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## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MARKETING AS A TOOL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*This Study examines national and international strategies for developing tourism and investigates the opinion of participants in the tourism industry in Nigeria, with a view to identifying the key strategic issues that can ensure the success of sustainable tourism marketing. The research consisted of a literature Study, field surveys and interviews with policy makers, tourism operators, academics and administrators. The results identify tourism marketing as an economic development strategy tool for Nigeria. Four strategic issues of product and enterprise development, education and training, transport and infrastructure, as well as funding and financial administration are identified as fundamental for its success.*

**Keywords:** *Economic development, Nigeria, Service sector, Strategy, Sustainability, Tourism marketing.*

### **Introduction**

Fundamental processes of restructuring, an increased mobility of capital, the rise and decline of localities and regions and the pursuit of new economic growth activities, particularly in the service sector, have characterised the economic geography of the post-industrial world (Binns and Nelt, 2002). In the developing world, such economic change frequently overlays more localised processes of marginalisation and extreme poverty. In recent years, in a parallel and often related process, service-based economics sectors have received significant impetus from altered consumer preferences and choices, wealth and locational mobility (Hudson, 1995). Tapping into economic shifts such as these can have significant potential for areas that are seeking to reorientate their local economies as a result of economic change or marginalisation. One sector that has performed particularly well in this context is tourism, which has clearly become one of the most critical forces shaping the world's economy (Williams, 1998). The identification and promotion of localities as a result of their location, natural attractions and tourist-oriented facilities, has enabled once marginalised area, such as Nigeria to enjoy new found economic prosperity. The increasing importance of tourism

generally, and more specifically in the developing world is a noteworthy theme in development literature, and many countries have now come to regard it as a 'passport to development' (Williams 1998, Dann, 2002).

Within this context, the advocacy of tourism as a so-called 'pro-poor' strategy is an emerging theme in development literature (Ashley and Roe, 2002), as are parallel debates concerning the potential of tourism development in promoting community development and sustainability in a manner that does not lead to drastic environmental and social changes (Wahab and Pigram, 1997). Numerous governments and development agencies around the world find tourism promotion a relatively inexpensive strategy that can draw in foreign exchange through 'exhibiting' local culture and environments. In situations marked by economic collapse, and in the absence of significant economic alternatives, this is probably an understandable situation.

Tourism industry has seen rapid growth in recent decades and has attracted the attention of many scholars who see Tourism as a tool for economic development in less developed countries (LDCs). Tourism obviously increases spending by affluent visitors from developed countries in less developed countries. It can, also, contribute to the transfer of non-monetary resources such as human skills and technology from developed countries to less developed countries (LDCs).

However, like other development strategies, tourism has limitations (Sharpley, 2002). The main constraints are lack of capital and infrastructure including hotels, transportation, health facilities, and security. Local support industries often do not exist or cannot meet the demands of large tourism operations. If tourism is to grow as an alternative development strategy, the LDCs must be able to supply or import the industrial goods and offer the specialised services that are essential for this industry to succeed. In the short run, this would negatively affect LDC trade balances and increase dependency on imported goods and labour. On the other hand, tourism could support much needed infrastructure and open opportunities for faster and cheaper movement of resources. Increased trade opportunities would assist all markets and lead to faster long-run economic development in other sectors.

The paper has the objective of examining national and international strategies for developing tourism and investigates the opinion of participants (policy maker, tourism operators, academics and administrators) in the tourism industry in Nigeria. The paper is organised as follows. It first reviews the application of tourism by developed countries for economic development. The next section discusses the

reasons for tourism marketing in developing countries like Nigeria. Subsequent sections explore the relevance of sustainable tourism marketing in Nigeria, the concept of marketing and some policy issues regarding the subject matter. The methodology used and the results from the field follow. A concluding section suggests some recommendations and their implications for Nigeria.

### **The Application of Tourism by Developed Countries for Economic Development.**

Tourism is the temporary movement to destinations outside the normal home and workplace. Tourism marketing and its impact on rural communities are becoming increasingly prominent internationally. Special attention is being paid to tourism development in rural areas where wildlife and indigenous cultures provide numerous opportunities for tourism, rural development and economic growth (Mahony and Van Zyl, 2002).

Tourism Marketing is truly global, but little is known about this new tourism product in developing countries (Page and Getz, 1997). It is ironic that tourism marketing is well established in most developed countries of Europe, North America and Australia, while it remains unacknowledged in most developing countries. For instance, the countries that attended tourism seminar and shared their experiences were Australia, Italy, France, Switzerland, China, Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, Romania and Israel (World Tourism Organisation, 1997).

Given the decline in rural economies internationally over the past three decades, it is understandable that much government attention has been given to the economic benefits of tourism, particularly in areas that are struggling to keep pace with, and adapt to, the vagaries of a globalised economy. Tourism development has, therefore, received increasing recognition as a toll for regional and national economic development. In Japan, which has long been held as model for many of the developed nations of the West, the countryside has suffered from out-migration. The national and regional governments, together with businesses have implemented policies to arrest rural population losses by replacing declining industries such as forestry, farming and fishing with rural tourism (Graburn, 1995).

Government intervention in tourism is widespread. Tourism is being promoted as a source of rural and urban economic growth and employment generation at all levels of government in developed nations such as Australia, Canada, the European Union, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States (Williams and Shaw, 1988, Hall and



Jenkins, 1995), by the former state socialist countries of Eastern Europe, and by less developed countries such as Kenya, Cuba and Sri Lanka, and the Pacific region generally (Hall and Jenkins, 1995). It is beyond any doubt that tourism marketing is indeed an internationally acclaimed tourism product.

The goals of tourism marketing such as economic growth and diversification, employment generation, increased investment, population retention, infrastructure and facility provision and conservation are fairly standard policy goals, but the actual strategic process by which they can be achieved is not standard. Little attention has been paid to the objective defining process or to strategy formulation. Although tourism is hailed as a tool for regional development, there is rarely a clear conception of tourism marketing or of the role tourism in rural regions or local communities that could inform strategy or planning (Butler et al, 1998). This is the background against which strategic guidelines for tourism marketing development are considered.

Tourism marketing is distinctive by its projection of people needs, whether authentic or not (Kotler 2003). It's generally constructed around the built or natural environment, and includes programmes such as cultural festivals and traditional activities that often re-enact the past or provide a flavour of the traditional local or rural culture and its history. Tourism marketing brings together the natural and cultural heritage, and this is what differentiates it from nature-based tourism. Tourists and their way of life are key component of tourism marketing. There is enough theory to form the basis for the development of tourism marketing as an enterprise in its own right (Butler et al., 1998). Australia is a leading nation in tourism development, and had developed a National Rural Tourism Development Strategy by 1994.

### **The Relevance of Sustainable Tourism Marketing to Nigeria**

Tourism is one of the subsectors of the Nigerian economy that is waiting to be exploited. Owing to the nature of the subsector as a major foreign exchange earner, many countries, (both developing and developed) devote much attention to its development in a bid to realise huge potentials. This is why most countries that are less endowed rely on tourism as major source of revenue (Williams and Shaw, 1988).

The growth of the tourism industry of a country depends largely on the state of its economic development (Ibru, 2006). This is why any tourism is intertwined with the level of economic development of any country. There is also a strong correlation between the level of economic

development in a country and the state of its hospitality industry, which is an aspect of tourism.

This explains why Ikeja Hotels Plc, a leading hospitality company in Nigeria, is making strategic moves to position itself in the industry in a bid to maximise the huge potentials that is inherent in the unfolding economic growth in Nigeria. Under the strategy, Ikeja Hotels, parent company of Ikeja Sheraton Hotels and Federal Palace Hotel, has acquired 51 per cent of Capital Hotels (Owners of Abuja Sheraton Hotel and Towers).

The strategic acquisition was made through a special purpose vehicle and it was financed by a syndicated loan obtained from a consortium of banks consisting of Union Bank of Nigeria, Afribank Nigeria Plc, Intercontinental Bank Plc, Diamond Bank Plc, IBTC Chartered Bank Plc, and First Bank of Nigeria Plc. To underscore the importance of tourism, the Federal Government of Nigeria set up a presidential tourism council, which is more or less an inter ministry council comprising of twelve (12) ministers and ten (10) Governors of States who have interests in the development of tourism in their states. It is a public/private sectors partnership in which the private sector is well represented (Ibru, 2006). Ibru (2006) says that from projections made about the country, one can see that the economy will grow if the economic reforms in place are sustained, noting that by 2016, the Nigerian economy will be as big as the South African economy, which is the biggest economy in Africa presently.

The story making the rounds in the country is the perceived government's poor attitude to tourism. The way government workers relate with the individual operators leaves much to be desired. From the Nigeria Government Quarters, inability to fund some world Tourism Days at the national level in Abuja was major obstacles to the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) charged with the responsibility of marketing and promoting tourism potentials in the land. A visitor interested to see several historically and culturally significant tourism sites in Nigeria would not look too far. Such person has the choice of eight (8) states such as Abia, Lagos, Bauchi, Plateau, Cross River, Osun and Nasarawa to traverse. These States are full of impressive ecotourism scenery, including Fari Ruwa, i.e. white water in English, precious mineral deposits, Bay Dorchester, Obudu Cattle Ranch etc.

The tourism writers of Nigeria in 2003 gathered in Ibadan to rub minds and keep abreast of the trends in the global tourism industry. At the end of the seminar the writers issued a communiqué, which they said would jump-start the tourism industry, if it were well implemented by the

government and other stakeholders. Some of the resolutions that were reached on how to move the sector include, according to Okpanku (2003), the following:

- Federal Government should advise the leadership of the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) to turn a new leaf in order to improve the industry in the country.
- Review of NTDC poor implementation of marketing and promotion responsibilities
- Public hearing by National Assembly on the way forward for the new national airline which will project the image and pride of Nigeria
- Harmonisation of taxation policy in the country in order to encourage the speedy growth and development of the tourism industry and
- The summit said that the vibrancy for which the National Association of Nigeria Travel Agencies (NANTA) was noted has nose-dived, calling on the travel trade body to seek ways to review the industry.

This unfolding scenario will sustain demand for hotel and conferencing facilities over the medium term, translating to improved prospects for the company in the years ahead.

### **The Concept of Marketing**

People hold a variety of misconceptions about marketing. Most common is its confusion with selling and advertising. Selling and advertising are actually types of promotion, which is only a component of marketing. Marketing involves much more, including products/service development, place (location and distribution), and pricing. It requires information about people, especially those interested in what you have to offer (your market), such as what they like, where they buy and how much they spend. Its role is to match the right product or service with the right market or audience. Marketing is an art and science. According to the American Marketing Association (1984), marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organisational objectives. Simply stated, it is creating and promoting a product (ideas, goods or services) that satisfies a customer's need or desire and is available at a desirable price and place.

Modern marketing is a way of doing business, heavily based on the marketing concept which holds that businesses and organisations should:

- Design their product/services to meet customers' needs and wants,
- Focus on those people most likely to buy their product rather than the entire mass market, and

- Develop marketing efforts that fit into their overall business objectives.

By adopting this concept one will provide one's customers with better products. One will avoid wasting valuable time and money developing and promoting a product or service nobody wants. Since tourism is primarily a service-based industry, the principal products provided by recreation/tourism (R/T) businesses are recreational experiences and hospitality. These are intangible products and more difficult to market than tangible products such as automobiles (Ibidunni, 2004). The intangible nature of services makes quality control difficult but crucial. It also makes it more difficult for potential customers to evaluate and compare service offerings. In addition, instead of moving the product to the customer, the customer must travel to the product (area/community). Travel is a significant portion of the time and money spent in association with recreational and tourism experiences and is a major factor in people's decisions on whether or not to visit your business or community.

As an industry, tourism has many components comprising the overall travel experience. Along with transportation, it includes such things as accommodation, food and beverage services, shops, entertainment, aesthetics and special events (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999). It is rare for one business to provide the variety of activities or facilities tourists need or desire. This adds to the difficulty of maintaining and controlling the quality of the experience. To overcome this hurdle, tourism related businesses, agencies, and organisations needs to work together to package and promote tourism opportunities in their areas and align their efforts to assure consistency in product quality.

### **Some key Policy Issues Regarding Tourism Marketing**

Tourism Marketing does have some disadvantages for rural and urban areas, despite its benefits and viability as an economic development agent. Tourism is not a quick fix for economic ills. Like rural manufacturing, it can put communities in competition with one another. Employment in the tourism industry, like many other service sector positions, remains among the lowest paid around the world. Jobs associated with tourism are often seasonal and profit is made only for a specific part of the year (Wilson et al, 2001). Nonetheless, tourism remains one of the few viable economic options for communities.

Research on how best to facilitate the development of tourism has burgeoned in recent years. A view which draws heavily on the economic literature argues that tourism is best developed by helping and creating individual businesses and letting them compete in the market (Eadington

and Redman, 1991). This has been criticised because it views tourism and its related businesses as isolated from communities and their issues, because it does not recognise the interdependence of the different sectors, individuals and groups involved in tourism and because most small tourist businesses, especially those in rural and urban areas do not individually have the resources to promote themselves or their community as tourist product (Palmer and Bejou, 1995).

Opposing this view is the community approach to tourism development (Murphy, 1995). This approach argues that tourism is a community product, and it is, therefore, necessary to have community and local capabilities such as community leadership and formal and informal networks directly involved in tourism development and promotion efforts (Murphy, 1985). While the community approach may be an effective way to develop and promote tourism, creating necessary inter-community cooperation and collaboration is a complex and difficult process. Businesses are asked to share resources while simultaneously competing with state and local governments, and indeed, the private sector may see collaboration to develop tourism as risky. Adegbuyi and Iruonagbe (2006) consider that the reluctance of the private sector to invest in tourism in Nigeria could be attributed to the complexities and uncertainties associated with land ownership, poor infrastructure support, the limitations of the tourism market and largely risk-averse financial community. After having analysed the concept and issues concerning tourism marketing and its potential role in the field of tourism specifically in Nigeria—the research problem can, thus, be formulated as how tourism marketing can be fully integrated in a well structured way into the country. The purpose of this Study is, therefore, to identify and examine key issues that can help private and government to successfully develop tourism.

### **Methodology**

The methodology used in this Study consist of:

- A comparative literature Study of international tourism, with special emphasis on the Australian strategy for promoting tourism
- A field survey among tourism community.

### **Empirical Survey**

The researcher uses local individual interviews and focus-group discussions (unstructured interviews) to obtain in-depth information from the respondents who were selected randomly from interested and affected parties. Osuagwu (2002) argues that the unstructured interview is one of the most practical means of trying to understand one's fellow human

beings. It attempts to understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any prior categorization that may limit the field of inquiry.

A stratified sampling is used to select respondents from each category sampled for in-depth interview. Nine (9) policy-makers and administrators (officials of the tourism department), Six (6) tour operators taking visitors to cultural villages and nature and game based parks, Seven (7) academics from higher education, and Eight (8) domestic and international tourists to Nigeria were interviewed. The unstructured interviews explored how tourism developed and the respondents' understanding of the reasons for its success and failure. Respondents were asked to share their views on the salient strategic developmental issues in tourism marketing development. The primary method of data collection has been the unstructured interview technique undertaken by the researcher himself.

## **Results**

The literature Study and fieldwork survey identified a set of issues. Four strategic issues were found to be most important for successful Tourism Marketing in Nigeria:

- Product and enterprise development
- Education and training
- Transport and infrastructure
- Funding and financial administration

## **Service and Enterprise Development**

'Product' refers to the actual attraction or service being offered. Its successful marketing is inextricably are linked to the tourism enterprises developing the product. For this reason product and enterprise linked together in one strategic guideline. It is recognised in the tourism literature that successful tourism involves persuading tourists to stay longer than simply undertaking visit to view an attraction. When a region has a Victorial Falls or other special tourist attraction centre. It is relatively easy to attract visitors for a prolonged time by providing additional secondary attractions and tourism oriented activities around the central feature. In the absence of such special attractions, and owing to the dispersed character of attractions in rural and urban areas these destinations find it more difficult to attract visitors. This, also, seems to be a problem in Nigeria. It has been shown that as a matter of strategy, visitors need to view dispersed attraction points, not as isolated from and competing with each other, but in combination. Tourism packages must include all aspects of the

environment, its cultural life and natural (scenic) features. In the absence of a particular object of attention, tourists who visit a region want to go for the 'total experience'. As a point of departure it is thus strategically important to identify the major and ancillary attractions and to draw up a comprehensive supply inventory, including every possible place, activity or happening of interest or of practical value or assistance to tourists, to construct the various kinds of tourism packages that will provide the much-needed total Nigerian experience. The aim is not to show places only, but to let the tourists feel and experience foreign cultures and environments.

The research has identified that for a tourism enterprise or area to be successful in the absence of world-renowned attraction, it is essential that the tourism product be innovative, diverse and different from that of its competitors. Diversifying tourism products and matching a specific product offered to a specific market are critical for commercial success. Developing and marketing products, which provide a specifically African experience, are often an important stimulus for new business (Kirsten and Rogerson, 2002).

### **Education and Training**

Tourism depends almost entirely on skilled and innovative human resources for delivering quality service. Research has shown that many small-scale tourist operators in major areas had little or no experience either in hospitality or in small business operation. The management of the majority of tourist centers has less than five years' experience in the industry. Education and training are urgently needed to ensure the delivery of quality service.

Some academics, policymakers and administrators who were interviewed insist that meeting the educational and training needs of tourist guides, tourism operators, communities, local government authorities, tourism associations and development organisations are essential for successful tourism marketing in Nigeria. The means to achieve this are:

- Encouraging industry training for tourism operators
- Establishing educational programmes to increase the tourism skill base of local and state governments and economic development officers
- Distributing a simplified code of conduct for visitors of the tourism destinations
- Working with academic institutions on developing relevant and effective training materials and courses that encourage best practices

and principle to ensure that tourism development will be sustainable and keep abreast of new demand patterns.

### **Transport and other Infrastructure**

Tourism is all about people moving between places, and requires a good infrastructure of all forms of communication. Tourism products are often found in relatively remote and urban areas with poor transport facilities and other infrastructure. Improved transport facilities will not only benefit tourism, but will also ensure that the country is a true gateway to Africa. Respondents regarded the general decline in the condition of some roads in recent times as a major hindrance to tourism. Lack of proper basic services such as water, electricity, telecommunications and road also hamper tourism activities in the country. The development and upkeep of infrastructure should form an important part of the tourism strategic plan. Our research findings and literature reviewed identified infrastructure development as being primarily the responsibility of government. Cooperation between all interested parties and, most importantly, public-private cooperation, are essential.

### **Funding and Financial Management**

It is clear that provision of enough funds for tourism development is a strategic issue. All the issues discussed above need funding. A strategy for acquiring funding from the private sector (and if possible from abroad) seems essential in the light of the restricted budgets of all government departments and the poverty in the country. Funding requires a very special place in any strategic plan for tourism marketing development, in that it requires the raising of funds from within a relatively poor community. It also needs a system of guidance for local entrepreneurs on day to day financial administration.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

The Study of tourism literature has proved that tourism is an industry that warrants special attention. In a country such as Nigeria such development will not happen by itself. Pro-active initiatives through the implementation of the strategy, as expounded, will be necessary. It is a relatively new service with a great potential that can revitalise and diversify the nation economy and counteract the global trend towards urbanisation and depopulation of rural areas. Most developed countries, are ahead as far as tourism marketing and promotion are concerned. Despite its good intentions, the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation does not explicitly identify tourism as an industry segment



that has potential to address economy problems. As a result, almost all communities still remain neglected in tourism development initiatives, which reinforce an observation made in the Tourism Seminar organised in 1999 in Lagos. One may conclude that citizens of a country do not stand to gain unless specific policies or strategies are developed to target them.

The Study emphasises the important role of tourism marketing as part of the economic recovery and development of rural and urban areas. The suitability of tourism in Nigeria with its citizen character and rich cultural heritage is also documented. It is believed that should the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation utilise the strategic guidelines outlined in this report, the country may have a bright tourism future. Without it the tourism sector will remain a haphazard conglomeration of a number of small individual entrepreneurs, trying to do their own thing without realising the immense potential of the area.

Besides, governments (Federal, State and Local) and private businessmen should endeavour to among others:

- Identify key anchor projects at the national and local government levels, which will generate significant spin-offs and assist in promoting interstate economic integration.
- Develop a national marketing strategy
- Develop a research capacity in Tourism
- Promote partnerships such as those formed via sub-regional bodies. Examples include Nigerian tourism Development Corporation, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Regional Tourism Organisation of South Africa (RETOSA)

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