

## THE ROLE OF HOTEL INDUSTRY TO NIGERIA TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: A MEDIUM FOR MANAGING NIGERIAN ECONOMY

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### Abstract

*This paper IS designed to x-ray the role of the hotel industry in Nigeria tourism development. The essence of the hotel industry to the development of the Nigeria economy is discussed in the area of hospitality, creation of job opportunities, urban/city development, source of income to the government, gateway to the Nigeria tourist sites and foreign exchange. Conceptual issues on tourism and National development are also discussed. It concludes that, to attain national development through tourism, government should encourage, educate, train, promote and develop all sectors so as to make it attractive to the local people, the hotel industry and the world in general. The paper recommends unalloyed support of the government and maximum attention to development of hotel industries and tourism sites in Nigeria.*

### Introduction

Most nations in the world today have found solace in tourism as one of the major areas through which the over-all national development could be attained. This is because of the rate at which tourism has contributed to the development of some nations where it is given precedence or concern like most of the countries of Europe and Americas where it constitutes the major source of national income. Nigeria is not left out from this trend. , Nigeria launched her National Tourism Policy on 10<sup>th</sup> OF July, 1990. The main thrust of the policy was to generate foreign exchange, encourage even development, promote tourism based rural enterprise, generate employment and accelerate cultural exchange. (Ailemen, 2006). A well-articulated tourism policy in any nation would enhance even and rapid tourism development in such nation. The question now is, what IS tourism development? This could be defined as the general improvement on the tourism sector of any given nation. Such an improvement would affect the economy of the nation

positively through income generation, employment generation, provision of tourism facilities like accommodation, transportation, foreign exchange, cultural exchange, etc.

The role of the hotel industry in Nigeria in the tourism development of this country can never be underestimated. Hotel industry can play positive role towards the overall tourism development of Nigeria in the following ways:

**a. Hospitality:** This is one of the major aspects of the tourism industry of any nation. Tourism entails travelling for at least one night away from home. That means that a tourist would sleep outside his home, needing shelter and comfort. Hotels of any standard with necessary amenities serve as a place of pleasure, comfort and relaxation, providing shelter for transient travelers where they could stay for temporary period of time for whatever purpose. (Oladele, 2001). Since tourism entails movement, it implies that, the absence of movement is equally the absence of tourism. Before a

reasonable tourist travels, the first thing he/she puts into consideration is where to put down his head and enjoy comfort while away from home. Although sometimes due to the traditional hospitality which is embedded in the African culture whereby one would prefer to stay or sleep in a friend's house while on trip, it is not up to 15% (percent) of total tourists that may have the privilege of putting up with their relation anytime they travel. This has made the position of the hotel industry outstanding in the Nigeria tourism development.

An average hotel in Nigeria provides the following facilities: accommodation, food and catering, cocktail, bar, security, recreational facilities, etc. Absence of hotels in Nigeria, mostly five star hotels, would have discouraged foreign visitors to Nigeria thereby affecting the national tourism development. A hypothetical foreign tourist, be he/she a pleasure traveler or a businessman who has been used to a certain style of life, would want to live comfortably in the foreign country visited as he/she would at home. He may want to communicate with his/her own country during peak business hours and so, there is need for effective operation of modern day communication systems, such as telephone, fax, E-mail. There is also need for constant water and electricity supply, effective and efficient transportation system and adequate security in the hotels. So from the foregoing, one can understand why the hotel industry is the focal point of tourism development of any nation.

**b. Creation of Job Opportunities:** As at May 2006, the total number of staff at Zaranda Hotel, Bauchi, was standing at over 100; that of Tourist Garden Hotel, Awka, Anambra state, was over 50 as at 2005, etc. Hotel industry has done a lot in the employment

sector of the Nigeria economy. In most hotels, they have categories of staff in strategic positions namely food and beverages, front office, recreation, business centre, maintenance, store, laundry, etc. One of the hotel managers in Nigeria attested that in his hotel, the employment of new staff is a continuous process due to the improvement in the industry. From all indications, the totality of number of staff employed in 25 hotels in Anambra state as at 2005 was standing at over 1300 staff (Ngwu, 2005). However, using a random sampling to consider the number of both permanent temporary, casual and contracted staff in the hotels in Nigeria, the number of staff employed in the Nigeria hotel industry as at 2007 will be approximately standing at 250,000 staff. And the fact is that this number is at increase on 15 scales annually (Ngwu, 2005).

**c. Urban/City Development:** one of the attractions of tourist to a given tourist destination is the extent at which the areas are developed. This is because the beauty of any city forms part of tourist attractions to the area which can capture the interest of guests. In the opinion of Oladele (2001:100), "the size and comfort of a city's hotels have long been recognized as a measure of its standard and importance." Hotels contribute immensely to the tourism development of the areas where they are located. The influx of tourists to a given destination is at times dependent on the availability of Hotels in the area. This is why most of the five star hotels in Nigeria are cited in the major cities. The scarcity of standard hotels in a given area may likely make the area a no-go area for tourists and thereby affecting the over-all tourism development of the area. However, the hotel industry in Nigeria has contributed immensely to the over-all tourism development of Nigeria by attracting the

interest of both local and international tourists to a given tourist destination. Therefore hoteliers should appreciate this indispensable role of hotels to the Nigeria tourism development by bringing up standard of their hotels since hotels can "serve as important landmark for aesthetic appeal to visitors" (Oladele 2001 -101).

**d. Source of Income to the Government Interest:** Nigeria government has in recent times developed much interest in the tourism sectors by formulating so many relevant policies aimed at even and rapid development of tourism in this country. For instance, following the inefficiency of the Nigeria Tourism Board and the state Tourism Committee and their resultant inability to provide the right answer for the development of Nigerian tourist trade, decree No 81 of 1992 was promulgated. It established the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation to oversee tourism development in the country, (Okpoko and Okpoko 2002:34-35). However the new interest of the Nigerian government in investing in the tourism development of the country is not a child's play. This is because of the huge financial benefit among other things that is being generated from the industry. Take for instance most of the five star hotels in the country are meant to pay so much amount of money to the government as taxation, electricity bill, water bill, environmental bill, VAT etc. As at 2007, Nigeria had over 750 hotels scattered in the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Based on these facts, the Hotel Industry in Nigeria has formed major parts of income generation to the Nigeria government.

**e. Gateway to the Nigeria Tourist Attraction:** Nigeria is blessed with a wide range of potential tourist attractions. "Her

diverse but rich ecological features and dynamic cultural heritage have special appeals to various classes of tourists" (Okpoko and Okpoko 2002:390). Most of these tourist sites which are scattered in the various states of the federation are not often popularized to attract the interest of potential tourists. It is only few developed sites in the country that can boast of having internal accommodation within the site. However, hotels built very close to tourist sites are meant to cater for the hospitality needs of tourists, some of these potential sites might be dumped or neglected by both domestic and international tourists due to non-proximity of any hotel to the site. Statistics has revealed that sites that are very close to some popular hotels often witness the influx of both domestic and international tourists (Okpoko, 2002).

Hotel also plays another vital role to the Nigeria tourism development through the enlistment of tourist sites around their vicinities in their organizational brochures, so that such sites would attract the attention of tourists to the area. Sometimes, some of these sites are given booking offices in some hotels by the management of these hotels so that guests to the hotel can easily get to know about the site.

At typical example is found at Zaranda Hotel Bauchi where a given office was allocated to the management of Yankari Game Reserve Bauchi at the reception corner of the hotel. Such should be emulated by other hotels so that guests to the hotel can easily notice such sites. The enlistment of tourist sites in such medium would not only help to market the sites but also market the hotel since some of the sites can attract guests to a given hotel.

**f. Foreign Exchange Tourist:** This is

synonymous with international tourists who deal on foreign currency. Some international hotels in Nigeria do capture the interest of international tourists who use the hotels while they are on business trip, educational trip, holidays, or for any other reason. This attracts foreign exchange to the Nigeria government. It is a well-known fact that most countries in the world are underdeveloped. In this twenty-first century, almost every developing country of the world is adopting one development strategy or the other in order to achieve the transformation of its economic structure or attain national development.

One of such development strategies adopted to enhance national development is the development and promotion of the tourism economic sector. According to the World Travels and Tourism Council Report (2000:10), the tourism sector has been the world fastest-growing economic sector since the past 30 years. South Africa and some European countries are reaping the benefits accruing from tourism. This highly labour-intensive industry has the potential to facilitate sustainable national development. For example, from 1996 to 2000, South Africa was reported to have had an annual growth rate of 17% in international tourist visits and 27% in overseas tourists (Johan, 2003:10). This development enhanced its foreign exchange earnings, creates sustainable jobs, encourages the growth of tourism-based enterprises, promotes infrastructural development, accelerates rural-urban integration, promotes even development and fosters socio-cultural transformation (Johan, 2003:10).

This discourse is designed to educate and inform the public on the potentials of the tourism sector, which if rightfully exploited,

can lead to sustainable national development.

### **Conclusion**

It can be seen from the above discussion that tourism and hotel industry can facilitate national development. If the growth and development of tourism vis-a-vis the nation is to be achieved, there is the need to maintain a vibrant and healthy natural, economic, cultural and social environment (Modinos, 2000:308).

If the tourism sector is well managed, it is capable of bringing in the needed foreign exchange, infrastructural development and boost the social, political and economic growth of the nation. To attain national development through tourism, government should encourage, educate, train, promote and develop the sector so as to make it attractive to the local people and the world in general.

### **Recommendations**

The paper, however, recommended that:

1. The hotel industry should be given much needed attention for sustainable development of the Nigeria economy.
2. Sustainable tourism could be used as a means of correcting the adverse environmental, social and cultural effects of tourism on host communities (Modinos, 2000:306). Thus, it is vital that efforts are put into developing approaches to sustainable tourism management and also to implementing these at the world level (Lavery, 1993:43).
3. The introduction of "sustainable development" as a policy should be sustained and environmental protection policies should be embedded in other policies to make it as objective as possible. This is the only

way to attempt to prevent overexploitation of the ecological resources and utilization of space. Specified standards, which are considered to be sustainable from an ecological point of view, should be maintained. This implies that standards are directly derived from the functioning of the eco-cycles. Critical loads, carrying capacities, emission standards and extraction quotas are policy goals in this respect. Subsequently, both command and control instruments and economic instruments could be used to attain these policy goals. The choice between them, or better, the specific mix of them, depends on criteria such as effectiveness and efficiency (Modinos, 1996:105).

4. There is, therefore, need to maximize the benefits from tourism while the cost should be minimized. It is advisable to limit tourism development within standards considered to be sustainable. This approach will not only enhance the socio-economic benefits derivable from tourism, but also improve and or conserve the natural environment.

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