



CREATIVE TOURISM: A PANACEA FOR ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: This study assessed creative tourism as a panacea for economic sustainability in Nigeria for the period of 1999-2019 alongside capability and predicaments impeding the sector in question. Creative tourism for years has proven to be an unexpectedly basic contributor to the sustainable economy of the nations and powerful economic activity by creating millions of jobs and producing billions of dollars in exports. In this study, a desk approach system was employed as a methodology. The result showed that the trend analysis of international tourist receipts, international tourist arrival, creative tourism sector's contribution to GDP, and employment fluctuated between the period of 1999-2019. It also indicated that Nigeria as a country has the capability of making creative tourism the main source of its earnings being that it has various tourist attractions. This study supports the tourism-led growth hypothesis and concluded that creative tourism contributed to GDP and employment in Nigeria and the fluctuation was a result of the poor record of data, insecurity, and lack of political will, poor infrastructural facilities, and unfriendly business. In the presence of uncertainties and difficulties, this study recommended among other things the firm establishment of a sound tourism development master plan with the capability of revitalizing the capabilities embedded in the economic blueprint of Nigeria and ensuring sustainable tourism development participation.

Keywords: *Creative Tourism, GDP, Economic Sustainability, Sustainable Tourism, Nigeria*

Introduction

Tourism refers to the actions of individuals who travel to and stay in locations outside of their typical environment for less than a year for leisure, business, or other reasons (UNWTO, 2015). It is valued at US\$30 billion every year, contributing 9% of global GDP, and generates one of eleven employment opportunities worldwide (UNWTO, 2013). It is one of the world's fastest and largest growing industries (UNWTO, 2013). And thus, tourism is gradually becoming regarded as one of the most important economic players, both in Europe and globally (Ferreira & Sousa, 2020). Richards and Raymond (2000) coined the word "creative tourism". Creativity has been widely utilized in a variety of disciplines, most famously in the creative and cultural sectors. It surfaces that creativity had been portrayed as a panacea for a variety of issues. The creation of creative cities, clusters, industries, and fields can help to attract the creative class and, potentially, save the economy, as well as knit communities together and revive local culture (Scott, 2010).

Tourism is a vital component of many economies and a reliable source of revenue for most countries. Since 2017, the tourism sector has experienced impressive growth. International tourist arrivals globally grew by 7% in 2017, according to a report published by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2017). This was the highest rate since 2010 when a constant percentage of about 4% was reported. According to Yasmine (2019), international visitor arrivals increased by 5% year over year in the first nine months of 2018.

According to Peter (2011), creative tourism is a notion that was only formally defined a decade ago, but it has experienced tremendous growth in the intervening years. The diversity of presentations at the conference on various creative tourism programs from all around the world demonstrates how widespread it has become. As a result, creative tourism emerges as a key development alternative for a variety of reasons and can be used to achieve a variety of goals. For starters, it addresses the need for tourism to reinvent itself, as well as the necessity for locations to stand out in a crowded market. It can also satisfy tourists' yearning for more enriching

and meaningful experiences. On the other hand, there is an increasing number of small creative businesses looking for new markets to expand into. Creativity is becoming a more common professional option, and new creative require markets to target. Creative disciplines such as music, dancing, and photography are also becoming more popular (Cultural Alliance, 2010). Thus, the aforementioned trends explain and, to some extent, legitimize policymakers' preference for creative development techniques.

The problem of economic sustainability and tourism practice investigates many different aspects of the creative tourism phenomena, as well as how it has progressed in different regions. Despite the emergence of critical opinions on the subject, creative tourism has experienced obstacles in terms of development, and they tend to stress the good aspects. Travel and tourism are key economic activities in most countries across the world. The sector has major indirect and induced effects in addition to its direct economic impact. Despite wars, political upheaval, natural disasters, medical scares, terrorist attacks, and economic and energy problems in various regions of the world, the worldwide tourism trade has exploded since the 1970s. With this in mind, the purpose of this paper is to evaluate the contribution of creative tourism to the long-term viability of the Nigerian economy, with reference to potential and impediment factors of the sector.

Literature Review

Tourism Development in Nigeria

The first international tourists arrived in Nigeria in 1472, when Portuguese merchants arrived in Lagos, ostensibly in quest of trade. Trans-Saharan and caravan travels have also been documented in the past. Since then, the tourism industry in the country has continued to grow at a steady pace. The Nigerian Tourist Association was created in 1962 by the government with the mission of promoting domestic and international tourism in the country (Munzali, 2011). NTA was disbanded in 1976, and the Nigerian Tourism Board (NTB) was founded in its place. When the Ministry of Trade and Industry was established in 1990, the sub-growth sector was accelerated and the NTB became a Corporation (Ashikodi, 2010). Tourism's importance stems from its enormous potential for generating foreign exchange. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 1988), a total of 328,906 visitors visited Nigeria in 1987, bringing in N1.1 billion in revenue. By the year 2000, estimated earnings were predicted to reach N53 billion, and significantly greater by 2005, especially given the country's stable democratic dispensation (Yusuf & Akinde, 2015). By 2017, the government, recognizing the necessity for economic diversification as a result of the recession and drop in oil prices, had implemented a new visa policy aimed at facilitating corporate access and boosting tourism as part of the administration's larger economic diversification program (Thisday, 2017).

Furthermore, the comptroller of immigration, Mohammed Babbandede, was reported by the International Center for Investigative Reporting (ICRI, 2017) as saying, " *Foreign visitors who wish to visit Nigeria as tourists or to visit relatives and friends can apply for tourist visas.*" While a visit on arrival visa is a type of short-stay visa issued at the port of entry, it is available to frequently-traveled high-net-worth investors and intending visitors who may be unable to obtain visas at Nigerian missions/embassies in their countries of residence due to the lack of a Nigerian mission in those countries or the need for urgent business travel.

Contributions of Creative Tourism to the Long-Term Sustainability of Emerging Nigerian Economy

Many rising economies, such as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) which for example include Burkina Faso, Gambia, Haiti, Madagascar, Nepal, Rwanda, and Tanzania, rely on tourism as a source of revenue. UNWTO (2014) maintained that tourism was the fourth-largest source of export revenue for emerging nations, generating US\$ 485 billion in 2013. Similarly, World Travel and Tourism Council (2017) states that Travel and Tourism are pertinent economic activities in most countries around the globe. The industry has enormous indirect and induced economic repercussions in addition to its direct economic impact. Kolawole (2017) maintained that Nigeria as a country has to reconsider its dependency on crude oil. In all seriousness, the government must have learned a valuable lesson from the great recession. Dependence on a single large source of income is undesirable for a rising economy like Nigeria's, which has a population of about 170 million people that grows on an average of 2.3% yearly. The demand for leisure activities, social activities, and outdoor relaxation facilities such as music, art, entertainment, and movies is emerging as a major investment opportunity because for about 30 months from 2010 to early 2017, the sudden and most prolonged drop in commodity (particularly crude oil) prices, as well as severe disruptions in crude oil production and agricultural activities in some parts of the nation, have exposed Africa's greatest economy's fragile underbelly (Frivota Economics, 2017). Following the

National Bureau of Statistics (2013), the hotel and restaurant sector in Nigeria contributed between 12.01 percent and 12.69 percent of the country's total GDP between 2011 and 2012, and it is predicted to grow as the year's pass.

Leisure and Tourism Contributions to Nigeria's Economic Sustainability

Nigeria has a population advantage in its study of the country's strengths and potentials. The government can sell tourism to Nigerians to the extent where they recognize the value proposition, selling to international tourists may become optional. Available data showed that out of over 180 million Nigerians, the percentage of our population with purchasing power for tourism is above 30%. When looking at the figures of the fact sheet (2016) of the record of tourism receipts (International tourists) to the country, it can be seen that there was a steady increase from 2005 to 2010, but then a fall in revenue from international tourists until it picked up again in 2015. Between 2016 and 2017, it reached its maximum point (Kolawole, 2017)

Nigeria's Economic Tourism Potentials

Ogunberu (2011) maintained that Nigeria is a country with a landmass of about 365,000 square miles and is home to magnificent arts, crafts, sports, parks, museums, cultural and historical heritages, good tropical weather, lush vegetation, a diverse range of wildlife, tribes, and ethnicities, among other things, all of which are important factors in developing rural and urban creative tourism. With these creative tourism potentials, Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, could be transformed into an undiscovered tourist paradise with extensive stretches of unique beaches, beautiful mountains, well-preserved tradition and culture, and captivating tourist sites.

Methodology

The study employed a Desk Study approach as its methodology, which entails review of the several existing literature on creative tourism and the Nigerian economy while analyzing international tourist receipts, international tourists arrival, and their contributions to the economy's long-term viability and as well as job creation and employment.

Data Presentation and Findings

Figure 1. International Tourists Receipts in Nigeria 1999-2019



Source: World Bank Group (2021)

According to the figure above, international tourist receipts peaked between 2008 and 2009, with significant spending coming into Nigeria through creative tourism, before declining from the end of 2010 to 2015 as a result of terrorist activities, global economic meltdown, kidnappings, a lack of accurate data, and the then threat of Boko haram in Nigeria e.t.c. These findings corroborated Isaac's (2012) findings, which maintained that one of the variables impeding tourism development in Nigeria is the difficulty of putting a value on tourism contributions due to insufficient recordkeeping of tourism operations in the country and the World Travel and Tourism Council (2012) which reiterated that Tourists and tourism investors are likely to be deterred from visiting or investing in a country seen to be insecure. The results also showed that foreign tourist receipts peaked between 2016 and 2017, with significant expenditure going into Nigeria through creative tourism, while revenue was dropping from 2018-2019.

Figure 2: International Tourists Arrivals in Nigeria 1996-2016



Source: World Bank Group (2018)

Figure 2 shows consistent growth in international arrivals from 1996 to 2010, with a peak in 2010, and a distinct fall in 2011, which can be attributed to the global economic catastrophe and terrorist attacks and this finding agreed with the opinion of WTTC (2012). There was a resurgence in 2015 as a result of numerous business conferences hosted in Nigeria and a seamless democratic changeover following what appeared to be a cloudy picture of the situation in Nigeria.

Table 1: Data on Contribution of Travel and Tourism to Real Gross Domestic Product (RGDP) and Employment in Nigeria: 1999-2019

S/N	Period	Contribution to GDP (%)	Contribution to Employment (GDP%)
1	1999	2.7	2.5
2	2000	4.2	3.9
3	2001	4.2	3.9
4	2002	4.8	4.2
5	2003	4.2	3.9
6	2004	5.7	5.3

7	2005	6.3	5.9
8	2006	5.0	4.6
9	2007	6.0	5.6
10	2008	7.0	6.4
11	2009	5.5	5.1
12	2010	3.9	4.0
13	2011	3.5	3.6
14	2012	3.9	3.6
15	2013	4.5	4.3
16	2014	4.6	4.3
17	2015	4.4	4.2
18	2016	5.1	4.9
19	2017	5.4	5.1
20	2018	5.0	4.7
21	2019	5.1	4.8

Source: World Tourism Council Data, (2019)

In the year 2019, the contribution of travel and tourism to employment (as a percentage of GDP) in Nigeria was 4.8 percent, as shown in the table above. Since year 2000, Nigeria's contribution of travel and tourism to employment (percentage of GDP) was ranged from 3.6 percent in 2011 to 6.4 percent in 2008, with an average of 4.6 percent between 2000 and 2019. Nigeria's contribution of travel and tourism to GDP (percentage of GDP) was 5.1 percent in 2019. The following results revealed that the contribution of travel and tourism to GDP (percentage of GDP) in Nigeria fluctuated in recent years, with a downward trend from 2000 to 2019, ended at 5.1 percent in 2019. However, the table above also revealed that creative tourism contributed to GDP and job opportunities, was consistent with George (2013), who stated that the tourists businesses provides excellent prospects for job creation and economic growth, and this was also collaborated with Ogonu *et al.* (2019).

Nigeria's Economic Tourism Potentials

Table 2: Few Out of top 30 Tourist Attractions and Their locations in Nigeria

S/N	Tourist Attraction	Location
1	Osun-Osogbo Grove	Oshogbo, Osun State
2	Isaac Boro Garden Park	Port Harcourt, RiverState
3	Arochukwu Long juju-slave route	Abia State
4	Ngwo Pine Forest	Ngwo, Enugu state
5	Sukur cultural landscape	Madageli, Adamawa State
6	Surame cultural landscape	Surame, Sokoto State
7	Oke-Idanre Hills	Oke-Idanre, Ondo State

Source: Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, 2016

As shown above, Nigeria offers a plethora of tourist attractions spread around the country. These enormous tourist attraction / potentials are dispersed among the country's states. In addition to these thirty top tourist attractions, there are business tourism like seminar conferences and meetings as well as festivals that vary across regions, ethnicities, and groups all year round such as Argungun fishing festivals, Akata fishing festivals, and these enormous tourist activities that are commonly used to showcase Nigeria's rich cultural heritage. According to Uche (2013), Abiodun (2013), Yusuff and Akande (2015), these several rich cultural heritage provides a

range of tourism development potential that, if properly utilized, would make the tourism business profitable in Nigeria and this finding agreed with the opinion of Uche (2013), Abiodun(2013), Yusuff and Akande (2015).

Conclusion

This study backed up the tourism-led growth hypothesis, maintained that creative tourism contributed to Nigeria's GDP and employment, with fluctuations due to a lack of data, insecurity, a lack of political will, insufficient infrastructure, and unfavorable business conditions. The study also reiterated that Nigeria's economy can and must fully benefit from the knowledge it possesses through the appropriate application, conversion of that information into viable ideas, and commercial implementation of those ideas in both local and international value chains.

Recommendations

In the face of uncertainties and difficulties, this study recommended among other things the entrenchment of a sound tourism development master plan with the capability of rejuvenating the potentials in the economic design plan of the country and make certain of sustainable tourism development participation.

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