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Tourism: problems and prospects

The advent of organised tourism in Nigeria has taken place as a result of the formation of Nigerian Tourist Association in 1962 by a group of private tourist operators and subsequent admission in the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) in 1964. Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation was formed in 1992 as an apex body of Federal Government charged with the overall responsibility of promoting, marketing and co-ordinating tourism activities. In order to increase her share of the market for tourism, Nigeria must understand that "a whole range of changes in society and the global economy will need to be taken into consideration in planning and managing tourism destinations and enterprises in the era of globalisation". Tourism is still being developed in Nigeria; as a result, there is a new federal policy in preparation which recognises the vast potential of the sub-sector. With the government's renewed interest and new private sector initiative, there are indications that there are more exciting days ahead for every tourist.

Challenges

- Inadequate infrastructure to guarantee security of life and property. Development of road networks, provision and maintenance of water pipes and sewage, improved solid waste management at the tourist sites, and telecommunication.

- Inadequate finance and banking services.

- Absence of effective monitoring and enforcement.

- Lack of adequate awareness.

Measures

- Safety and security of life and property, maintenance of law and order is the paramount duty of the government. It should strengthen the police force with modern weapons to overcome the threat posed by anti-social elements.

- Infrastructure in terms of good road, expansion of railways, development of airports, provision and maintenance of basic amenities at the picnic spots, comfortable accommodation and catering facilities have to be increased to attract tourists into the country.

- Visa regime should be liberalised and made easier without administrative bottlenecks such as corruption and red tapism.

- Capacity building through



dissemination of education, training and raising awareness among tourist officials is important for the promotion of tourism.

- Environment protection management is essential to avoid adverse impact as a result of tourists' inflow. In modern times, tourism also presents a positive force in helping to conserve the environment of the holiday regions. New forms of tourism such as 'clean-up' tourism should be adopted, leaving the destination in a better envi-

ronmental condition- in a form of 'enhanced sustainability'

- Various types of crises from terrorist attacks to conflict among communities may cause a falling trend in supply and demand of tourism. As tourism relies on international human and business transactions, it is among the most severely crisis-damaged industries. Therefore, tourism organisations both in the public and private should be well equipped in crisis management and tourism contingency planning to deal effectively with

such crisis and restore crisis-impaired images of tourist destinations.

Though many tourism policies have been formulated including National Agenda 21 for the promotion of tourism, they remain as paper tigers without full implementation. Therefore, it is essential to take real steps for planning, development, promotion and marketing of tourism along with rebranding the image of Nigeria within and outside Nigeria including well defined roles for Federal, State

and Local governments to ensure that the nation as a whole and the local population benefit from tourism development projects.

Around the globe, governments have intervened to assist and regulate the private sector in the development of tourism. Similarly, all the three tiers of government i.e., federal, state and local governments should participate actively in the promotion of tourism. This is because the complex nature of tourist product makes it unlikely that the private markets will satisfy Nigeria's tourism policy objectives to produce a balance of facilities that meets the needs of the visitor and benefits the host community. The Government can use the fixed and economic incentives as policy instruments that can be used to correct the tourism market failures and ensure a development partnership between the public and the private sectors. Thus, it is needless to say that if the above measures are implemented in letter and spirit, tourism could be used not only as a passport to foster peace and unity but also as a measure of conflict resolution and development in Nigeria.