Tourism: A gold mine yet to be tapped

Nigeria is the largest black nation in the world and is endowed with huge potentials of resources, excellent tourist locations and traditional heritage which are essential for rapid tourism and economic development.

Benefits of tourism are manifold: as an industry, it is labour intensive but non-cyclical and less vulnerable than traditional sectors; with less entry barriers and no trade tariff controls, it has a catalytic effect on other sectors of the economy generating jobs. Further, tourism as a form of leisure and as a harbinger of peace enables people to live amicably.

Tourism is built on natural and cultural assets and it is consumed on tourism sites; as such it can reach the poor easily in rural areas where poverty is harsher. Moreover, tourism has the potential to ameliorate poverty and inequality by accelerating pro-poor growth in Nigeria.

It has the capacity if well-developed, to reduce the soaring crime rate in Nigeria, as a peace building and conflict mitigating measure to promote cross cultural understanding among 50 ethnic, 250 linguistic and Niger delta militant groups.

Tourism facilitates people to realise the importance of contribution and achievements of other ethnic groups that would generate in turn mutual respect, good understanding and fellow feelings. The World Travel and Tourism Council have estimated that revenue related to tourism and travel in Nigeria has exceeded 11 billion US dollars accounting for approximately 6 percent of GDP in 2008.

In the earlier decades such as 1960’s and 1970’s, agricultural sector has contributed much to the economic development of Nigeria. After the discovery of oil, the government has not bestowed its attention on the development of primary and manufacturing sectors in view of the fact that the government received more than 80 per cent of its revenue from the sale of crude oil which is not a renewable resource.

Instead of viewing the discovery of oil as a boon, many economists view it as a bane, in view of poor performance of various sectors of the economy. Therefore, in the context of country’s poor agricultural and industrial progress, Nigeria needs tourism revenue essentially.

However, the number of international tourists to Nigeria has remained static on account of barriers such as unfavourable visa regime, negligence, poor accommodation and catering facilities.

The image of the country is more important for the promotion of tourism. An image involves a whole act of beliefs about a place. The image of Nigeria is important not only in tourism drive but also in international with their tourism business, economic and social wealth. However, Nigeria’s historical and cultural sites are in decay and the physical environment is in a strategic disadvantage.

The good image is that the country enjoys a vast market potential, a large population with a friendly nature, a fine weather and the country’s attraction centre’s largely on cultural events, due to its ethnic groups but also includes rain forests, savannahs, waterfalls and other natural picnic spots.

The African triangle slave route to Europe and America, Badagry slave house, culture and heritage are strategic ele-

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