

Tourism Safety and Security for Sustainable Development in Bayelsa State

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Abstract

The study set out to examine Tourism Safety and Security for Sustainable Development in Bayelsa State. The study utilized secondary data and exploratory research method. The findings showed that tourism safety and security play a significant role in the sustainable development of Bayelsa State. In same vein, it established that to some extent, there are perceived risk, when tourist plan to visit a certain destination in Nigeria due to safety and security issues. It also revealed that tourism safety and security is a catalyst for sustainable development. It was recommended that government should ensure the promulgation of tourism related policies in ensuring safety and security so as not to hamper sustainable development and also ensure that such policies are implemented and practiced. There must also be a coordinated effort and commitment towards tourism infrastructural development without endangering future development. Periodic assessment of local crime rate and a self-sustaining emergency response programme. Develop an objective attitude towards perceived travel risks based on facts, instead of a bias disposition.

Key Words: Security, Sustainable Development, Tourism, Tourism Safety.

Introduction

Tourism in recent times has developed significantly to become one of the most rapidly growing industries in the world. The global economy is presently driven by three major industries and these are technology, telecommunication and tourism (WTO, 2003). It is also said that tourism today is second only to oil as the world's leading export commodity accounting for global earning of more than \$300 Billion Dollars or 25% of total world gross national product (GNP) in the last decade (Sodaguwo, 2017). Obviously, tourism growth and its resultant effects on economic fortune of nations globally are not uniform. It is a truism that irrespective of how naturally endowed a location can be, or well developed the physical infrastructure are, without a peaceful safe and secure environment such resources may never yield their full tourism potentials (Adeyinka, 2012). There exists a noticeable symbiotic relationship between peaceful atmosphere and sustainable tourism development in any destination. Evidences have proven that the absence of crises related to safety and security along with related factors is usually a pre-socio-economic benefits. (Torukuru and Nnamdi 2017). Safety and security have always been indispensable condition for travel and tourism. But it is an incontestable fact that safety and security issues in relation to tourism gained a much bigger importance in the last two decades. Changes in the world and indeed Nigeria during the last two decades were enormous. Due to terrorist acts, local wars, natural disasters, epidemics and pandemics that we were witnessed to, safety and security, has significantly decreased. The travel and tourism industry could not avoid the negative the negative impacts

and consequences of these events. Moreover, some of these events manifested the vulnerability of tourism both global and regional levels (Kovati and Zimanyi, 2015).

In the recent times, Nigeria has been enmeshed in firebox insecurity leading to scores of deaths of innocent civilians, foreigners, (tourist and expatriates), some members of the nation's security personnel, elected officials and many government workers. The insecurity challenge has assumed formidable dimensions forcing the country's political and economic managers and indeed the entire nations, to rule the loss of their loved ones, investors and absence of safety in most parts of the country. The number of violent crimes such as kidnapping, ritual killings, Carjacking, suicide bombings, religious killings, politically-motivated killings and violence against citizens and visitors, ethnic clashes, armed banditry and others has increasingly become the regular signature that characterizes life in Nigeria since 2009. (Imhonopic&Urim, 2012).

The continued state of insecurity has threatened not only the very fabric of national integration in the country, but has created the ecology of fear, disquiet and anxiety which has far-reaching effects on the image of our nation in the global community. Therefore, there is the need for multi-stakeholder intervention. Government in partnership with the private sector must evolve strategies to contain or douse this conflagration.

Bayelsa State is arguably one of the most naturally endowed location in the world, apart from having one of the largest crude oil and gas deposits, it is also blessed with scenic landscape and the largest coastline in West Africa (approximately 860 square kilometers of coastline) beautiful bodies of water enriched with abundant supply of aquatic and terrestrial life, rich in human population and cultural heritage. (Toruku, 2012). In spite of these huge tourism potentials Bayelsa State falls within the purview of where tourism safety and security issues or incidents occur. It is for these reasons the research is aimed at investigating the *Relevance of Tourism Safety and Security to Sustainable Development in Bayelsa State*.

Review of Related Literature

The Concept of Safety, Security, Tourism Safety and Sustainable Development

1. **Safety:** Safety like any other concept is a complex issue; with much different and sometimes contentious view point. Nompumelelo, 2009 in his ground breaking work on tourism crime, safety and security. Conceptualize safety as:

“The freedom from danger or risk and the feeling of being safe around a given geographical area”.

As legal concept, it implies:

“A state of relative security from accidental injury or death due to measures designed to guard against accidents; laws that encourage the maintenance of safety standards are often called safety.

According to Sodaguwo (2017) and some other scholars tend to view safety:

“As the state of being free from danger, or more practically, the use of methods and devices that reduces, control or prevent accidents”

2. **Security:** Like any other terminology, it doesn't lend itself to easy definition.

However, from the conventional usage of the word, security means:

“Safety or freedom from danger and protection from external attack or infiltration.”

This is security defined from the militarist point of view, but even at that, security involves but does not just mean defense. (Nwolise, 2006). However, it is because, ‘security’ for long has been tied to the apron strings of the military that scholars regard the concept as underdeveloped, and needing to be rehabilitated, insisting the word ‘security’, has never been in proper working order and that security is a very ambiguous concept.

The contemporary thinking or school of thought about security is all-embracing. As aptly

captured by (Ogunbanwo, 2015) writing on the developing world:

Security is more than military security or security from external attacks. For many of the four billion inhabitants in the developing countries, security is conceived as the basis level of the struggle for survival. Therefore, in order to provide, an integrated African security assessment, the non-military dimensions of security should be added. Henceforth, African security as concept should be applied in its broadcast sense to include economic security, social security, environment security, food security, (tourism security), the equally of life security and technology security.

3. **Tourism:** One of the earliest definitions of tourism was given by an Austrian economist, Von Schullard, who in 1910 defined it from the economic perspective as the sum total of operation is mainly of economic nature, which directly relate to the entry and movement of foreigner inside and outside a certain country, city or region. However, the concept of tourism gained a more technical definition in the annuals of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2008) as a social cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes.

4. **Sustainable Development:** is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend the desirable and result is a state of society where living conditions and resources used continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity and stability of the natural systems.

In 1987, the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development released the report “our common future,” commonly on Environment called the Brundtland report. The report included what is now one of the most widely recognized definitions of sustainable development which state that; sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Since the Brundtland report, the concept of sustainable development has developed beyond the initial intergenerational framework to focus more on the goal of “socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth”.

Safety and Security in Tourism Development

Safety and security are vital to tourism development. Olsen and Cassee (1996) have identified five global forces that would drive the tourism industry in the new millennium. Safety and security in one of the five forces. People (tourist, investors, governments) are concerned with safety, and security as the incidence of perceived and actual violence increases. Insecurity (which is the antithesis of security), especially internal is not a problem that is unique to Nigeria. Other countries both developed and developing face the challenge. Within the last few years, heightened social insecurity in Nigeria (Which has great implication for tourism safety and security) has arguably fueled the crime rate, leaving unpalatable consequences for the nation’s economy and its growth (Albinus, 2012). Nnmadi and Torukuru (2017) succinctly defined tourism safety as methods and devices that reduces, control or prevent accidents in tourism sites and while participating in tourism activities. The imperative of safety and security in tourism development cannot be overemphasized. Akindiyo, (2014) asserts that any nation or state where peace does not exist relatively can hardly witness any (holistic) progress to say the least. It therefore, follows that there exists an undeniable relationship between these two elements, safety and security and meaningful development and security is a pre-condition for travel and tourism. The 1950s witnessed the evolution of mass tourism, meaning tourism was a privileged activity for a select few as it was before this

era. The main reasons for this evolution process as enumerated by Kovari and Zimanyi, 2008 here after:

- (i) Travel and tourism are not any more an activity of a narrow social stratum or class but the whole widening middle class is getting progressively involved into it, which is the direct result of the growth in personal income and free time.
- (ii) Tourism scope covers more and more countries and regions in the world and not only highly developed countries are enabling to generate out-going tourism flows are getting in tourism but also countries of the called third world: Zambia, Nigeria, Ghana etc.
- (iii) The rapid and scenic development of transportation (aviation, automotive industry) contributed to the rise of (geographical mobility).

Safety and Security Environment

The safety and security environment are probably the most unpredictable factor in the tourism industry. These two factors have the potential to either promote or influence considerable impact on the industry.

“A few terrorists can have a decisive and crippling impact on travel patterns and economics of particular locales”.

It is pertinent to note that, in recent times, Nigeria has been enriched in a firebox of insecurity, ranging from militancy in the Niger Delta and Boko Haram terrorists' insurgency in the North, just to mention a few, which has led to scores of deaths of innocent civilians, foreigners, tourists, some members of the nation's security personnel, elected officials etc. The incidents of violent crime against tourists, such as armed banditry, rape, murder and motivated attacks are among the highest in the world. These acts tend to create a damaging impression that Nigeria is not a safe and secure destination for tourism thereby stifling it tourism potentials. Incidents such as the bomb blast at the United Nations Building at Abuja in 2011 reverberate around the world, to the detriment of the local tourism industry. Bayelsa State has its own share of insecurity with regards to the safety and security environment. It was reported on the news that, on the 22nd October, 2016, that Godgift was shot dead alongside one Anayo while another adult male sustained gunshot wounds during crossfire between the Special Anti-Robbery Squared (SARS) and a gang of suspected cultists in the Ekeki Area of Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State (Sahara Reporters, New York, 26, October, 2016). It was also reported that the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), Bayelsa State Command apprehended two teenagers for robbing a boutique at gun point in Okaka-Epie, in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The police public Relations Officer, Mr. AsinimButswat disclosed to newsmen, that the suspects, armed with a locally made pistol, entered the boutique of Mr. Sunday Anyigor and robbed him of assorted wears and other valuables. The suspects met their undoing when Anyigor and his wife, not deterred by the gun pointed at them raised alarm when attracted neighbors. The neighbors in turn called the police who swooped to the scene and get the suspects arrested and detained (Vanguard, 3rdFebruary, 2016). Still within Bayelsa State, Boma East, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area was reported by the Vanguard Newspaper, dated 28 November, 2016, that a 72-year-old retired principal, Pa Sunday Fess dies in Kidnappers den after family pays ransom of Five Hundred Thousand Naira only (₦500,000.00) at his home town in Finibiri in the above-mentioned geographical location (Vanguard, 28th November, 2016).

It is clear from above documented incidents, that tourism cannot escape some of these charges or challenges. Suffice to say that Bayelsa State (which is a microcosm of Nigeria) occurs, other countries both developed and developing face these challenges. The difference however between nations is how they manage these crises as it relates to tourism safety and security.

Several of Safety and Security Incidents

An understanding of the geographical dimensions of safety and security incidents is of great importance or relevance when handling safety and security related tourism crises. Host government and the tourism industry will do their utmost to ensure that the impacts of security and safety incidents are confined to the location where the incidents actually took place, and will not spill over to other location (Pizam, et al, 2006). In view of the above assertion, when Mr. Biggs a global fast-food franchise, situated in Opolo-Epie, Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State was alleged to have served “unsafe” meals to unsuspecting customers. It led to the closure of business in that particular location, and did not spill over to other location where the prestigious Fast-Food Restaurant is located. In same vein, these incidents did not affect the patronage of other reputable Fast Food Restaurants in Yenagoa Local Government Area, Prominent among them are Crunchies, Pepperoni, Mr. Vincent etc. The saga helped to ensure that practitioners or operators in the food and beverage sector imbibe precautionary measures and proper hygiene in the processing and delivery of safe ad fresh meals over the counter (News Report on NTA, Yenagoa, 2008).

Impact of Safety and Security Incidents

The spate of insecurity in Nigeria has assumed a more formidable dimension, forcing the country’s political and economic managers both at national and local level, to rule the loss of their loved ones, investment and lamenting the impact on tourism development. The number of violent crimes such as kidnapping, murder, political-motivated killings and violence, ethnic clashes, armed robbery has far reached implications and constraints on tourism development in Bayelsa State. The tourism system, where the tour operators in the tourist generating areas or markets and tour operators in the tourist-receiving arrears on market/destination both share common goals of mitigating the almost inevitable damage resulting from change in the safety and security climate of the various tourist destinations in the study area. (Nompumelelo, 2009). The impacts of safety and security-oriented crises evokes negative colouration of the image of the destination, which leaves almost an inedible imprint in the minds of would-be tourists and investors.

Tourism Safety and Sustainable Development

Tourism has long been recognized as a crime generator. This poses a dilemma in the sustainable development content, for a sustainable development of tourist destinations; there are a number of long factors that must be taken into consideration. In addition to factors like managing dynamic growth, climate change, poverty alleviation and support for conservation, tourist’s safety and security is a crucial consideration. Uncertainly regarding security can determine significant fluctuation of touristic flows, so residents and tourists’ safety becomes a global problem for a sustainable tourism even with the best efforts, a tourist destination cannot develop or be revived unless if offers a high level of safety and security. The key question then is how destination can expand their tourist base without corresponding increases in crime and disorder that affect local residents and/or tourists.

Regular local safety audits in tourist destination are very ideal to determine the extent of insecurity in such destinations. Such audit will provide the basis for the local long-term strategy for sustainable development.

Conclusion

The tourism industry is one of the most vulnerable industries to crises that relates to tourism safety and security. Crises have become more frequent and complex than before, affecting the tourism industry and other related activities so it is better to be prepared and well equipped to mitigate and minimize the potential effects of tourism safety and security crises, whether it is

natural and man-made. There is no doubt that tourism safety and security are two of the most important issues in the tourism sector. No destination, can thrive in the absence of safety and security however endowed with potentials for growth. The significance of tourism safety and security cannot be overemphasized these two elements as already confirmed is a fundamental consideration, if the industry must experience patronage, especially repeat patronage. Some scholars argue that the local authorities have not shown much seriousness in mitigating these crises prove areas. Good media relations are key to transmitting clear and unambiguous reporting of tourism related incident crises or issues that border on safety and security.

It is pertinent to note that when tourists and visitors alike feel safe and security in and around any geographical region or area, it has an increasing impact or influence on the tourism demand and supply. Government policies must adequately address situations of safety and security, which is a universal precondition for tourism development and redevelopment. In as much as the existence of tourism safety and security policies is good and articulate, yet it will not translate into meaningful tourism development unless they are adequately implemented and practiced. All stakeholders must participate in the formulation and implementation stages whereas government will serve as a regulatory body in order to promote best practices.

Recommendation

The following recommendations will help mitigate and minimize the effects and impact of tourism safety and security crises in the study area, viz.

- (i) Government should address environmental and social concerns through policies practices and initiatives with others.
- (ii) Government should ensure the promulgation of tourism related policies: The local authorities should deliberately ensure the provision of adequate tourism safety and security policies which will serve as a catalyst for tourism development.
- (iii) Ensure that tourism safety and security policies are practiced and implemented adequately. The local authority and all stakeholders should ensure that tourism related policies are practiced and implemented adequately. Laws are useless, if they are not enforced through the instrument of sanctions and restriction.
- (iv) Coordinated effort and commitment to infrastructural development. These infrastructures are very important to both tourist and the residents which include electric supply, lead networks etc.
- (v) Periodic assessment of local safety and security incidents rate and self-sustaining emergency response programme: Local authorities should ensure that records of safety and security incidents are properly analyzed and utilized for creative emergency response.
- (vi) Develop objectives attitudes towards perceived travel risks: Ensure a responsible objective analysis or communication between authorities in both tourist generating and tourist receiving areas.

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