

Nigerian Tourism Policy: A Critical Appraisal and Re-Appraisal

Bassey, Frederick O., B.Sc., M.Sc.¹, Egon, Christian I²

1. Assistant Lecturer, Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Calabar,
Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria

2. Department of Geography and Environmental Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Calabar,
Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper seeks to critically examine the Nigerian Tourism policy, identify areas that need re-appraisal. Some key areas were noted for re-appraisal, such as provision of infrastructure, transportation and communication, socio-cultural factor, marketing and promotion, safari and eco Tourism, private sector participation and security. These areas were identified based on their importance to the development of Tourism in a destination and the role they play in tourist intention to visit.

Keywords: Tourism Policy, Tourism development, Appraisal, Reappraisal

1. Introduction

Tourism has been recognized and accepted as the fastest growing sector of the global economy. United Nations World Tourism has since upheld this position and subsequently has followed through with the tourism and sustainable development relationship nexus gospel. The belief in the potential of tourism to catalyze the economics of developing nations was based on extant research and empirical evidences and not just political inclination. Retrospectively this campaign came to the fore in 2005 at the review meeting of Millennium Development goals at the United Nations. The preposition was that tourism has enormous potential for driving the developing nations toward achieving the MDGS (Holden, 2008). At the meeting, tourism was called upon to take its place in national development to help achieve the sets targets (World Bank, 2002). Because of the important and relevance of tourism, nearly every developing country is now promoting some brand of tourism tied to its development (Marafa, 2000, Yunis, 2004).

One of the cardinal interests of Nigeria administration is to diversify the economy through areas where the nation has comparative advantage one of which is the hospitality and tourism industry. The policy drives its inspiration from the pronouncement and determination of the Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) to develop and market Nigeria as a tourism destination. According to different scholars, policy has been defined as a guide to action, as a means to an end and not an end itself and a tool for solving socio-economic and political problem (Aluko, odugbesan, Gbadamiso & Osuagwu, 2011). It is on the basis of these that policy gains an absolute importance in the achievement of organizational goals. Thus, it is critical for the tourism policy to be appraised and reappraised in other for the nation to achieve its set tourism objectives and goals.

2. Policy thrust

The policy thrust is meant to develop sustainable tourism by capitalizing on heritage diversity as the basis for promoting domestic and international tourism. Aimed at developing sustainable tourism within the confines of the world market and open up Nigeria as a major tourist destination in Africa through development of international tourism and promotion of domestic tourism.

The policy thrust encourages Nigerians to spend their holidays in Nigeria and know about the country. It also proposed the month of November and December and as Harmatan Holiday season. The policy is further aimed at developing Nigeria into the travels to all parts of Africa and integrating all blacks, particularly those of Nigerian Origin.

3. Policy objectives

The main objectives of the National tourism policy are:

- i. To protect and promote Nigeria cultural heritage as a resources for home grown socio-economic development.
- ii. To encourage community and public partnerships in tourism development
- iii. To generate foreign exchange, enhance income redistribution, alleviate poverty and create employment.
- iv. To promote Nigeria as a desirable tourism destination within the context of Africa's cultural renaissance.
- v. To promote geo-political integration, healthy international cooperation and understanding and
- vi. To ensure environmental sustainability in the development of tourism resources.

4. Nigeria tourism policy: Areas for re-appraisal

Tourism policy according to Hall (2008) helps us to understand the shaping of the policy decisions and their impact. It provides information about practical problems and solution. It enables the interest and values involved in policy planning foresee to be understood and provide a guide to understating a policy and planning.

The blue print on tourism to demonstrate the government's commitment to develop and promote tourism in Nigeria can be traced to 1992. The areas of Nigeria tourism policy that require appraisal can be grouped into the following: infrastructure, transportation and communication, socio-cultural factors, marketing and promotion, safari and eco-tourism, private sector participation and security.

4.1 Provision of infrastructure

It is the responsibility of government to provide infrastructure or amenities like portable water, good roads, uninterrupted power supply, efficient communication services, etc, because these form the basis of attractiveness of tourist to tourism destination, just like their counterparts in Africa like South Africa, Kenya, Egypt, etc. If Nigeria has to promote the desired tourism destination within the context of Africa's cultural renaissance, then she must provide infrastructure as mentioned above to enable tourism thrive and compete favorably with other destinations in the world. Although, successive administration in Nigeria has been grappling on how to improve infrastructure, it is rather seen as a lip service when compared with their counterpart around the world. Government needs to be sincere and appropriate more fund to improve infrastructure as this form the basis of attractiveness of tourist to destination.

4.2 Transportation and communication

Transportation and communication are very important or key to determining the survival of tourism industry. In line with Middleton (1988) tourism components or sectors of a tourism industry which include accommodation sectors, transport sector, attraction sector, travelling organization sector and destination organization sector. Transportation and communication ensures that the airport and air space and railway system works and meet international standards and also ensures that the GSM communication works effectively and ensuring that the normal telephone service by NITEL is also effective. This is so that the policy objective of to promote geo-political integration, healthy cooperation and understanding through international tourism can be achieved. However, although there is improvement in communication in Nigeria, more need to be done through expansion and wider network coverage to enable tourist at all locations in Nigeria communicate effectively. Improvements in our railway system, expansion of seaport, building good road and bridges where there are needed will further consolidate Nigeria readiness to truly be a destination.

4.3 Socio-cultural factors

Identifying natural and cultural resources in every state and getting both locals and foreigners to appreciate tourism affect the tourism industry. Locals and foreigners affect tourism in the areas of cultural interaction, world peace; add value to life and creation of job. However, socio-cultural factors identified, like arts and craft, folklore, local events, food, traditional dance types and music or cultural festivals that are unique to the country. Packaging these unique cultural resources in a responsible manner that will promote the country's cultural resources in a responsible manner will promote the country's cultural and natural heritage. Equip and maintain our existing museums, art galleries, cultural centers and exhibition halls, and make efforts to recover from abroad the country's stolen works of art and crafts.

This should be done if we must achieve the objective of protecting and promoting Nigeria's cultural heritage as a resource for home grown socio-economic development.

4.4 Marketing and promotion

Tourist preference for a particular destination is based on marketing and promotion technique employed. The policy states "promotion and marketing would embrace development of a unifying hall mark for the nation through the adoption of a national slogan. Federal ministry of culture and tourism, federal ministry of information & national orientation and the private sector shall carry out promotion and marketing of tourism products of the nation. One cannot market and promote what he does not have. So physical attractions, facilities, accessibility and the quality of natural tourists' officers are required to package, market and promote Nigeria as a destination as it is a matter of demand and supply. Thus it is advisable that promotion and marketing campaign should be decentralized and handled by local government and state government where attractions are located.

4.5 Safari and eco-tourism

In line with the tourism policy, while acknowledging the importance and the present world focus on eco-tourism, Nigeria shall exploit her potentials in direction through conservation and promotion of environment for aesthetics and scientific. The protection of the country's wildlife, discouragement of degradation of the country's

environment, beaches, water bodies, marine life and the general biodiversity should be pursued with Vigor. These areas require aggressive approach from government to enable its implementation. Environmental impact assessment is required to be carried out over a proposed project or existing project in line with Federal Environmental Protection Agency act of 1992, but due to its complex guidelines and procedures, most developments do not accompany EIA procedure hence thwarting the achievement of the policy to protect and conserve our natural ecosystem. There is therefore need for synergy between ministry of environment, ministry of tourism and cultural orientation and its related private sectors to protect our tourism heritage, and eco-tourism potentials to enable Nigeria achieve its tourism objectives which state's "To ensure environmental sustainability in the development of tourism resources is imperative.

4.6 Private sector participation

The private sector is basically the executor of programs. It encourages necessary super-structure and material technical basis such as good standard tourist's accommodation, holiday resort, amusement parks, restaurant, and casinos. It is actively involved in tour operation, tour guiding, and provision of facilities for conferences such as public address system. The private sector encourages marketing of Nigeria as destination. However, private sector participation should be encouraged by government to further develop the industry because they have the money to invest by providing enabling environment for investment while partnering with local communities to assist in tourism development. Recognizing FTAN as an umbrella body for the private sector is not enough; other private agencies like National Association of Nigeria Travel Agencies (NANTA), Nigeria Hotel Association, and Association of Nigeria journalist writers on tourism should also be recognized because they also have roles to play toward development of tourism.

4.7 Security

According to the policy on security, Government would ensure stable policies and maintain friendly relationship with other African Countries. Refocusing on the National Security Agents to be tourism friendly (Tourism Policies) with a view to maximally assist and protect tourists as well as tourism sites.

These policy need appraisal especially since the awakening of terrorist group (Boko Haram) in the Northeastern part of Nigeria, killing scores of people every day. Kidnapping in southeast and south of Nigeria coupled with the activities of the militants that have cripple our tourism Industry. No tourist wants to go to an insecure tourism destination, so there is need for proper security measures to be put in place not only to secure Nigeria and its residents but tourist alike. This is very necessary, as security has been identified as one of the major factor influencing tourist destination preference and intention to visit.

5. Conclusion

Tourism offers an opportunity for development not limiting its contribution to the economy but as a vehicle towards bringing about further international understanding and reinforcing the sense of national identity. A re-appraisal of the Nigerian tourism policy in the area listed above will address key challenges to achieving the needed national tourism development. The best way to achieve this is through a vibrant or aggressive approach towards operationalizing the identified areas in the Nigeria tourism policy. However, the need for partnership or synergy between tourism private and public agencies is critical because government cannot do it alone.

However, it is important for government to make tourism its policy thrust of administration through steady funding to address all the issues affecting implementation of the tourism policy in Nigeria and ensure that challenges of insecurity, poor infrastructure, marketing and promotion and other socio-cultural factors are addressed to make tourism become the vehicle of development and catalyze the economy of Nigeria.

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