

Tourism: A Valuable Tool for Peace and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The concept tourism is about activities of persons travelling to and staying in a place outside their usual place for not more than one year and not less than 24 hours. Nigeria as a country in recent years had been having some focus on tourism as a means of development, though it is noted that the country after the discovery of oil in 1956 the fortune of country's economy automatically linked to petroleum, thereby leaving the Nigeria economy fragile, averting what would have been accrued to the economy. The consciousness of diversifying the Nigeria economy came up in 1986 though the promotion of other sectors such as tourism, agriculture. However, there had been some challenges for the promotion of tourism as a panacea for peace and development in Nigeria such as lack of political will, visionary policies, manpower, community participation, financial donor etc. Suggestions and recommendations are highlighted to use tourism as a valuable tool for peace and development such as eco-tourism, cultural tourism, religious tourism, business tourism and sport tourism should be taken seriously for peace and development in Nigeria.

Key Words: *Tourism, Peace, Development*

Introduction: In recent times there has been much discussion about tourism which is currently a fast-growing industry. In it's own right and way tourism is also growing area or field of study. Many journals and academic exercise have been devoted to tourism as a bases of peace and sustainable development. Tourism has been described as multi-disciplinary with the human dimensions of tourism attracting the attention of many countries of the world who consequently become deeply involved in using tourism as a yardstick in maintaining peace to sustain development. However, the nature of tourism as a commercial activity appeal to those engaged in economics and business. Therefore, the rapid growth of world tourism is thus associated with individuals, governments and key players of the world over, taking a close interest in tourism as a peace builder for sustainable development. Nigeria as a state in the past has witnessed not lost blood and gore situation, where hundreds of thousands of people have died through the activities of the Boko Haram, tribal crises, Niger Delta Avengers, Igbo (Ibo) agitations, Herdsmen Indiscriminate Killing, Cult activities as well as the kidnapping. This seems to be replica of the last civil war in Nigeria from 1967 to 1970. This has awakened serious discourse all over the world and palliative measures has to be taken in order to maintain peace, though there could be several palliative measures that must have been taken by the Nigerian government such as quest for amnesty, Islamic schools built, release of insurgent detainees and peaceful talk with the Niger Delta militants etc., all of these have played a little to bring a total peace, yet it has not seen the light of the day.

The crises experiencing may have been as a result of difference in diverse cultures, languages and religions. Fortunately, Nigeria as a country has two great tourism assets biodiversity and cultural variety. The country is replete with rare wildlife, ecosystem, waterfalls, caves, rocks, ancient monuments and places of international reputations museums, music and cultural dances etc. However, it will not be out of place to state that, the occurrence of violence may have been as a denial of the promotion of tourism that must have resulted to these periodic crises, because promotion of tourism has the force of peace between the local, national and transnational scales, which results to sustainable development. This is particularly clear in the context of heritage tourism, which promotes and sells the experience of so-called “authentic” natural landscapes or traditional cultures. According to Freya (2006) in this article titled “Reconciliation Tourism, Tourism Healing Divided Societies”. There are also statements codes and documents supporting the promise that tourism fosters peace for sustainable development. Though, the pathfinder in this endeavor was the 1980 Manila Declaration on World Tourism Organization that described tourism as a vital force for peace and development. This was followed by the Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourist code that was adopted at the WTO’s General Assembly held in Sofia, Bulgaria in 1985, it cited that tourism’s contributions include improving mutual understanding, bringing people close together and consequently strengthening international co-operation for sustainable development. According to Victor (2008) in his book title *Tourism: A Catalyst for peace in Nigeria* also made reference to the statement of the Jordanian Minister in 2002 on the Global Summit on Peace, through tourism held in Jordan, “There is no better way for people to know one another and their culture than through travelling to other countries and appreciate the culture of others instead of dehumanizing others, while tourism and travel allow people to know one another and to appreciate each other in the full splendor of our varied humanity. Finally, one of the most powerful statement to support the power of tourism as a valuable tool for peace and sustainable development is the one given by the South Africa Government in May, 1996 in a white paper titled, “The Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa”. Through its inherent communication, tourism is the most effective mechanism for fostering national and international cultural exchange and understanding among people, it is therefore an effective nation-builder and a strong incentive for peace and development. In the recent time Nigeria has been ridiculed as a country of no peace, which have led to loss of lives and properties as a result of armed robbery, kidnapping, child trafficking, cultism, Boko Haram crises are all on steady increase, because Nigeria as people have not recognize tourism as a strategy for peace and development, so this article is intended to examine the roles of tourism as a strategy for peace and development, so this article is intended to examine the roles of tourism as a panacea for peace and development.

Challenges of Tourism for Sustainability of Peace and Development

Nigeria emerged as a major oil producing country in 1956, therefore following the oil boom, the fate of the Nigerian economy and its capacity for growth has been inextricably linked to the fortunes of the petroleum industry. This resulted in the rapid decline of focus on other sectors of the economy, thereby leaving the Nigeria economy fragile. The considerable benefit that could have accrued from other economic sector for peace and sustainable development was almost wiped out as the country becomes unceasingly a mono-economy.

The consciousness of diversifying the Nigerian economy came up in 1986, which was aimed at shifting emphasis from oil to the promotion of non-oil exports such as tourism, but unfortunately due to less attention on the sector, there is relatively low promotion of tourism as a panacea for peace and development. This is as a result of the following challenges: low level manpower, lack of visionary strategy and policies, lack of community’s participation, lack of political will, lack of information, and lack of financial donor.

- Low level manpower training. There is low level manpower training at the nation's schools on tourism to meet up the national aspirations, philosophy and objectives of the tourism in the country, because tourism is people-oriented industry and it needs high manpower training to stabilize the desired needs of the people for development.
- Lack of visionary strategy and policies. Another challenge is lack of visionary strategy and policies. Another challenge is lack of visionary strategy and policies, for peace and development to be sustained there are needed to be an enabling policy environment department.
- Total lack of community's participation. There is total lack of participation of the communities as part of decision-making body. This seems to have led to inadequate participation of local expertise in the area of community-based tourism for development.
- Lack of political-will. The Nigerian government is not putting political will to develop the sector for peace, and development and that seems to hinder generally the development stride in Nigeria.
- Lack of financial donor. Lack of financial donor, banks and other financial houses or institutions do not see tourism as a booming industry with bright prospects and extend credit lines to non-governmental organizations wishing to embark on viable tourism projects for development.

Suggested Solutions: Tourism as A Peace Builder for Development

Nigeria is a country with hundreds of tribes, languages, cultures and religions living in different parts of the country as one people. This diversity may have been a cause of misunderstanding which has led to tribal and religious crises in some parts of the country, which ordinarily could have been prevented through the promotion of tourism development. Therefore, the following are factors below which are some of the types of tourism that could be considered for the purpose of peace and development in Nigeria, if Nigeria government is meant to use tourism as a panacea for development.

1. Eco-Tourism

This is an instrument for peace building; developing eco-tourism can be an essential tool for helping to integrate development and economic incentives into environmental peace-making efforts. This effect of collaborative conservation also creates economic interdependence due to the revenue from ecotourism, once livelihoods can be tied to cooperation, the intention to fight will be reduced significantly. Boo (2008) observed that virtually cold war existed between the respective governments, the financial gain offered by tourism trumped political concerns and brought people together and the aftermath of togetherness is peace and development, because development cannot be sustained without peace. Ecotourism builds trust amongst people through manual management of natural resources. The joint management of shared resources can be a way of keeping both parties talking and the key to negotiating a resolution. Therefore, ecotourism has to be strengthened to require significant planning in order to create a strong incentive for cooperation, peace and development.

2. Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism has the potentials of bringing peace and development in the society, because it is an embodiment of tourism development, it serves as an important tool in bringing people of different orientation to know the culture of others, thereby given an opportunity to identify the vital elements in each culture and appreciate those factors that are common and can therefore serve as a source of unity. Hence Satano in 2004 opined that "Every time tourists go shopping having a meal in a restaurant, visit museum or heritage and do whatever during their

travel and trips, they have chances to meet and talk with local people who have a different culture and religions the aftermath of these actions is peace and development”.

This was obviously what the Government of Nigeria had in mind when they officially recognized Abuja Carnival in 2005 where participants are recognized representing the 36 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory. The carnival relatively has brought peace, unity and development among Nigerians despite the diversity in culture, it has ended up in building and enhancing friendship amongst states and tribes. Therefore, tourism can bring people closer together through the understanding of different cultures, heritages and beliefs.

3. Sport Tourism

Sports as a concept can be seen as a process of life which serve as a unifying factor that brings about unity among participants as well as the sports consumers. Sports therefore, command global attention, world peace and development of social relationship. It is against this backup that most states and nations encourage sport festivals such as Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria. Denga (2002) described sports as a gift of nature and added that sports bring about friendliness through engagement in our interesting activities that gives satisfaction and enjoyment.

Therefore, apart from religion, sport is the only forum that can bring people together for a common goal (Adelus and Oklayede, 2007). Therefore, sports tourism especially football has become a very prominent tool in bringing unity in Nigeria. Associated with this is either domestic tourism especially when local league matches or other forms of sport are involved. Though international matches or competitions are also a form of promoting peace and development, because participants have to travel from one national destination to another is made possible. Therefore, mutual international relationships have to build. Such as the Ocean Boys of Bayelsa who travel to Kaduna State to have a match with Kaduna United, a mutual relationship will be built between the football teams and the aftermath of that relationship is peace where the religious differences could be undermined. Therefore, sports tourism has to the potentials in promoting peace and development among the people of Nigeria.

4. Religious Tourism

Pilgrimage, be it Christianity or Muslim oriented, have become very important forms of tourism that can bring peace and development in our society. Jerusalem in Israel or Mecca in Saudi Arabia are the world's leading religious tourist destination, each time this religious group embark on their journey, it could be realized that there is a mutual relationship that would be established amongst them, despite the fact that they are of different tribes or sect. It is generally believed that they worship the same God Allah. Therefore, the forces unleashed by tourism are so powerful that they can change apparently irreversible situations and bring reconciliation and development where none was considered possible (Al-Hanid M 2001). This generalization can be supported by peace through tourism disposition to the people. Mason 2008.

5. Business Tourism

This is another variable area of tourism that brings peace and development, even the international community has widely accepted that the success of peace and development is directly linked to the ability of people to embark on business tourism, which may create a forum for them to interact and understand their different lifestyle. Hence, Tomlyenovic and Faulkner (2000) in their works explained that tourism brings to world peace and development. Referring to the contact theory which submits that contact between different groups will improve intercultural attitudes and reduce tension. He further buttressed that business tourism could be considered as a tool for world peace and development, because it is when people travel to other countries and get into contact with locals, understanding the people lifestyle that will provide opportunity for exchange of goods and ideas that creates an opportunity for mutual peace and

development and wise minimize prejudice amongst people. This position is in conjunction with the World Tourism Organization which also regarded Tourism as a sector that comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for the purposes of so many reasons including business (WTO 1999). Kennedy (1960) also buttressed this point succinctly when he said “travel has become one of the greatest force for peace and understanding in our time”.

Conclusion

This paper mainly suggested the need for an effective implementation of the true tourism as a catalyst for peace and development in the country, because when properly annexed tourism can without doubt be a variable tool for people, nations and the world a better place for people to live in peace and development. Therefore, it is necessary for government, tourism stakeholder to key into the application of tourism as a means for development, because it is the only industry that creates an avenue for people to come together, despite their cultural religious and social differences that may result to total peace and development.

Recommendations

It is the onerous task facing the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture to collaborate with the apex tourism body, Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation to boost sustainable tourism practices in the country. Therefore, it is necessary to recommend some urgent measured needs to encourage good practice of tourism in order to resolve people differences. If all of these are considered, Nigeria will hopefully witness a better and peaceful future for development.

1. Promotion of the various cultural festivals in Nigeria, cultural festivals being the most visible and readily available product of the Nigerian tourism industry, because it can be the launching pad for people of different orientation, culture to come together and the aftermath of this is peace and development because there will be an exchange of ideas, drinking and eating together which could be the event of the day.
2. The promotion of eco-tourism should be well encouraged, because it creates much economic interdependence due to the activities involve, the revenue generated from eco-tourism brings people of different minds together and the happiness infused, of course will reduce violence among people and the restaurant of peaceful atmosphere is development.
3. The encouragement of sports generally should be promoted, among states, local government areas and communities. The coming together for sports activities will build mutual relationship among the athletics and the togetherness is peace and development.
4. There is an urgent need for even the institution learning to re-evaluate their curriculum to include tourism in order to create awareness on the importance of tourism as a peace builder and development.

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