Promoting Responsible Tourism in Nigerian Destinations: a Theoretical Perspective

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. In Nigeria, it contributes significantly to job creation, income generation, foreign exchange earnings and cultural promotion However, if not planned and managed well; it exerts negative socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts, especially on the host communities. To ensure sustainability, responsible tourism is advocated. Responsible tourism is an approach to tourism development which adheres to the principles of sustainable development, including economic and social benefits for destination communities and improved quality of life for hosts and their environment. This paper examines the adverse impacts of tourism and how responsible tourism helps to ameliorate these negative influences for the betterment of all tourism stakeholders. Economic, social, political, psychological and environmental empowerments are recommended as a means of achieving responsible and sustainable tourism development. Communities that are empowered politically and psychologically will have a voice in tourism development efforts which guarantee bottom-up development initiatives.

Keywords: *Responsible tourism, Sustainability, Community well-being, Development*

Background to the Study

Tourism is considered as a useful vehicle for economic development of a nation. The WTTC (2016) has classified tourism as a fastest growing industry which in 2015 contributed $7.2 trillion (9.8%) to global GDP and 284 million jobs to the global economy. These figures are estimated to grow by 3.3% in 2016 and on annual average of 4% for the next decade. In Nigeria, its contribution to GDP in 2015 was 4.2% and it is expected to grow to 4.5% by 2020. This is to show how vital tourism is to our national economy. Nigeria is blessed with rich natural and cultural tourism resources that could transform the economy if managed well. In view of this giant stride, it is necessary to emphasize responsible tourism so as to preserve what we have in order to be able to take us through ages, especially now that the most celebrated oil has failed to provide the anticipated fortune and sustain the economy. Tourism is a fertile ground to plough considering its resources scattered across the country, including such destinations as Yankari resort and safari in Bauchi State, Obudu Cattle Ranch in Cross River, Azurnini Blue River in Abia, Lake Chad in Borno, Oguta Lake Holiday Complex in Imo, NOK Village in Kaduna, Ososo Tourist Centre in Edo, Pategi Beach in Niger, just to mention but a few. Responsible tourism is the brainchild of sustainable tourism; it is an emerging, global trend that is widely gaining attention. This paper examines the principles and strategies for ensuring responsible use of tourism resources and services at different destinations in Nigeria in order to achieve sustainability in the industry. Specifically, it evaluates the behavior of the tourist and the host community, the effect of activities at destinations and the role of stakeholders in ensuring sustainability of available resources.

What are the behaviours of tourists and residents that may negatively impact on tourism? Do the activities at destinations affect the effort to achieving responsible tourism? What are the roles of tourism stakeholders in ensuring responsible tourism? These are the questions that are addressed in this review. This research is significant because it contributes to the ongoing advocacy for sustainable tourism as an alternative resource to oil for economic development.

Concept of Responsible Tourism

Responsible tourism is any form of tourism which: minimizes negative social, economic and environmental impacts. It is that tourism activity that generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities. It is tourism which is cautiously undertaken with consideration for the good of the local residents. According to Leslie (2016), responsible tourism is concerned with the effects of tourism on people, ecology, and communities, and how to ameliorate these effects by providing tourism which benefits host communities, improves working conditions, involves the local community, promotes cultural heritage, and benefits the environment. By this definition, responsible tourism seeks to minimize the negative impacts of tourism activities so as to protect the interests of host communities and preserve their natural and cultural endowment. It is defined by Responsible Tourism Requirements of South African National Standards (2011) as

> *'a tourism management strategy in which the tourism sector and tourists take responsibility to protect and conserve the natural environment, respect and conserve local cultures and ways of life, and contribute to stronger local economies and a better quality of life for local people'*

Responsible tourism is beneficial to the tourists, the host communities and tourism entrepreneurs. While it provides opportunity for better holiday experiences for the tourists, it enables the host communities to enjoy better socio-economic benefits and improved environment and provides enriched business opportunities to tourism enterprises. This in turn yields returns which contribute to national development.

The concept of responsible tourism is related to the theory of destination lifecycle (Buttler, 2006) and sustainable tourism (Frangialli and Toepfe 2006). The Butler's model postulates that a destination undergoes various stages, ranging from exploration through involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, decline and rejuvenation. To keep a destination going after the decline stage, the model requires private company or the government, to create a new attraction within the original resort to boost its popularity. Similarly, the concept of sustainability advocates for responsible use of tourism resources so that they are not used up but provide for continuity into the foreseeable future for subsequent generations.

Historical Background of Responsible Tourism
The first international conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations was held in Cape Town, 2002 and was attended by 20 countries. Since then, the conference has been held again in eleven other countries with the last one in 2016 at Finland. The main thrust of the conferences is on how tourism can be used to make better places for people to live in, and better places for people to visit.

There have been several contributions to the concept of responsible tourism by researchers such as Lee (2001), Budeanu(2005), Swarbrooke (2012) and Butler and Hinch (2007). Responsible tourism advocacy is meant to motivate stakeholders to develop strategiesthat can contribute to national socio-economic development agenda by supporting local economies and contributing value to the maintenance of local heritage, culture and traditions.

The Need for Responsible Tourism
Research has shown that people around the world are increasingly becoming aware of the potential impact of tourism activities on the nation's economy, environment and socio-cultural setting. The main goal of responsible tourism is to make nations develop programs for conserving these values.

Spenceley (2008).and Reid (2003) give some salient reasons why we must vote for responsible tourism. It is considered as a way by which people are respected as both the tourists and the host communities strive to benefit from tourism. The biggest opportunity for tourism to impact positively is through energy conservation and assessment of the socio-economic impact.

The rise of Corporate Social Responsibility in the recent time which places responsibility on companies to identify and defend the interests of the wider society and the environment makes the idea of responsible tourism a welcome development. Tourism firms owe a duty to preserve the environment and the economic, social and cultural identities of the destinations. Swarbrooke (2012) observes that responsible tourism recognizes that striving

for sustainability is about individual and corporate responsibility not just the public policy. Every tourism destination is different and needs its own peculiar solution where everyone can be empowered to contribute to making tourism more responsible.

Negative Impacts of Tourism

Tourism impacts negatively on the environment, the economy and socio-cultural life of the people. These negative impacts are caused by a combination of factors which are related to the activities and behaviours of tourists, the tourism service providers and the local community. UNWTO (1983) asserted that lack of planning by the public sector is responsible for most of the negative impacts of tourism development. The private sector is left to assume responsibility for tourism development, which according to standard best practice, does not always reflect the interest of the community. It is inevitable that once a destination starts developing, it will give rise to emergence of other businesses as result of evident opportunities created by the development. Tourism causes irrevocable damage to the environment and water resources

Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts

Ryan (2002) examines some socio-cultural changes at destinations which erode the culture of host communities. These changes manifest in modification, alteration or adulteration of handicrafts as souvenirs, erosion of local language   which implies a supplanting of the community's norms and values by an outside culture in the very matter of everyday communication, replacing traditional agriculture and other local occupations with seasonal induced tourism business which is inconsistent with the past, importing food that meets a perceived tourist need for an 'international cuisine' rather than providing the dishes that are eaten by local people, erosion of art and music where traditional tunes are fast giving way to fashion that is admirable by the tourists, and compromising local architecture for architectural uniformity in a bid to give the tourist what is consistent with what is obtainable elsewhere world over. Leslie (2012) laments that tourism does not just bring change but calcify a culture into a frozen picture of the past. In addition, Reid (2003) observes that tourism is a catalyst for emergence of unusual behavior and crimes in destinations such as terrorism, prostitution, sexual exploitation of children, kidnapping, theft, murder and other forms of attitudes that are culturally alienated. Other evolving social maladies associated with tourism identified by Spenceley (2008) include questionable marketing practices, sex tourism and inappropriate use of water.

Negative Environmental Impact

Apart from the socio- cultural impacts, tourism also exerts negative environmental impacts. Though it said that tourism creates jobs, regional income, tax funds and foreign exchange earnings, it is only little of total tourist spending that remains in the destination economy to benefit residents (Timothy in Leslie 2012). Supporting Ryan (2002), Swarbrooke (2012) and Spenceley (2008) argue that the sum total of activities by the tourists, the tourism enterprises and local residents contribute to environmental degradation. There is remarkable pollution by the transportation system such as air, water and noise pollution because of large volume of emission released by aircrafts and vehicles (ground and marine). Construction and development of tourism infrastructure cause depletion of natural formations and monuments, scare away wildlife and contribute to poor air and water quality. Dahles (2000)

critically evaluates the alteration and fragmentation of the ecosystem caused by tourism development.. Development related to tourist activity can be detrimental to cultural and aesthetic aspects of host communities if undertaken in an indiscriminate or unguided manner (Scheyvens, 2002). Swarbrooke (2012) summarizes the effects of tourism on environment by highlighting water pollution, over development of destinations, and destruction of landscape and topography, as key contributors.

Negative Economic Impacts
The negative economic impacts of tourism refer to those hidden costs to tourism, which could have unfavorable economic effects on the host community. The principles of sustainable and responsible tourism suggest that tourism should provide socio-economic benefits that improve the better lots of the tourists, the tourism service providers and the host communities (Leslie 2012). However, many destinations in Nigeria do not enjoy these benefits which are due to them and are supposed to improve their quality of life for economic growth (Scheyvens, 2011). In fact, this is the position of pro-poor tourism which advocates poverty alleviation for the local and host communities. In addition to upfront job creation by tourism, people are also to benefit from other economic gains such as balanced spread of employment to all regions(Timothy in Leslie 2012). Contrary to these ideals, Reid (2003) sadly notes that tourism rather encourages export and import leakages which lead to trade imbalance; enclave tourism where local businesses often see their chances to earn income from tourists severely reduced by the creation of "all-inclusive" vacation packages; high cost of infrastructure development and exorbitant prices of basic goods and services; economic dependence of the local community on tourism which could only offer seasonal jobs. In the same vein, Budeanu (2005) laments that experience shows that most jobs in tourism are seasonal, with low wages, no guarantees for future employment or assurance of work-related medical benefits. Also, Swarbrooke (2012) observes that tourists continue to pay a price which is subsidized by local taxpayers and low paid workers, tourist destinations become ghettoes wholly cut off from local life, and tourism 'uses' places rather than being used by places to improve the quality of life for locals. There are glaring labour issues involving tipping, poor salary levels, discrimination and unfriendly working conditions. More so, organisations refuse to accept their responsibilities and instead adopt vague policies that look good but continue to ignore the difficult issues. While the majority of the locals are isolated and deprived, vacation continues to be a norm for a few.

From the foregoing analyses of extant literatures, it is an undeniable fact that tourism could inflict adverse and costly impacts if not planned and guided appropriately. This explains the reason why responsible tourism must be seen as a welcome responsibility of all tourism stakeholders in an effort to achieve the goal of sustainable tourism. Those values and norms which were hitherto adored in Nigeria are rapidly becoming eroded with the advent of mass tourism.

Responsibilities for Achieving Responsible Tourism
The responsibility for realizing the sustainable tourism development goals lies on the public and private sectors, the tourists and the host communities. It is not enough to talk about sustainable tourism; there must be concerted programme of actions to make it workable.

Swarbrooke (2012) calls for industry involvement in taking actions that preserve the traditional dignity of labour, ensure spatial distributions of costs and benefits, promote tokenism through charity donations and provision of essential services that ameliorate the negative side effects of tourism, facilitate environmental conservation through tree planting, and comply with local and international laws that protect the rights of individuals.

Budeanu (2005) emphasizes the role of tour operators in ensuring responsible tourism which is beneficial to the service providers and the tourists. The tour operators buy tourism services in bulk, from a direct provider like hotel or airline, assemble them in attractive holiday packages, and sell them directly to the customer or through a travel agent. By buying in bulk, the operator saves the tourist's time and takes the burden of selling the products and absorbs the risks of having unsold products. The operator is able to minimize losses and make low budget travelers happy. As an information link between the producers and the markets, the tour operator knows the levels and trends of demand for and supply of leisure products and can have a significant influence on the equilibrium and on the way markets evolve. Hence, this extensive influence the operators have on individuals, companies and even regions makes them a powerful force in mass tourism system, which can provoke actions by other tourism stakeholders in pursuit of sustainability in the industry (Curtin and Busby 1999, Budeanu 2005).

As available in places like South Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean, Latin America and Cape Town, large tour operators have started taking steps in developing environmental policies and plans including green purchasing strategies, environmental training for their staff, education, and sponsorship of environmental protection activities in destinations, and environmental management systems for the hotels and airlines under their direct ownership (Mowforth*et al*.,2008). Thus, tour operators can contribute significantly to responsible and sustainable tourism in destinations.

In the spirit of sustainability, Spenceley (2008) clamours for tourism development that is guided by such principles as equity, holism, balance, harmony, cultural and ecological integrity, and the economic and social good of the destination. Spenceley advocates for destination community empowerment through planning and decision making process as a means of achieving responsible and sustainable tourism. This helps to create more harmony and cooperation at the local level, where cultural and ecological integrity are upheld as residents work together to achieve common goals and objectives. Timothy (2007) identifies four levels of empowerment which include imposed development, tokenistic involvement, meaningful participation and true empowerment.

Imposed development occurs when tourism is compelled upon destinations because outsiders see the economic potential of their resources. Tokenistic involvement occurs when people in power seek just nominal input (which may not be regarded) from community members to fulfill participatory policies. Meaningful participation occurs when opinions of the residents and their concerns are sought by policy makers. True empowerment occurs when the ideas derived from the grassroots level in the destination eventually form criteria for policy formulation.

True empowerment is that which emanates from the bottom to the top after collaboration between the local residents and businessmen and leaders. Other forms of empowerment enumerated by Cornwall (2003) are social empowerment, economic empowerment, political empowerment and psychological empowerment, whose importance lies in the fact that they give a voice to the people who have hitherto been ignored.

Conclusion

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world economy that contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In Nigeria, it is inevitably becoming a viable alternative to oil for overcoming the current economic doldrums. It generates benefits in terms of environmental protection and socio-cultural conservation. To realize its full potentials, tourism must be practiced responsibly and its activities fully integrated within sustainable development policies and procedures.

Responsible tourism is an approach to tourism planning and development which gives consideration to social, economic, political, and psychological empowerment of the tourism stakeholders, allowing anyone who wants to benefit to benefit. There is no better time than now for us to emphasize sustainable and responsible tourism in Nigeria if we must preserve our natural and cultural heritage and protect the interests of the locals in destinations. Responsible tourism should take into consideration the needs of the broader community and ensure that some of the income derived from the industry is used to finance public schools, health care, environmental cleaning and public services (Leslie 2012). In this way, destination population is made to benefit from tourism rather than bearing the burden of costs alone. Also, jobs created by tourism should spread to marginal areas, small enterprises should be encouraged and supported, and training and education should be provided for community members.

It is high time the public sector liaise with the private sector to develop national minimum standard for responsible tourism. In the absence of a national policy, it will be difficult to enforce compliance among tourism businesses and consumers. A national responsible tourism policy should set standard criteria for economic, social, cultural and environmental compliance. Every stakeholder should be provided with a manual that facilitates compliance with guidelines.

On the part of the tourist, he should be guided by a manual relating to his conduct during his stay in a destination. He is expected to read about the destination to be visited, learn a little of the local languages, raise money for local charity, give tips and gifts to the local residents, be conservative in the use of water, leave no rubbish behind, avoid smoking, noise and damage to ecosystem, use conveniences correctly, buy locally made goods, have respect for the residents, observe local dress code and show high sense of morality. These are some among responsible tourism code of conduct that the holiday makers must know.

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