

## The Career Prospects of Tourism in Nigeria

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### Abstract

The increasing need for leisure travel and the overwhelming tourism development in Nigeria has necessitated high level of human resource management in order to meet up with challenges facing the tourism industry. Of a truth, many tourism students graduates without clear understanding of the magnitude of career prospects awaiting them; while those still undergoing the programme are clouded with doubts about what the future holds for them. This paper therefore seeks to address this problem. It examines the various programmes obtainable in Nigerian institutions of learning and the career prospects of tourism students in Nigeria.

### Introduction

Tourism is travel for recreational or leisure purposes, while a tourist is a person who travel to and stay in places outside his usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes and not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity with a record of over 903 million international tourist arrivals in 2007; and with a growth of 6.6% as compared to 2006. Presently, international tourist receipts reached 856 billion in 2007 (WTO 2008). Tourism as an industry is dynamic and competitive, and is recognized widely as one of the world's largest growth industry. The constant development of new tourism products has led to an increased need for knowledge, flexibility and creativity. Information technology on the other hand has provided the consumer with tools to seek out special services and better value. As a result, the tourism industry continues to feed an ever-growing system of subsidiary services. Based on these, the need for well qualified and dedicated professionals to manage this rapidly growing industry is on the increase.

This paper is born out of the fact that there are gross inadequate trained personnel for tourism industry in Nigeria. It is also sad to note that majority of the federal and state owned universities do not award degrees in the field, while some offer few courses in tourism, others have not met the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) required accreditation. However, the Nigeria Tourism Development Master Plan of 2006 is a clear evidence of the nation's commitment to further develop her tourism industry. It should be noted that tourism is a multi-sectoral industry that cuts across other industries like hospitality, catering services, transportation, travel agencies/airline operators, etc. Trained personnel are needed to manage these establishments for tourism development in Nigeria. Thus, there is a very bright future for graduates of tourism programme.

Tourism as a career is therefore designed to develop skills and give training to interested students to enable them handle tourism-related matters as well as to equip students for careers in Schools, Ministries, Tourism Institutions, Tourism Corporations and Boards, Hotels and related areas. This paper is also designed to respond to the need for tourism professional and prepare interested students at undergraduate level to enter the many businesses and organizations of this demanding industry. The course (tourism) is also aimed at integrating social, cultural, financial and ecological perspectives in other to help students develop a better understanding of the world around them.

**Keywords:** Career prospects, Tourism courses, Tourism students, Tourism programmes

### Tourism: What It Is?

The definition of tourism has been the subject of long debate. Like any other concept, tourism is very difficult to define in absolute terms because of imprecise and/or inconsistency in the usage of the concept; thus, it became

difficult to define in absolute terms. However, the complexity of tourism is best treated in a multi-disciplinary way, which include sociology, economics, anthropology, archaeology, geography, urban and regional planning, fine and applied arts, architecture, etc

The word tour is derived from Latin '*tornare*' and the Greek '*tornos*', meaning a movement around a central point or axis. This meaning changed in modern English to represent 'one's turn'. The suffix – *ism* is defined as an action or process; typical behaviour or quality; whereas the suffix – *ist* denotes one that performs a given action (Theobald 2005). When the word tour and the suffixes – *ism* and *ist* are combined, they suggest the action of movement around a circle. One can argue that a circle represents a starting point, which ultimately returns back to its beginning. Therefore, like a circle, a tour represents a journey that is a round trip, i.e. the act of leaving and then returning to the original starting point and therefore, one who takes such a journey can be called a tourist (Theobald 2005).

Okpoko and Okpoko (2002) regarded tourism simply as any temporary movement of people, either individually or in groups, from one place to another for specific 'tourism' purposes of pleasure, health, meetings or business; and for a period of not less than twenty-four hours. World Tourism Organization (WTO) defined tourism as the movement of people to and stay in places outside their usual home for at least twenty-four hours but not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to any form of employment from within the place visited (cf. Okpoko, *et. al.* 2008). For Ward, *et. al.* (1993) tourism involve movement from a place of residence to a destination for a fixed period of time, returning home at the end of it. They went further to explain that visitors arriving at a destination in order to seek work or find permanent accommodation are not regarded as tourists. Tourism is also viewed as a field of research on human and business activities associated with one or more aspects of the temporary movement of people away from their immediate home communities and daily work environments for business, pleasure and personal reasons (Chadwick 1994).

There are three types of tourism that can be identified when using geographical movement, these include (1) Domestic Tourism, which involves the movement of tourist within their country for tourism purposes such as leisure, business, visiting friends and relations (VFR), culture, health purposes, etc. (2) Regional Tourism, which is a movement of tourists within a given sub-region for tourism purposes listed above; and for a period of twenty-four hours and above, and (3) International Tourism, which involves movement of people from their country of origin/resident to another country for specific tourism purpose(s). Apart from these, the intents and purpose of travel are often used to categorize tourism; thus, tourist who travel for cultural purpose could be referred to as cultural tourist/tourism, for the love of nature (eco-based tourism), for sport purpose (sport tourism), for religious purpose (faith/religious tourism) etc.

Tourism industry is divided into five different sectors: accommodation, transportation, travel services, recreation and entertainment, and food and beverage services. The diversity of these five sectors shows that tourism is a multi-disciplinary course. It is therefore pertinent to note that in the study of tourism, hospitality industry is very essential; thus, the knowledge of accommodation sector such as serviced and non-serviced accommodation becomes indispensable in tourism. This is more glaring in the definition of tourism, when it is defined as a movement of person(s) away from home for a period of not less than twenty-four hours... This is therefore, the reason why tourism students are often exposed to courses in hospitality management such as Introduction to Hospitality Industry, Tourism Accommodation and Services, Industry Study (a three to six month industrial attachment to any hospitality industry and travel agencies of their choice) etc. Transportation is another veritable industry of which students of tourism are introduced to. In as much as tourism is the movement of persons..., such movement is either made by land, air or sea; thus, tourism students are further exposed to the various modes and forms of transport conveyance.

Apart from the above, tourists are often interested in a destination where there are clusters of attractions often referred to as 'tourist domain'. This is the more reason why tourism as a discipline deals with tourism products and services, tourism marketing and shopping, tourism information technology, etc. These are various ways in which tourism industry is further developed and promoted for potential tourists who would take the advantage of abundant tourism resources and good enabling environment to visit such areas for satisfaction of their individual interest. They are also intricate parts of tourism development and promotion embedded in recreation and entertainment, and food and beverage services. It is therefore important to state here that the description of tourism cannot be over-emphasized. Thus, its further description can take more space and time.

## **Areas of Specialization**

It is very important to note that areas of specialization in tourism are available in Masters Programme (M.A.). The Diploma and Bachelor programmes in some higher institutions are designed to generalize exposure of tourism to students in order to enable students develop entrepreneurial skill, training on entrepreneurship development, resort management, marketing, information-system-based management etc. The courses cover heritage, tourism and related areas in the humanities. The Diploma and Bachelor programmes composed of a number of constituent parts, which sets out a number of learning objectives that includes creating effective manpower for the tourism industry to meet the challenges of the new century; developing a range of vital skills such as creativity, enterprise and lateral thinking among students; preparation for employment in the wider service sector by developing transferable skills so that graduates may gain an academic and practical appreciation of the operation, organization and management of tourism as a business activity; as well as adding value to the students so that they serve as tourism officers, professional tourist guides, travel agents, among others. At the end of two (Diploma) or four (Bachelor) years programme, successful graduates will be awarded Diploma in Tourism or Bachelor of Tourism. Below are the minimum basic tourism courses available in some higher institutions and NGOs in Nigeria.

### **A. Diploma in Travel and Tourism**

- i. Certificate Course in Tourism Studies (CTS)
- ii. Certificate Course in Travel and Tourism
- iii. Diploma in Tourism and Hotel Management
- iv. Diploma in Travel and Tourism
- v. Diploma Course in Tourism Studies (DTS)
- vi. Vocational Course in Travel and Tourism

### **B. Bachelors Degree Course in Airlines, Tourism and Hospitality Management**

- i. Bachelor in Tourism Administration (BTA)
- ii. Bachelor in Tourism Studies (BTS)
- iii. Bachelor in Tourism Management (BTM)
- iv. Bachelor of Travel and Tourism Management
- v. Bachelor of Commerce with Travel and Tourism Management

### **C. Post-graduate Diploma Programmes**

Post graduate courses in travel and tourism management can be pursued by graduates, which may prove to be advantageous in providing managerial and administrative options in the industry. Among the available post-graduate courses in tourism studies are:

- i. Post-graduate Diploma in Tourism Management (PGDTM)
- ii. Post-graduate Diploma in Tourism Studies (PGDTS)
- iii. Post-graduate Diploma in Management (Tourism and Travel Option)
- iv. Post-graduate Diploma in Management (Tourism and Leisure Option)

### **D. Master's Level Programmes**

- i. Master in Travel and Tourism Management (MTTM)

- ii. Master in Tourism Administration (MTA)
- iii. Master of Business Administration (MBA) with Tourism Option
- iv. Master in Tourism Management (MTM)
- v. Master of Business Administration in Tourism and Hospitality Management

#### **E. Non Governmental Organizations' Accredited/Approved Courses in Travel and Tourism**

International Air Transport Association (IATA) courses: IATA is a world organization of transport with head office at Geneva. IATA provides travel, tourism and cargo industry recognized standard in training. There areas of specialization are:

- a. IATA/UFTAA Standard, Advanced and Travel Agents, Marketing Courses
- b. IATA/UFTAA Cargo Agents Introductory, International Air Cargo Rating, Dangerous Goods Refresher Courses. Graduates of these courses can fit into relevant/related areas of tourism industry within and outside Nigeria. For the purpose of clarity, we shall quickly examine various institutions in Nigeria that offer tourism and are recognized by Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC).

##### **1) National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR)**

The National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR) was established in 1988 following a tripartite agreement signed between the Federal Government of Nigeria, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The institute was set up to serve as the apex institution for the development of human resources in the hospitality and tourism sectors in Nigeria. Her educational and training facilities are located at Lake Bagauda. NIHOTOUR also has responsibilities for the operation of the Rock Castle Hotel at Tiga Rock, Kano State, as a training hotel. Also, her training facilities in Lagos consist of a single training room and some office support facilities (NTDMP 2006). The following 'full time' areas of specialization offered by NIHOTOUR at its Bagauda complex include:

- i. Professional Certificate in Tourism Management (three months)
- ii. Basic Tourism Course (two weeks)
- iii. Advanced Professional Certificate in Tourism (three months)
- iv. Diploma Courses in Tourism
- v. Professional Diploma in Tourism and Recreation
- vi. Post Graduate Diploma Courses.

Worthy of note are also short International Air Transport Association (IATA) based courses offered mainly at NIHOTOUR Lagos office. Such courses are Basic Fares and Ticketing courses, Intermediate Fares and Ticketing courses, Advance Fares and Ticketing courses, etc. Diploma Fares and Ticketing courses are provided from time to time by NIHOTOUR to students offering Professional Certification in areas of interest such as Hotel and Catering Operations and Management, Fast Food Operations and Management, and Night Club Operations (NTDMP 2006).

##### **2) Nigerian Polytechnics**

At present, there are seventeen polytechnics and one Non Governmental Organization (NGS) sponsored monotechnic offering programmes in Catering and Hotel Management. Only three polytechnics offer programmes in Tourism Management. Eight of the polytechnics offering such courses are federally owned while the remaining polytechnics are state owned. Three out of the eighteen institutions offer Ordinary National Diploma (OND) programmes in Tourism Management; while one institution (Kaduna State Polytechnic) offers a

Higher National Diploma (HND) in Tourism Management Studies. The rest (fourteen) of the institutions offer OND in Catering and Hotel Management (NTDMP 2006).

### **3) Nigerian Universities**

Four universities are offering Bachelor courses in tourism-related areas. The Imo State University (IMSU) offers Bachelors of Science, Post Graduate and Masters Degree programmes in Hospitality and Tourism Management through the Faculty of Business Administration. Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH) offer Bachelor of Science in Hospitality and Tourism Management. The Federal University of Agriculture in Abia State on the other hand offers a B.Sc course in Hospitality and Tourism Management. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka also offers Bachelors of Arts in Archaeology and Tourism; while at Post-graduate level, she offer Masters in Archaeology and Tourism. The University also offers Post-graduate Diploma in Tourism. It should be noted that many other institutions are interested in tourism related programmes and there is hope that sooner or later, they will take a clue from existing ones.

### **4) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Nigeria**

Similarly, in the spheres of travel and Tourism training and employment, the only courses available to interested students are IATA/UFTAA (Universal Federation of Travel Agents' Association) accredited courses by a privately operated company based in Lagos. IATA/UFTAA Diploma courses are internationally recognized qualification for Travel Agents. Her courses are independently assessed and verified through a Lagos based off-shoot office of IATA, Canada. The aim of the IATA-UFTAA training courses is to provide an opportunity to increase professionalism within the travel industry. The course is primarily designed for the counter and ticketing staff within travel agencies, air-liners, among others. IATA has appointed authorized training centres to enable coaching sequel to the agreement reached with the Federal Government of Nigeria on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2007.

Furthermore, IATA/UFTAA's Travel and Tourism Management programme is a four-year programme designed to equip students with the requisite entrepreneurial, marketing and operational skills necessary for travel and tourism management. The course includes two compulsory six-month (3000 hours) industrial attachments at the end of the second and fourth year. In addition, the students sit international examination set by IATA/UFTAA in which successful students are awarded IATA/UFTAA Foundation Diploma or IATA/UFTAA Consultants Diploma (NTDMP 2006).

### **Students' Entry Requirements into Tourism Institution**

Admission to the degree programme is either through University Matriculation Examination (UME) or by Direct Entry (DE). Candidates wishing to gain admission into university for tourism must satisfy the university minimum entry requirements as well as departmental requirements. At least credit level passes in English language, Economics/Foods and Nutrition, and any two other subjects from the following: Geography, Commerce, Biology, Chemistry, Social Studies, Igbo etc. In addition, at least a pass in Mathematics is compulsory. All four courses can be credited in Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), National Examination Council (NECO) or General Certificate Examination (GCE) A/L.

Students who have gained the benefit of an OND (Ordinary National Diploma) and/or NCE (Nigerian Certificate in Education) in relevant discipline may enter at year two level and complete their degree course over three years (3/3). While students who have gained a HND (Higher National Diploma) in relevant discipline may enter at year three level and complete their degree course over two years (2/2) (applicable in some State University Degree Programmes).

For the Polytechnics, the OND course in Tourism Management is harmonized so that students may graduate from that course and move onto the two year HND course after completion of a period of one year cognate experience. Thus, a student wishing to enter a HND course direct from secondary education cannot access such a course unless the candidate has completed the OND course in the relevant discipline.

## **Personality of Ideal Tourism Students**

The personality of ideal tourism students should be one that have the ability to work with all kinds of people from foreign tourists to people with disabilities and must be friendly. On completion of their programme, they could work as Tourism Officer/Managers, etc; thus, they are mainly concerned with the management of tourism organization, which implies that people will work under them. This requires that tourism managers must have some management abilities such as organization and delegation skills. Students should also possess good memory and positive attitude towards people. Prospective students must also possess effective communication/language skills as well as enthusiasm to interact with people and social etiquettes.

Put differently, students who made credit level passes with ease in O' level courses such as English, Economics, Geography, History, Social Studies, etc are the ideal tourism students. One who finds it difficult to credit these courses are likely to find tourism difficult to study because the course as earlier mentioned is a multi-disciplinary course, which cuts across many disciplines such as Economics, Geography, History, Sociology, Archaeology etc.

## **Employment Opportunities/Career Prospects**

Being a very wide field, the scope of employment in tourism sector is very bright and the potential is still largely untapped. Career opportunities exist both in the public and private sectors. In the public sector, graduates of the programme can be employed as tourism officers in Museums, Embassies, State Tourism Boards, Local Government Tourism Committees, etc. There are opportunities in the Ministries of Information, Culture and Tourism as tourism officers, information assistants, and tourist guides.

Other good prospects for qualified tourism professionals are in the private sector with travel agencies, tour operators, airlines, hotels, transport and cargo companies and other related areas. Thus, there are plenty of opportunities for self-starter seeking entrepreneurial ventures. Whether one is interested in opening a tour company, an out-door adventure operation etc, the phenomenal growth of tourism in Nigeria means bountiful business opportunities for the entrepreneurial development. For those that prefer to work in the recreational field of leisure travel; there are wide varieties of career options. At the completion of their tourism programme, one may work for the National Park Services as a park ranger, photographer, park police, museum staff, and managerial and financial administrative personnel. Other career alternatives full of excitements are tour leader (with an adventure travel company); instructor/teacher of elephant/horse riding in reserved areas where wildlife are cared for (Walker and Walker, 2011).

Other areas that have career prospects for tourism students include convention and visitors' bureau or top-class hotel, amusement park or cruise line, or an airline or restaurant. As rightly argued by Walker and Walker (2011:30) "tourism has experienced tremendous growth in the last 50 years and is expected to continue in the future; thus, a career in the tourism industry will most certainly offer one opportunities to use his creativity and constantly improve as well as exciting mix of constant change and experiences that go away beyond what one get in most other workplaces". A study in tourism offer a wide variety of career opportunities including tourism research officer, tourism marketing manager for destinations and airlines, government research officer etc. The following section of jobs may be available to graduates: Cultural Tourism Manager, Tourism Research Officer, Tourism Marketing Manager, Regional Tourism Coordinator, Tourism Planning Officer, Eco-tourism Guide, Government Tourism Officer, Tourism Event Manager, and Tourism Association Coordinator. For tourism economics, career prospects may be limited, but they are interesting and well rewarded. Most nations, state, and some larger cities have economists who work on economic impacts, cost-benefit analysis, and the tourism multiplier. A bachelor's degree is a necessity and an advanced degree is often required (Walker and Walker 2011:140).

Furthermore, tourism organizations need good marketing strategies and salespeople to do both marketing and sales management and management planning by figuring out the best product, pricing, distribution and promotion and sales strategies. Thus, tourism graduates can acquire an overview of a company by working in various departments before specializing in the marketing and sales areas. It should be noted that thousands of marketing and sales positions are available across the spectrum of tourism and hospitality (Walker and Walker 2011:140).



## Conclusion

The global growth of tourism and its speedy expansion has created serious societal problems such as environmental degradation/pollution, culture treats/diffusion, prostitution, drug trafficking, among others. A basic understanding of the concept enables tourism stakeholders to minimize and manage the risks and problems tourism and/or tourists create. Thus, tourism as a discipline is a positive step to this direction in that its teaching in higher institutions brings the knowledge of the concept closer to the people and thus, reduces ignorant of natural and cultural resources and its values to tourism development and promotion in Nigeria.

The career prospects of graduates of tourism cannot be over emphasized. Both the private and public sectors are good playing ground for tourism graduates. Their job opportunities range from government establishments (Ministries, State and Local Government Tourism Committee) to private-oriented outfits. Career opportunities from airlines, tour operators, travel agencies, hotels, to transportation sector require a large amount of manpower. This paper therefore exposes secondary school leavers and individuals interested in tourism as a career to the fundamental requirements of tourism as a discipline. It gives interested students pre-knowledge idea of what the discipline is like as well as equipping students with basic information on options and areas where students can specialize and/or at what level they can be admitted in the course.

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