

Tourism Entrepreneurship as An Employment Opportunity For University Graduates in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Tourism industry is the fastest growing industry in the world and the most viable avenue for job generation for graduates who are entrepreneurial oriented. Although this should be the case, tourism development in Nigeria is still at its lowest compared to international tourist attractions such as those in USA, UAE, or Europe. The different successive administrations of Nigeria government over the years have been adamant in coming up with a worthwhile strategy that could make tourism industry an employment hub. Though the industry has been providing jobs for thousands of graduates every year, this is just a tip of an ice-bag. Currently, the industry is struggling because of insecurity, poor transportation, and wide-skills gap from among others. However, the industry has the potential of providing jobs and entrepreneurial avenues for millions of graduates if only the government in partnership with the private sector could give it a second thought.

Keywords: tourism entrepreneurship, employment opportunity, unemployment, Nigeria

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1. Introduction

Tourism is a main potency in any economy across the globe. It is one of the sectors that is consistently showing great significance in promoting economic growth (Eruotor, 2014). As the world becomes more globalized and change remains a constant factor, the growth of the tourism industry thus becomes the only hope for the third world countries as a source for harnessing revenue for economic development purposes (Eruotor, 2014). Already a report by World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has indicated that countries such as the USA, China, Japan, Germany and the UK were the top five markets in 2018, collectively representing 47 percent of the global Travel and Tourism GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019). In the same year (2018) the tourism industry contributed to 10.4 percent global GDP and 10 percent of total employment. The tourism industry thus is arguably and undeniably becoming a hub for job creation and employment opportunities for young people in hotels, travel agencies, airlines and passenger transportation services (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019).

The world over, the WTTC report revealed that tourism industry provided Europe with the highest total GDP contribution of \$2.2 trillion representing 9.7 percent, while the USA received a total GDP contribution of \$1.9 trillion representing 8.2 percent, and North East Asia received a total GDP contribution of \$2.1 trillion representing 9.6 percent. However, Africa only received a total GDP contribution of \$194 billion representing 8.5 percent (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019). Although the performance of Africa's tourism industry is still low compared to other regions in the world, the continent is endowed with natural resources such as mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, birds, animals and numerous cultural heritages and sites. In 2017, the tourism sector contributed up to 22.8 million jobs

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opportunities in the continent. For instance, Seychelles contributed 26.5 percent of total job opportunities, Cape Verde 15.8 percent, Mauritius 7.2 percent, and Morocco 7.1 percent (African Development Bank Group, 2018).

Indeed, African countries are surrounded by coastal line which makes them more attractive for tourism, such as the beaches in Lagos, Nigeria, the world's highest sand dunes in South Africa, the wild life experience in East African countries such as the safari in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda. With these tourism potentials, it makes tourism very essential in developing job opportunities for the unemployed young people taking into consideration the untapped natural resources blessed within the shores of these African countries (Eruotor, 2014).

2. Research Method

Tourism in Nigeria is a neglected goldmine. The country has an abundance of physical endowments which have not been explored. There are the extensive Yankari Reserve, scenic Mambilla Plateau, comforting Obudu Cattle Ranch, the temperate Jos climate, fascinating Ikogosi warm spring, the awesome Bilikisi Shugbon Shrine near Ijebu Ode, the ubiquitous Kuwruku hills as well as the tranquil Lake Chad sanctuary. The rich museums and many natural resorts make Nigeria a veritable tourist paradise. In addition, Nigeria provides a variety of cultural festivals all through the year, including Osogbo Osun festival, Lagos Eyo festival, Argungu fishing festival, Omumo festival in Imo State and the Mmanwu masquerade festival in Anambra State (Chuma, 2004). Although Nigeria has all these tourism potentials, the sector still remains a minor player in the national economy. In terms of absolute figures, international tourist arrivals rose marginally in 2001 from 850,000 to 1,550,000 in 2010 and fell to 486,000 in 2012. However tourism activities picked up in 2015 with 1,255,000 recorded international arrivals (Yusuff & Akinde, 2015) as indicated in figure 1 below.



Figure 1. International Tourists Arrivals in Nigeria

3. Result and Discussions

Contribution of Tourism to GDP

The WTTC Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2015 indicated that in Nigeria, the Direct Contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP was 1,560.2 billion (1.7% of total GDP) while the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was 3,766.1 billion (4.1%) of GDP (Jumia Market, 2016). Again, these numbers are not inspiring because of the country's overreliance on oil. However, in terms of employment generation, the tourism sector has greatly out-competed several sectors in the country. Looking at the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Travel & Tourism Economic Impact, 2015, it clearly showed that in 2014, Travel & tourism directly supported 883,500 jobs (1.4% of total

employment) while the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment including jobs indirectly supported by the industry was 3.6% of total employment, 2,198,500 jobs (Jumia Market, 2016). On the other hand, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicated that tourism sector accounted for about 20 per cent of the nation's employment creation in 2017 (Agency Report, 2018).

Challenges Facing the Tourism Sector in Nigeria

The Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria has taken a major dimension in the history of Nigeria. The country is no longer safe for visitors and interested tourists. Little success has been achieved by government in the area of resolving the Boko Haram crises (Ekundayo, 2014). This is having a negative implication on the tourism sector. Since the beginning of Boko Haram activities in the North-Eastern Nigeria, tourism industry has suffered a lot of setbacks in Northern Nigeria, most especially the Sukur Kingdom in Madagali, Adamawa State which has gained international recognition as a tourist center and has also succeeded in attracting both international and local tourist to the area, for studies and other related issues (Ahmed, Ojeh, Atuma, & Philip, 2018).

Another challenge that is affecting the tourism sector in Nigeria is the issue of corruption. In spite of the machinery put in place by every administration in the Nigeria government, the power of fighting corruption to its final state is still missing in Nigeria. Corruption has eaten very deep into the fabric of all sectors of the country and the tourism sector is not left out of these crises. Indeed the menace of corruption in Nigeria is a huge discouragement to tourism and tourist in the country which hinders the country from being a tourist destination (Anatusi & Nnabuko, 2012). Transparency International, an independent global watch on corruption in its 2018 report ranked Nigeria 144th least corrupt nation out of 175 countries (Transparency International, 2018).

According to (Ekundayo, 2014), security is a necessity for the effective operation and implementation of tourism. However, Nigeria does not have an effective system of security management, this has led to major cases of kidnapping, armed robbery, killing, bombing, and crises in both internal and external environments. Insecurity in the country is getting out of hands. It is repulsive hearing the same stories again and again. The country is no longer safe, people are afraid of their protection and safety. The insecurity in the country needs attention, the government needs to face the security challenges and look deeply into the issue to find a lasting solution to this carnage (Hoel, 2019). Likewise, the insecurity and regular travel warnings by western countries have created global negative press around Nigeria leading to poor perception amongst foreign tourists.

Similarly, Obinna (2016) decries poor means of transportation as a major problem of tourism development. Indeed, the deplorable state of Nigeria roads keeps posing a challenge on the success of tourism in the country. Many tourists are discouraged due to the bad states of roads. Some tourists after envisioning the risks of traveling on bad roads coupled with the after-effect of tiresome trips feel discouraged. Furthermore, the building and construction of new roads to ease transportation in Nigeria is not quite encouraging. So much has been budgeted by the government on yearly basis but this has not translated to the required roads that are needed in a globalized business world that will further enhance tourism businesses (Obinna, 2016).

Furthermore, there is a huge skills-gap in the tourism sector in Nigeria. Seriously the human resource ability in terms of quality and international standard leaves a lot to be desired in spite of the fact that the nation has a flamboyant and operating National Institute of Hospitality and Tourism (NIHT). Unfortunately NIHT offers courses that largely focus on catering and basic hotel management rather than ecotourism or tourism development in general. In the same vein, the NIHT lacks state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities to equip the students with the necessary practical skills and knowledge in the industry. To add more injury to an already existing wound, several universities in the country offer courses in tourism and hospitality basing on only theoretical aspects thus leaving many graduates in this field with minimal skills that can hardly be applicable in the development of this industry (Ajibola, 2016).

Government Effort to Revamp Tourism Sector in Nigeria

Several endeavors have been made by the Federal Government to boost the tourism industry in Nigeria. This was explicitly voiced in 1990 with the formulation of the National Tourism Policy and the

subsequent promulgation of Decree 81 of 1992 establishing the Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) (Bassey, 2015). A further boost was the design and development of the Nigeria Tourism Development Master Plan in 2005. The Plan was prepared in collaboration with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Tourism Development International. The Master Plan was focused on strengthening institutional capacity of the Nigeria tourism sector. Since then not much has been achieved. The slow implementation of the Nigeria Tourism Master Plan can be attributed to the low political *will* expressed by political office-holders and human capital shortage in tourism planning by responsible public agencies (Nigeria, 2006).

Notwithstanding the low level of implementation of the Nigeria Tourism Master Plan, sporadic developments have taken place in some States of the country such as Cross River State, Akwa Ibom State, Kebbi State, Lagos State, Osun State, and Abuja. However, a number of initiatives by government to reposition the tourism industry in Nigeria as a viable economic power bank have met several failures. This scenario has been the concern of academics, tourism practitioners and civilized Nigerians. The industry is still in a frail state even when the government has shown concern; although with minute effort (Bassey, 2015).

Nonetheless, irrespective of government's unsuccessful efforts to revamp tourism industry in the country, the capability of the tourism industry in Nigeria to generate sustainable revenues that will rival current earnings from crude oil cannot be overemphasized. However, this can only be achieved by a synergy of all levels of government in creating an enabling environment for tourism to thrive and attract domestic and foreign nationals. This will include improving infrastructural facilities and creating a favorable business environment in Nigeria that will attract local and foreign investors to participate in this industry (The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2017).

Unemployment among Graduates in Nigeria

In Nigeria today, the high rate of unemployment among graduates can be blamed on the poor education standard at university level that basically trains job seekers and not job creators (Erilem, 2019). For instance a report by the National Survey on Labor Market Needs (NSLMN) revealed that 44 percent of the 20 surveyed organizations rated Nigerian science graduates as average in competence, 56 percent rated them as average in innovation, 50 percent rated them as average in rational judgment, 63 percent rated them as average in leadership skills, and 44 percent as average in creativity (Adekalu & Oludeyi, 2013). On needed skills like literacy, oral communication, information technology, entrepreneurship, analytical, problem-solving and decision making, 60 percent rated them as poor (Adekalu & Oludeyi, 2013). These simple statistics are already an indication that majority of Nigerian graduates are unemployable. This could be the reason why the report by National Bureau of Statistics indicated that unemployment among graduates keep skyrocketing every year. For instance, in 2015 it was at 12.37%, then 23.67% in 2016, in 2017 it was at 25.65%, and in 2018 it escalated to 29.75% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Employment opportunities for graduates in the tourism sector

Employment opportunities in tourism and hospitality sectors can be created either directly or indirectly. Direct Employment opportunities are the total number of job opportunities supported by directly in travel and tourism. For example employment by hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, tourism information offices, museums, protected areas such as national parks, palaces, religious sites, monuments, aircrafts, cruise lines, resorts or shopping outlets, souvenirs, photography, sightseeing tours, farmhouses, bed and breakfast, rural inns and guest houses, local transportation (state owned airlines and railways, private transport facilities), Guides, cooks and program scouts (Aynalem, Kassegn, & Tesefay, 2016).

Tourism and hospitality also supports indirect employment in activities like restaurant suppliers, construction companies that build and maintain tourist facilities, as well as necessary infrastructure, aircraft manufacturers, various handicrafts producers, marketing agencies, accounting services, which are more or less dependent on the companies providing direct employment for their revenues (Yunis, 2009).

Truth be told, there are so many job options that exist in the tourism industry that could highly absorb thousands of graduates that are entrepreneurial oriented. For example our young graduates entrepreneurs could find business in areas such as art and craft, folk dance organization, tour guide agency, marketing agencies [by building websites for online booking and showcasing different tourist attraction sites] (Orekoya, 2018).

On the other hand, there are also many business opportunities for entrepreneurship minded graduates in Nigeria in restaurant and hotel subsectors. A case in point, hospitality graduates who would wish to provide restaurant or cafeteria services to the tourists can provide their best expertise with African touch in ensuring that eating African food in their facilities would be a memorable event for tourists. At the same time, they can employ their fellow graduates in areas such as chefs, waiters, waitresses, and catering coordinators (Dayananda, 2014).

Likewise, entrepreneurial graduates could also find business opportunities in the tourism entertainment departments such as organizing daytime activities like beach football, netball, volleyball, or cultural dances, to keep the guests entertained. In this sector, graduates could work as adventure tour guide, amusement park managers, or show (talent) entrepreneurs. Similarly graduates who have the necessary skills could highly likely find jobs in event management where they can be employed to look for and book suitable venues for events, organize transportation, or inform guests about the transport and parking option. They can also work as wedding coordinators, concert or festival organizers, party planner or conference host (Becheru, 2019).

4. Conclusion

Tourism and hospitality industry of Nigeria has the capacity of creating many job opportunities for millions of graduates in different areas like accommodation, food and beverage (restaurants, dining rooms, cafes, fast food outlets, bed and program breakfasts, motels, hotels, resorts, lounges, catering operations; airlines, airports, aircrafts, ships, boats, cruises, land transportations like (train, bus, travel agencies, tour operation companies), natural and cultural attractions such as national parks, caves, monuments, museums and program galleries, theatres, concerts, festivals, carnivals, conferences, tradeshow, and exhibitions). Therefore, given the potential of the tourism sector to create jobs for graduates, there is need for the government to develop and empower this sector through partnerships with local and international private sectors so as to forge a way of transforming the tourism industry into an economic and job generation power house. Way forward of this research is 1) Nigerian universities and the National Institute of Hospitality and Tourism (NIHT) need to be well funded, facilitated and developed so as to offer tourism and hospitality courses that provide students with employable practical skills such as communication skills, problem-solving skills, diplomacy skills and business management skills. In this way, after graduation, graduates can either start their own businesses that directly target tourists or they can easily get jobs in the different investments within the industry such as hotels, travel agencies, or tour guides. 2) In addition, the Nigerian government in partnership with the private sector could work hand in hand to provide more investments in terms of hotels, technology, transportation, and international marketing. Investments in amusement parks, development of national parks such as Yankari to international standards, and provision of good roads and stable electricity power would boost and attract both local and international tourists into the country. Thus with a vibrant tourism industry, graduates could be absorbed to work as customer care clerks, tour guide, story tellers, drivers, chefs, waiters and waitress, event managers, entertainers, marketing personnel among others. At the same time graduates who are entrepreneurship minded could establish start-up businesses that would provide the tourists with what no other highly established settings do off; for example night round fire storytelling, locally organized cultural dances and wrestling games, or food tasting of locally prepared Nigerian food delicacies such as roasted bush meat. 3) Likewise, Nigerian Universities should provide career guidance to students on the importance of choosing employable career options that would easily absorb them into the job market after graduation. Many students take courses without being guided on what they would become after graduation. For many, they are still stuck with the traditional courses such as medicine, law and engineering and shun courses such as tourism or entrepreneurship with the mindset that they are for low grade people. However, this mindset needs to be broken and proper career guidance given to students of the viable job opportunities that are currently very obvious in the tourism industry. 4) Furthermore, the government of Nigeria should impose laws and regulations that will guard the activities of foreign investors who invest in the tourism industry such as constructors, developers, hoteliers, tour operators among others. This is because, most of whom prefer to employ experts from their own

countries thus leaving our young graduates with either no jobs or underemployed in such investments. A policy guiding our good investors streamlining at least 90% local employment and 10% foreign employment could help provide our young graduates with chances of getting employment.

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