

EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

BY

KWADA FREEMAN TUMBA

Department Of Geography

School Of Arts And Social Sciences

Adamawa State College Of Education, Hong

Abstract

Tourism contributes toward complete growth and development of a country by bringing numerous economic values and benefits. It has grown to become the second largest industry in the world. There are many tourist centres in Nigeria, but the industry is still at the infant stage. The priority goals of developing countries are generation of income, employment and foreign exchange earnings. Several steps have been taken in promoting sectors like agriculture but tourism has not received as much attention as it need to contributes its quota to economic diversification due to economic, political, social and physical problems. Tourism has direct impact on employment, income, infrastructure, standard of living and rapid development. The covid-19 pandemic have resulted in countries of the world placing restrictions and closure of their borders to and from other countries led to shutdown of cities and states across the country have greatly affected the tourism industry. Industries such as airlines, hotels, entertainment, hospitality, research centres just to mention a few have caused decline in aggregate demand, unemployment, poverty, low patronage, cancellations, crashes delay in hotels, travel bookings resulted in billions of dollar loss. Hundreds of thousands of job loss worsened unemployment situation which resulted in loss of revenue to the government. It is concluded that Nigerian government should focus more on tourism to boost the patronage of local and foreign tourist. It is recommended that government should diversify the economy so other sectors of the economy could be relied on. Tourism and hospitality industry should adopt safe travel and implement protocols that would help travellers to feel safe when they travel so as to reduce the effect of the pandemic across the country.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, Tourism and Industry.

Introduction

Tourism contributes toward complete growth and development of a country by bringing numerous economic values and benefit. In Nigeria, is not a very developed section of the economy. According to (Iwena (2018), the three main justification for tourism in Nigeria include leisure, recreation and education. It has grown to become the second largest industry in the world. Tourism as an industry has gained wide recognition in most nations of the world due to its active response to national issues and international relations. The industry has contributed tremendously to the overall economic development of those nations. Despite this, the industry is still at the infant stage in most developing nations like Nigeria. The rise of tourism in Nigeria in the last two decades has motivated the need for development of tourist attraction centres for economic development of Nigeria in tourism potential.

However, tourism in particular according to Celementina and Helen (2015) it has not really attained the stage due to neglect, abandonment, impact of Covid-19 Pandemic and the rise of crude oil revenue in Nigeria.

It is necessary to follow the trends of developed countries who invest a lot into the tourism sector. It can help to diversify the energy economy and improve a positive image of the country in the international arena because the contribution of travel and tourism to GDP as a share in 2019 for Nigeria was 5.1%. The three priority goals of developing countries are generation of income, employment and foreign exchange earnings but tourism has several economic potentials that lie fallow, unharnessed and unexplored and need to be harnessed and explored.

Several steps according to Aruonye and Ahmed (2020) have been taken in promising sectors like agriculture, but tourism has not recovered as much attention as it needs to contribute its quota to the economic diversification dream. The economic growth of the country has been said to be in a state of stagnancy due to the global oil volatility and Covid-19 Pandemic and Nigeria over depended on the crude oil revenue to the detriment of other sectors for foreign earning. Looking at the contributions of tourism in other countries of the world, Nigeria should imitate other countries in order to reduce the economic challenges facing the country today caused by either oil price plummets or Covid-19 Pandemic.

Tourism has directed impact on employment, income, infrastructure and standard of living. There is also a direct linkage between tourism environment and the local economy in terms of social and economic development. Nigeria has abundant but untapped resources. As a result the article will bring to your perusals the concept of tourism, and its importance, impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on tourism industry and recommendations. This in turn will point to the need to improve tourism in Nigeria. This is because it cost many Nigerians leg and arm to take tourist vacations outside the country mostly because the tourist attractions in Nigeria which could have cheaper alternatives are not given attention or adequately developed compared with the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The concept of tourism

Tourism has been subjected to arrays of definitions over time. It is on this ground that Celementina and Helen (2018) defined tourism as “the activities of persons travelling and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and any other purpose”. It is also defines as the process or act which involves the visiting of people or place of interest where one can relax and be entertained. It is an act of discovering the free gift of nature and how to prevent them from extinction.

Iwena (2018) agreed that it is the practice of travelling for pleasure or the business of offering information, accommodations, transportation and other services to tourist. The places where such people visit are called tourist or resort centres. It is usually done by an individual or group of individuals which lead to the movement from one place to another or a country for performing a specific task or a visit to a place or several places for the purpose of entertainment which lead to an awareness of other civilisation and culture, increasing the knowledge of countries, culture and history. It involves attractions.

Mayhew (2015) defined tourism as “making a holiday involving an overnight stay away from normal place of residence”. Tourism has to deal with temporary migration to another geographical location where the populace who may be of a different race or the same but have

a culture that is different from yours or and a very pleasant environment which favours sightseeing or business or for mere relaxation for a period of time year after year.

Some tourist centres in Nigeria

Some of the tourist centres in Nigeria include: the National Theatre in Lagos, The Kainji Dam in Niger State. The Lekki Badagry and Bar-Beaches in Lagos, the game reserve such as Yankari (Bauchi and Gombe), Ibadan Zoo (Oyo State) Nok Village (Kaduna State), the zuma Rock (Abuja), Oluma Rocks (Ogun state), Lake Chad, Obudu Calttle Ranch (Cross-River state), the Hills of Benue (Middle Belt), Yankari National Park, Kyarimi Pack (Borno State), wikki warm spring (in Yankari National Park) just to mention but few (Iwena, 2018).

Importance of tourism industry to the economic development of Nigeria

In the last few years, the Nigerian government has been taking steps towards diversifying our mono-base oil economy. There has been a clarion call sent forth to nationals, private investors and international public investors to consider making investments in the country.

The tourism industry have contributed greatly to the economic development of Nigeria through the following according to Iwena, (2015) Iruonye and Ahmed (2020).

- Financial returns and proceeds to Nigeria: Income can be tremendously generated from tourism for Nigeria as a whole and also the host community in which the tourist centres are found. This will go a long way to reduce the number of poor people in the country and improve their standard of living.
- It brings extra money: people are willing to pay ₦2,500 for a ₦1000 Hat if they come for tourism. This encourages profit maximization in areas where tourism centres exist.
- Revenue: Tourism e.g. cultural tourism has potentials to contribute to government revenue through receipt, payment of goods and services, tax duties and service payment.
- Fixing of feeder Road: If tourism get adequate attention and a particular community with a tourist attraction or centre does not have a feeder road, the federal government will make arrangements to fix it.
- Regional and economic development: Tourism helps in regional and economic development of roads, vehicles, communication, water supply, airports and railways.
Job Positions: the unemployment rate in the country is very high and tourism can provide job positions for guides, restaurants, coach services, hotel staffs, university graduates and post graduate students. It will create great opportunity for business development.
- Business development (job creation): with viable tourism in Nigeria, souvenir shops will open across the country especially in areas close to tourist attractions, Flight and international travel agencies will have more patronage and hence need more employees. Also, car renting or more ordered commercial intercity transport companies will open up and more sophisticated hotels to accommodate tourists will be built, and all these will increase number of jobs, thereby reducing unemployment.
- Increase in commercial activities: there is always an increase in commercial activities where resort centres are located. This involves buying and selling of commodities produced in resort centres.

- Foreign exchange earnings: activities of tourism have been known to generate foreign exchange earnings because the foreigners pay in hard currencies. This becomes one of the major sources of government revenue.
- It fosters social and economic integration: it brings people together from all over the globe, promote responsible travel, help us become better citizens, reduce poverty, it helps the exchange of ideas to be possible between the local people and the tourist.
- Development of towns: Some of these resorts areas were originally village but are now developed into big towns and cities that are now popular in Nigeria.
- Source of income to individual: as a result of siting of tourist centres, many people now engage themselves in many economic activities thereby generating income for themselves.
- Improvement in standard of living: As a result of the money earned by the local people through tourist visitations, this helps them to improve on their standard of living.
- Development of local craft industries: The existence of tourists centres do help the local communities to showcase their local industries which are now developed to international levels.
- Provision of social services: social services in many forms are usually provided to tourists in resort centres. Such social services include provision of food, drinks, wears, barbing, tailoring, banking and transportation to both the tourist and the local communities.
- Conservation of wild life: The siting of tourist centres in some places like the Yankari, and Borgu have helped to establish some game reserves in such areas.

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Tourism in Nigeria

Tourism has direct impact on employment, income, infrastructure, standard of living, development of towns and cities, economic, social integration, revenue generation, social amenities, social and economic development.

However, the outbreak and spread of Covid-19 disease resulted in countries of the world placing travel restrictions and closure of their borders to movements and from other countries. The tourism industry is one of the sectors that are greatly affected.

The spread of Covid-19 disease led to rapid shutdowns in cities and states across the country which greatly affected the tourism industry. Industries in the tourism sector such as airlines, hotels, entertainment and hospitality are facing declining demand and patronage with travel crashes and cancellations expected to continue.

The increased cancellations of hotels and travel bookings according to Aruonye and Ahmed (2020) resulted in billions of dollars in revenue loss and hundreds of thousands of job loss in the country. Delay in travelling also affects air economy.

Covid-19 is already worsening the unemployment situations in the country resulting in loss of substantial revenue to the government, increasing incidence of poverty among others.

Quarantines: The almost complete suspension of international travel has been one of the major elements of the quarantines introduced during the Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19 Pandemic). This has brought misery for those who love to travel and brought decimation for airlines, Hotels and Tourism operators.

Overdependence of a country on tourist industry is risky because it can lead to breakdown of traditional values and ways of life of the local people. It can lead and has led to spread of diseases such as Aids and Covid-19.

Covid-19 pandemic has increased substandard products such as drugs and herbicides. The pandemic aggravated the challenges posed by substandard personnel, protective equipment, unregulated goods and products which are harmful to health.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected women and girls according to Neminebor, (2021). This is because women and girls are likely to take on most additional work owing to the closure of schools and day-care centres. Women also account for 54% of health workers on the front-lines in fighting the corona virus and account for 7% of nearly social workers globally.

- Lost by the tourism and hospitality sectors as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic not only in Nigeria, but worldwide. Over 770,000 jobs were lost in the sector in Nigeria alone and women accounted for 54% of all jobs in travel or tourism (Abdullahi, 2021).
- The last but not the least, it has affected leisure, recreation and education which are the three main justification for tourism in Nigeria (Iwena, 2018).

Conclusion

Nigeria stands a great chance of surviving the economic meltdown facing the entire globe if it could focus more on tourism industry to boost the patronage of local and foreign tourist. There is also need to improve viable tourism in Nigeria by staying safe and taking responsibilities. This will go a long way to reduce the number of poor people in the country and improve their standard of living.

Recommendations

Although the Covid-19 pandemic has encouraged and promoted personal hygiene, it has impacted negatively on tourism in Nigeria. It is therefore recommended that:

- Government should decide to go into tourism and utilize its opportunities very well.
- There is need for diversification priorities to alternative sectors such as tourism and agriculture.
- There should be continuous sensitization programme or awareness campaign by the people or authority concern.
- All people and other sectors should adhere strictly to Covid-19 protocols during either indoor or outdoor activities by staying safe and taking responsibilities.
- All tourists and resort centres should also abide strictly to Covid-19 protocols to boost tourism in the country.
- The federal government should compensate business operators in the tourism industry so as to enable them revive their businesses.
- Stay safe, Stay safe, Stay safe.

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