial incentive in term of tax relives or exemption must be made available to participant in the industry. However, some of the industry most important stakeholder such as hotel operators still faces multiple taxation from the Federal, State and Local government they operate in (Federal Ministry of Information, 1999). In addition, an act, LASG (2010) mandating all hotels and lodging operators to pay a registration fees or risk a fine of and prison term of up to two year for the head of operation. This equally serves as an impediment to the smooth flow of any tourism enterprise as the availability of reasonable accommodation at affordable charges is paramount in such enterprise.

#### 2.4.3. Poor Infrastructural Development

There are four major international airports presently in Nigeria: Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport Abuja, Aminu Kano International airport Kano, Muritala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos and Port Harcourt



International Airport Port Harcourt (Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria, 2010a). Major international airlines serving these airports include British Airways, Lufthansa, Air France and Delta Airlines (Sule, 2010). However, the airlines of Nigerian origin remain crippled by lack of funds to finance and acquire aircrafts as they find themselves not able to compete with the international airlines that are operating in the country and making profit (Sule, 2010). The deplorable state of the run-ways at the airports makes landing and takeoff dangerous and impedes tourist frequent inflow to the country (Kayode, 2010). In addition, The Nigerian rail network has suffered from lack of significant development over the years. The country has a network of 3,505km of narrow-gauge single track lines which cover nine of the thirty six states of the country and these rail networks are virtually not usable (Ashikodi, 2012). The Nigerian road network is likewise underdeveloped, with road networks leading to some strategic tourism areas in disrepair. The road networks comprises 193,200km, of which less than 30,000km are currently tiled (Ashikodi, 2012).

#### **2.4.4. Monumental Structures**

According to Ashikodi (2012) the lack of maintenance of monumental sites is a major constraint to tourism in Nigeria. Most tourists to Nigeria want to visit historical and monumental sites, but most of these monuments are in a depleted state due to lack of maintenance. For instance the national theater in Lagos and the Badagry slave route according to Ashikodi (2012) are some of the national monumental structures which are in deplorable condition due to lack of maintenance.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Findings and Discussion**

From the review of literature above, it is clear that the tourism and relaxation industry of a nation could be used as an important source of national revenue. However, the Nigerian tourism and relaxation industry, with its immense potentials, which could be used in strategically repositioning the national economy, remains underdeveloped and under-utilized. This is as a result of barriers that relates to technological underdevelopment, political instability, ethnic and religious factors, ineffective and inefficient tourism regulations and policies. Hence these factors militate against the positioning and delivery of an efficient tourism services in the industry.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

The identification of tourism by the Nigerian government as an alternative source of revenue in view of the oil prices decline is a prudent move. However government at all levels must be willing to partner with each other in the development of tourism. Such partnership would likely lead to positive results that would encourage companies to explore tourism as a wealth creation alternative.

### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- I. New legislation should be enacted that will conforms to international regulations and best practices. In response to the current political and ethnic instability in the country, the government must embark on a countrywide sensitization and orientation program that is geared towards uniting the various ethnic and religious groups. Such campaign could be launched through the religious leaders, community

leaders and schools instructors. Local residents in the different regions of Nigeria must be sensitized on the need to be friendly, accommodative and the need to develop positive attitude in dealing with incoming visitors.

- II. In relation to the marketing mix of product, the government of Nigeria must embrace on nationwide infrastructure rehabilitation. Such infrastructure must include tourism related infrastructure such as the roads, pipe borne water, amusement parks, museums, electricity, internet and communication facilities and the hotels and relaxation joints. Such feat could be achieved by embarking on a public and partnership program in order to reduce the financial burden that such rehabilitation program might pose on the government.
- III. Regarding the marketing mix of promotion, government efforts must be focused on promoting tourism. Even with rich cultural diversity, and immense tourism attraction potentials, an efficient promotion and marketing is needed to further enhance the growth of the industry. Hence it is important that the Nigerian government adopt its position as a cultural tourism destination in the market place through aggressive marketing of its tourism products. Marketing activities should focus on markets that will offer the best prospect – the United Kingdom, United States, Caribbean, West Africa, South America and South Africa. Furthermore, public relation and promotion campaigns must be undertaken to counteract the negative image of Nigeria. Such medium as the internet, the cable network news (CNN), British broadcasting corporation (BBC) and the Ajazeera network could be employed as a means of publicity of the country, as major tourist destination.
- IV. Also, the strict regulations on tourist entry visa must be reviewed to appropriately comply with what is obtained in popular tourist countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, France and the United Arab Emirate. Regarding this, it is recommended that an online based platform through which tourist visas can be applied and secured should be initiated by the Government or concerned authorities.
- V. Finally, human development is a key determinant in the activities involved in the preparation, packaging and offering of tourism related goods and services to the market. In this case, the Nigerian government should initiate a training and development program aimed at equipping staffs/personnel in tourism establishment with the required skills and expertise to deliver the most effective products and services in the market place.

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