

Meeting the Challenges of Climate Change to Tourism: Nigeria's Experience

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Abstract

Nigeria is a country with about a million square kilometers of landmass, blessed with untapped natural, human and tourism resources. Human activities affecting the land are leading to insecurity and restiveness, which in turn is impacting tourist flow. Findings show that land degradation, erosion, desertification, oil spillage, gas flaring, deforestation, low harvest, joblessness, socio-economic and political unrest are all key issues that impact on tourism. The paper thus concludes that unless human activities begin to incorporate the environmentally responsible policies and actions, Nigeria will not prosper according to its potential. Early government and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) intervention with the United Nations resolutions on climate change and tourism best practices are required to achieve sustainable tourism development in the country.

Keywords

Tourism, travel, resources, product, climate, degradation, tourist, flow, harvest, restiveness, industrialization, gas emissions, global warming convention, resolution, best practices, sustainability, development

Background

Nigeria covers a total of 923,768km² along the West African Gulf of Guinea and is an important center of biodiversity with tropical rainforest, coastal plains, mangrove and savannah zones. Its population of 150 million makes it the most populous country of Africa.

Nigeria's economy is primarily based on petroleum with relatively high growth rates in both commerce and industry. Population explosion has led to a high rate of urbanization and material consumption that, together with mining and industrial activity, has led to a despoiled environment

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), travel and tourism revenues in 2007 were \$10.67 billion in 2007 increasing to \$12.35 billion in 2008. Travel and tourism clearly has excellent prospects for growth in Nigeria and should be encouraged to supplement the petroleum industry as a source of revenue and foreign exchange.

Problem

Nigeria's environmental issues are centered in the Niger Delta region that has been experiencing oil spills, desert encroachment in the north, soil degradation and

deforestation, all of which are having an effect on climate change and global warming leading to a poor agricultural harvest, poverty, diseases and low per-capita income.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this paper is to suggest strategies and policies for enhancing the preservation of Nigeria's abundant natural resources and tourism assets as a basis for sustainable tourism development at both the domestic and international level thereby contributing to Nigeria's Vision 2020.

Methodology

The methodology employed for this paper included the reviews of documents from conventions, legislative acts and resolutions passed through government and non-governmental organizations on climate, environment and tourism.

Reviews

Climate Change: Nigeria emits about 0.1 tons of carbon per person per year as compared to United States' and European Union's 7 tons and 3 tons respectively. Yet carbon emissions are a threat to Nigeria's citizens and less industrialized neighboring nations of West Africa. Nigeria requires a strategy to achieve high economic growth and poverty reduction together with a low-carbon economy in meeting the targets of the country's Vision 2020. Sustainable tourism development, together with agriculture and protection of wildlife can contribute to such a strategy.

Desertification: Some 55 million people in Nigeria have been affected by increasing desertification and desert encroachment in the northern and south eastern parts of the country due to climate change visible through intense heat, loss of arable land and soil degradation and gully erosion. The desert is advancing at a rate of 600 meters per annum (Ishaya, 2010).

Gas Flaring: Refineries and oil exploration in the Niger Delta region account for 50% of Nigeria's greenhouse gases, a result of which is the loss of soil nutrients due to intense temperature rise and lack of vegetation cover making agro-economic activities difficult for smaller farmers who lack access to improved crop varieties and facilities.

Coastal Areas: Heat emitting from rivers and the Atlantic Ocean is also adversely affecting the coast of Nigeria leading to the loss of aquatic life.

Poor Disbursement of Ecological Funds: The Ecological funds disbursed to States to prevent and deal with environmental disasters have often been misappropriated. Newly elected President Jonathan has created the Ministry of Environment to direct and manage these funds to achieve their intended purpose.

Nigeria's Tourism Sector

Nigeria is quickly growing into an industrialized nation with increased demand for industrial and domestic products. This is resulting in significant growth in international

business arrivals. As petroleum is the main economic sector for Nigeria, tourism has received little attention.

The UNWTO Tourism Master Plan for Nigeria (2006) highlights the fact that the tourism sector lacks reliable statistics and market information; essential databases to implement the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) are not available; there is a lack of information on frontier arrivals; and existing incentives and investment procedures are not attracting investment in the tourism sector;

Reports on the marketing approaches indicate that current marketing activities are under-funded, inadequate and ineffective; the tourist products are not organized or packaged for the market place; tourist attractions are unknown to the international travel trade; and Nigeria's negative image abroad, is not being addressed.

In light of the above, it can be concluded that tourism in Nigeria is still in its infant stage.

Nigeria's Tourism Product and the Challenges of Climate Change

Issues that must be addressed by Nigeria in meeting the challenges of climate change and to promote sustainable tourism development include the following:

- Lack of adequate political will to legislate and regulate human activities related to climate change, the environment and the tourism industry at large.
- Lack of adequate funding to address desertification and de-forestation in affected areas.
- Lack of rain causing drought and death of wildlife that in turn is resulting in the encroachment of herdsmen into game reserves and national parks.
- Flooding that is eroding road networks, and negatively affecting wild life and human socio-economic activities as experienced in Kano, Jigawa, Taraba, Nasarawa and Sokoto States.
- Mining activities and the emission of radioactive gases at the Jos Plateau, Jagindi Kaduna, Nasarawa Eggon/Keana Nassarawa, Nkalagu Enugu and Zamfara States.
- The dumping of toxic waste in Nigeria's sea ports and industrial cities including Lagos, Port Harcourt, Kano, Onitsha, Kaduna and other capital towns. These have resulted in mysterious ailments proving difficult to cure.
- Business travel and movements by air and land emit high levels of carbons through aircrafts and automobiles.
- Tourist flows to Nigeria for ecotourism, safari and related activities is negligible compared to business travel.

- Nigeria's industrial cities such as Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Aba, Onitsha, Port Harcourt and the cosmopolitan cities of Sokoto, Maiduguri, Lafia that utilize automobiles to the fullest constitute much of the air/smoke pollution.
- Insecurity through the activities of restive youth such as the Niger Delta Militants in the South-South and the Boko Haram Sect in the northern parts of Nigeria threatens the inflow of tourists.

Prospects for Sustainable Tourism Development in Nigeria

Nigeria is blessed with rich and abundant natural resources that are mostly untapped. These can be seen from the rich coastal mangrove and rainforest to the savannah regions. There are also opportunities that abound in government efforts in the promotion of tourism at both domestic and international levels. Some of both the public and private sectors' initiatives are as follows:

Public Sector

- The environmental and tourism policies of Nigeria give priority to ensuring environmental sustainability of the tourism resources.
- The establishment of the Climate Change Unit under the Federal Ministry of Environment at the federal level that oversees and regulates all industrial and rural development.
- Federal Ministry of Tourism and Culture that promotes the utilization of environmental resources for ecotourism.
- Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry implementing re-forestation and agricultural management programs, as well as park, garden and forestry reserve activities.
- Ecology funds being made available to States in billions of Naira on a yearly basis to combat erosion, desert encroachment, gullies, petroleum oil spills, etc.

Private Sector

- The World Wildlife Conservation Federation with their activities in the forest reserves and national parks.
- National Conservation Societies are in all States of the Federation coordinating environmental activities.

Strategic Approaches

The works of Balmford, Berford, Nadoo, Walpole, and Manica (2009) with further reference to Buckley (2009) and Volume II of the UNWTO's Nigeria Tourism Development Master Plan (2006) addressed the issues identified above, and determined the strategies and actions government must take if tourism is to become a profitable and sustainable economic activity. Sustainable tourism development must also be linked to the government's overall policy of development through institutional capacity building.

The development of a vibrant and sustainable tourism industry will rest on a range of actions and implementation processes. Nigeria's tourism master plan provides key recommendations from which the action and implementation program can evolve and includes:

Type of Tourism: That Nigeria adopts a clear identifiable positioning as a cultural and regional conference destination in the tourism marketplace.

Tourism Clusters: The development of tourism should be concentrated in five clusters: Tropical Rainforest, Conference Capital, Atlantic Gateway, Scenic Nature and Sahara Gateway.

Product Development: Market-led quality products should be developed for international, regional and domestic tourists .

Flagship Tourism Projects: Within each tourism cluster, flagship projects should be developed to act as tourism icons and as a catalyst for all further development of tourism within the cluster. The Flagship Projects proposed are:

- Tinapa Business, Leisure and Conference Resort (Tropical Rainforest)
- Cross River Tropical Rainforest (Tropical Rainforest)
- Development of Conference, Meetings and Event Management Capability (Conference Capital)
- Farin Ruwa Eco Tourism Project (Conference Capital)
- Olokola Cultural Resort (Atlantic Gateway)
- Museum of Traditional Nigerian Architecture (Scenic Nature and Ancient City of Kano (Sahara Gateway)

The Environment: Each State government should appoint a Waste Management Officer to establish and implement a waste management system involving the general public, local governments and private waste management enterprises.

The development of tourism products should be preceded by an environment impact study. Planning and protection of cultural assets and heritage sites require the co-ordination of the three tiers of government and particularly local governments.

Conclusion

Nigeria's economy is primarily based in petroleum with relatively high growth in both commerce and industry. Population explosion has led to a high rate of urbanization and consumption that together with mining and industrial activity has led to a soiled environment and the need for improved waste management.

The solution is an inter-disciplinary approach between Nigerian experts in environment, natural resource planning and tourism management to develop policies and a master plan that preserves biodiversity and fosters sustainable tourism development contributing to Nigeria's Vision 2020.

Recommendations

For the tourism industry in Nigeria to prosper and meet the challenges of climate change, it is recommended that:

1. The Nigeria Tourism Development Master Plan, rolled out since 2006, but yet to be implemented, should be reviewed, updated and implemented to make tourism a major economic sector. This will help arrest climate change issues and create employment to supplement the petroleum sector.
2. Current conditions for the funding of tourism micro enterprise and SME should be reviewed and simplified – to be amended as they are too complicated and difficult for SMEs.
3. The government and NGO's should develop a coordinated plan that meets the requirements of the U.N. Climate Change Convention Resolutions.
4. Political will is required to develop legislation in support of the greening process and regulation of protected areas.
5. The enhancement of Nigeria's wildlife, agricultural and ecotourism resources should be consistent with sustainable tourism development efforts.
6. Industrial cities such as Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Aba, Kaduna and related towns should be audited and monitored against industrial chemicals, toxic waste discharge and waste management practices.
7. Petroleum spillages and toxic-waste dumping in especially the Ogoni area of the Niger Delta regions of Nigeria should be stopped and the land made productive for ecotourism.
8. Economic activities such as forestry, mining, bush burning, oil drilling and industrial activities should be regulated to mitigate gaseous emissions..

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