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TOURISM AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The role of tourism in regional development cannot be overemphasized. Tourism is an important driver of economic, social and political development of any region. It is one of the significant ways to open up rural areas especially in the provision of infrastructures. Tourism and regional development increase the potentials of growth within regions by reducing poverty and inequality. This paper examines the geographical perspective of tourism and regional development towards a sustainable economy. The paper critically reviews the concepts of tourism, development and regional development; analyses the theories of regional development; assesses tourism and regional imbalance in development; discusses the relationship between tourism and regional development; examines the impact of tourism on regional development and highlights the challenges confronting regional tourism development. The paper concludes by emphasizing on the need for government to present policies and programmes that will assist in the improvement and development of regional tourism and tourism as a whole through provision of necessary and adequate infrastructure.

Keywords: Tourism, Infrastructure, Regional development, Sustainable economy and Rural areas.

Introduction

Tourism development is related to rural and urban development. It is very fundamental to the growth of the economy of any region as it generates employment at all levels of government in developed and less developed countries (Hall & Jenkins, 1995). Rural tourism is one of the surest ways to open up rural areas, especially in the provision of infrastructures. There are many different types of tourism and some of these include: religious, ethnic, nature, recreational, business, environmental, historical, ethnic, cultural, city, risk, curiosity, small settlement, aqua, country side, teens, ancestral home, belief tourism among others. Regardless of the type of tourism development that is embarked upon, each has the capacity to enhance national and regional development.

There exists a number of strategies employed by different countries worldwide particularly developing countries for regional development

which varies from one country to another. The end result is that some of them are successfully developed while some are not. Most of these strategies however concentrated more on sectoral approach than regional development with focus on different aspects of the economy. Such aspects include exploration of mineral resources, industrialization, exportation of primary products and concentration of investments in the major urban centres at the expense of the rural regions.

The few strategies that focused on rural development were not monitored and usually did not achieve the desired aims. For instance, in Nigeria some, policy programmes that aimed at regional development include: Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) (1972), River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA) (1976), Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) (1977), Rural Banking Scheme (RBS) (1977), the Green Revolution Programme (GRP) (1980), Directorate for Food, Road and Rural

Infrastructure (DFRRI) (1986), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) (2001), Green wall initiative (2007), Presidential Amnesty program (2009), Economic sustainability Plan (2020), the cares plan (2021) among others. Most of these programmes could not stand the test of time and have become moribund.

A good strategy that can aid regional development in most developing countries is the development of tourism. The robustness of tourism performance is evident in poverty alleviation, employment generation and income redistribution influence on rural communities (Kurian et al., 2010 cited in Ndanusa et al., 2014).

Tourism is a severely neglected sector that can assist regional development as well as generate much-needed revenue for any region or country. This can be made possible through creation of awareness of tourists site, access to tourist sites, development of roads, provision of hospitality services among others (Tunde 2012). Hence, to harness potentials of tourism in any region, there is the need for effective public infrastructural provision such as roads, hotels, electricity, pipe-borne water and security among others. The provision of these facilities is a stimulus to physical development of the region. Regions show a spatial subdivision of a country and are distinguished by a clear-cut degree of spatial diversity. Nijkamp & Abreu (2009) pointed out that availability of and access to infrastructure is a principal success factor for regional development.

It has been established that, there exist disparities in regional development all over the world Afolayan & Tunde (2017). The question is, why are some tourism attractions developed more than others? There underscore the uneven distribution of tourism and sustainable regional development may be underestimated. In the light of the above issues, this paper therefore, attempts to make a geographical contribution by means of literature review to the study of how tourism and its related activity can act as a support to regional development. It examines concepts of tourism, concept of development and regional development; analyses the theories of regional development; assesses tourism and regional imbalance in development; discusses the relationship between tourism and regional development; examines the impact of tourism on regional development and highlights the challenges confronting regional tourism development.

Concept of Tourism

Tourism as a concept emerged due to the growth and changes in tourism activities. Cooper *et al.*, (2006) while defining tourism referred to it as the movement of people temporarily to destinations outside their normal places of work or residence, the pursuits undertaken during their stay in those destinations and the facilities created to cater for their needs. Paul (2000) viewed tourism as recreational activities which require at least a night's stay away from home due to recreational interest. This means, tourism entails the movement of people from a generating region to a destination region with a motive of adventure or relaxation.

Ormsby *et al.*, (2004) opined that the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places that is not their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes is what is known as tourism.

Tourism is a group of activities, services and industries that delivers a travel experience, this include accommodation, eating, transportation and drinking establishments, entertainment businesses, retail shops and other hospitality services provided for individuals or groups traveling away from home (Parks and Recreation Management, 2012).

The Concepts of Development and Regional Development

The word "growth" is often confused with "development". Based on this, between 1950s and 1960s development was seen singularly as economic growth [Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Product (GNP) and Per Capital Income (PCI)]. This, however was a myopic economic conception of development as it means more than economic growth. Sen (1999) argued that development should not be considered as economic growth which is just an aspect of the process of economic development rather in terms of "freedoms" that people enjoy such as political freedoms, economic facilities, transparency, social opportunities and protective security. Development is therefore a multidimensional phenomenon that involves economic, social, environmental, institutional and political factors. No matter how development is being viewed, it means positive social change. Development is based solely on how effective the factors involved in social change are, and this is interpreted in different ways by different fields such

as sociologist, historian and economist who examine the consequence and the root of social change (Sercek & Boz, 2016).

Economists such as Seers (1969) sees development as a more equal distribution of income, as a means of eradicating mass poverty, unemployment and inequality. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1997) employed the Human Development Index (HDI) of three indicators to measure development. These include life expectancy, education and income. The four main dimensions of development as viewed in literature include economic growth, modernization, distributive justice and socio-economic transformation.

Regional development entails the geography of welfare and its evolution. In an effort to define regional development, Stimson *et al.*, (2006); noted that regional economic development is a process whereby regional stakeholders, business communities and local government strive to invigorate economic opportunities through the involvement of all economic sectors, employment and quality of life.

Hajisaroso (1994); submits that, regional development can be regarded as the growth or expansion of a region or the building of a new region so as to enhance its public welfare. It is deeply rooted in such disciplines as economic geography, economic growth theory, regional economics and regional science. Regional development therefore, is a multidimensional concept with a considerable socio-economic variety that is ruled by an array of factors. These factors include technological infrastructure and progress, natural resource endowments, capital availability and access, quality and quantity of labour, productive and overhead investments, physical infrastructures, sectoral structure, open mindedness, entrepreneurial culture and attitude, public support systems among others (Nijkamp & Abreu, 2009).

Regional development as a concept has been perceived by Adedayo & Afolayan (2015) to have two components: what constitutes a region and definition of development. A region can be seen from two viewpoints i.e., the objective viewpoint that conceived it, as a real entity, physically identified and mapped while the subjective observed it, as an administrative unit of land with relatively certain homogenous characteristics that are important for regional development planning. The World Bank

(1975) in its own definition sees regional development as a process of growth, transformation and progress that a region undergoes. This means that, regional development entails revamping of economy so as to please the people in terms of material needs and aspiration, especially the people at the rural areas that constitutes a larger proportion.

Regional development is making available support and additional aid to regions which are not very well developed economically. This means, making positive change happen for certain areas, in terms of economics, regional traffic and environmental development. The implementation of national development in some areas which is modified to its physical and social capability as well as complies with legal provisions is what is referred to as regional development (Sandy, 1992).

Jayadinata (1997), cited in Hairullah (2013) noted that regional development is meant to upgrade and increase what is in existence. Regional development, therefore, is never static as it means multiplex space-time change of an interconnected set of regions.

Theories of Regional Development

Some theories of regional development shall be examined here. One of the development theories that deal with regional development was the theory of growth poles or development poles by Perroux (1950) who had the earliest theoretical works on polarized growth and development in abstract economic space. His work however did not regard geographical space but only economic space. This prompted the following scholars to modify the theory: Myrdal (1957) and Friedmann (1966). Myrdal emphasized on the theory of circular and cumulative causality which is of the notion that when there is a shift of labour force towards rich regions, there will be an exacerbated situation in the poor areas. Friedmann (1966) proposed the *centre-periphery theory*. Thus, at regional level, the association of central and peripheral areas are viewed as true engines of development.

Rostow (1975) propounded the theory of development in stages. He emphasized basically on the different stages that regions must undergo to be able to transit from underdevelopment to development. According to him, most advanced countries are moving in the direction of self-sustained growth, while countries that are underdeveloped are still in a traditional society, or in

the pre-conditions' stage, and must adhere strictly to some steps so as to reach a sustained economic growth level (Antonescu, 2012).

According to Dhimitri, *et al.* (2015), theory of endogenous development came out at the end of 1970s. From the theory, development by definition is in fact endogenous. The theory involves engaging the use of local resources, that is supporting pliable regional economy which has the potential of adjusting to the external environment (Butowski, 2010). According to Arocena (1995), for endogenous development, social aspects are integrated into economic aspects. Hence, development gives rise to economic growth and increased regional productivity. It is worthy to note that the recognition of endogenous factors of growth was the critical scientific issue that explained the creation of regional development theories (Butowski, 2010).

Tourism and Regional Development: The Nexus

The tourism industry is closely related to and has the propensity to engender regional development. There are three basic impacts of tourism that can be felt in any nation, these include, economic, social and environmental. The economic impact has to do with creation of wealth through increased personal income, improved standard of living and generation of employment opportunities. Social impacts include, provision of social services, preservation of local culture, interactions between people of different cultures and background, strengthening communities, commercialization of culture and art, and the preservation of heritage. Environmental impact has to do with conservation of the natural environment, traditional values to include food, culture, heritage, language, arts and crafts.

Tourism creates employment opportunities for the residents and act as a source of economic growth of a region. It has been seen by many developing and undeveloped countries as a chance for economic prosperity due to its strong influences on regional development. Regional development of tourism is meant to act as a catalyst for economic growth by alluring populations to new regions and creating a positive change in the regions. When there is tourism development in a region that is underdeveloped, many positive changes are noted. These include improvement in infrastructure provision, increased awareness of the region as a travel/tourism destination which can enhance international

recognition, community participation in events, better land-use planning, development of the fringes, preservation of heritage and retainment of the population in the native country. Any region where tourism is thriving, development is very rapid.

Tourism industry plays crucial roles in regional development through provision of revenue and diversification to rural economy by linking it to other sectors like naive art, local craftsmanship, etc. and as foreign currencies from foreigners remain within the local economy. Residents of the host communities will be fascinated by some of the events planned for tourists. Tax revenue obtained from foreigners can be used for expansion/development of some other facilities. Development can also be experienced when industries are located in the area because of the quality of services and recreational resources provided. It may result in foreigners becoming permanent residents. Increased standard of living will be experienced by the residents. It contributes remarkably to the protection and restoration of biological diversity, environmental protection, and sustainable use of natural resources. It prevents migration from villages into cities and encourages transmission of ideas from urban into rural regions (Dimitrovskia, *et al.*, 2012).

Considering the international aspect of tourism, foreign exchange flows from developed to less developed regions. The flow of the money between regions can contribute meaningfully to the financial support they need in the provision of devices to use in the development process of regions (Durgun, 2006). The different composition of the tourism product creates effects on many sectors of the economy. For instance, travel agencies, airlines, airport staff, catering company among others are from different organisations offering tourist delivery services. Income generated from all these services constitute the direct impact of tourism on the region in question. The development of tourism will create environmental awareness in the region. It will further encourage the evolution of infrastructural facilities like water supply, security, hotels, roads, electricity and communication among others thereby making the rural sector more sustainable. This will also increase local pride, community spirit, increased knowledge concerning the potential for investment and commercial activity in the region.

Despite all these, there are still some other impacts that are not favourable to the destinations especially during tourism events. These include: pressure on

local services, noise pollution, increased crime rate, conflicts between residents and tourists, messing up of the environment, hike in transport fare, traffic congestion, overcrowding, vandalism and destruction of biodiversity.

Impact of Tourism on Regional Development (Empirical Issues)

The impact of tourism in regional development cannot be overemphasized. For instance, Lui, (2022) examined the impact of tourism on regional and global economic growth using Thailand as a case study. According to the findings, tourism in Thailand generates significant economic impact on output and value added. Meyer (2020) assessed the impact of tourism sector on regional economic development in South Africa focusing on Gauteng. Findings revealed that for tourism to be a regional economic driver, a relatively clean environment is a requirement and that, tourism should be the main industry to revitalize any ailing economy. Similarly, Cortes-Jimenez (2008) evaluated the role of tourism on regional economic growth in Spain and Italy with the use of panel data econometric methods and reported that domestic and international tourism contribute significantly to regional economic growth. Sharmin (2016) in his study, with the use of multiple regression techniques, examined empirically the economic contribution of the tourism industry in Bangladesh. Findings showed that tourism created over 1 million international tourists in 2014; international tourism generated US\$1.5 trillion in export earnings, and international tourist arrivals grew by 4.3 percent in 2014 to 1.133 billion.

In Nigeria, Adebayo *et al.*, (2014) examined the effects of tourism development on the economy of Ile-Ife, Osun State. Findings suggest government at all levels should increase the amount budgeted for tourism development as this will enhance socio-economic development of the area. Ovat (2003) carried out investigation on the role of tourism in economic development of Nigeria and suggested promotional remedies for the industry by the government. In the same vein, Matthew *et al.*, (2021) examined the interaction effect of tourism and foreign exchange earnings from the tourism industry on economic growth in Nigeria. The results showed that revenue generated from tourism have a significant and positive effect on Nigeria's economic growth. Yusuff *et al.*, (2015) carried out an empirical

investigation of the contribution of the rapidly developing tourism sector to economic growth in Nigeria. The findings showed a unilateral causality and positive long-run between tourism development and economic growth.

Furthermore, Fayissa *et al.*; (2007) analysed the impact of tourism on economic growth and development in Africa. The results revealed that receipts from the tourism industry significantly contribute both to the current level of gross domestic product and the economic growth of Sub-Saharan African countries. Therefore, well packaged tourism development will promote regional development.

Tourism and Regional imbalance in Development

Tourism is a key instrument to economic development of any area, region or country. However, if not given adequate attention by harnessing its potentials, it will remain idle without impacting on the development of any host region.

Over the surface of the earth, there is unequal distribution in resources endowment needed for social, economic and physical development across regions. As some regions are exceptionally blessed with economic potentials like tourist sites, some have scarcity and some have none. Also, while some are technologically advanced, some are not advanced at all (Afolayan & Tunde, 2017). Neglect with respect to development that can bring out the potentials of a tourist site where it exists in any area could be a hindrance to economic development of such region.

In most developing countries, urbanization has made most urban areas to experience greater development in the area of tourism than the rural areas. Urbanization could be a factor that promotes regional disparities if not controlled because, tourist sites and recreational activities required to aid economic development are provided in the urban areas to the detriment of the surrounding rural regions.

According to Withanage (2015), regional imbalances can be seen as a situation of imbalances in the levels of economic development and social well-being of communities living in different geographical regions. Regional balance as put forward by Kwatiah (2016) means uniform distribution pattern of planned investment among different geographical regions. Tourism can therefore be used to correct regional imbalances.

Challenges Confronting Regional Tourism Development

The challenges of regional tourism development are enormous and more pronounced in developing countries than the developed countries. Some of these include: enabling environment, infrastructure provision, funding, security of lives and property, attitudinal change, low level of awareness.

Enabling Environment

Annual capital base growth or capital formation remains an important factor of growth in any economy. For instance, Nigeria's capital base has been growing at only 0.1 percent per annum, for over four decades (Kester, 2007), this made the economy one of the slowest growing in the world. Nigeria as a country has been confined in a low investment and low savings. In the past five years, growth and development has been inadequate to make any impact on poverty reduction. The public sector remains the main employer of labour despite efforts to diversify the economy, while the private sector is still inactive in terms of capital investment (Kester, 2007). Low productivity weakens regional tourism development and investment with increasing costs of economic goods having inevitable negative consequences on workforce employment, remuneration and purchasing power.

Basically, spending on tourism and recreation is optional. When there is little or no growth in the economy, there is possibility that people don't spend on tourism but rather spend on necessity of life. This can result in decline in the growth of domestic tourism.

Infrastructure Provision

Infrastructure provision plays an important role in tourism development. Lack of or inadequate provision of infrastructure facilities can hinder the development of tourist attraction. Infrastructure such as various modes of transportation (road, water, air, rail), water supply, health care facilities, electricity, internet, restaurants, accommodation, telecommunication, banks, tour guides and security posts among others are essential requirements that are lacking (Amanawa, 2022). For instance, accessibility can be seen as a serious challenge confronting regional tourism development. This is common to many developing countries whereby

there are many exciting tourist attractions that are not accessible in terms of transportation of residents of the host communities not to talk of international tourists. Provision of crucial infrastructural facilities will surely enhance regional tourism development.

Security of Lives and Property

Regional tourism is usually faced with the problem of security of lives and property particularly in developing countries. There are clear cases of abduction, assassination, kidnapping, armed robbery, suicide bombing, and other related crimes which influence the regional tourism development negatively. Different countries are faced with severe developmental challenges, such as political instability, conflict, weak institutional capacity and poor governance. Their common features include dependence on external resources, weak infrastructure, inability to mobilize domestic resources, poor levels of human development, low population density in the rural areas, concentration of exports in a few products, and high risk of conflict. Tourism development in feeble and post conflict countries involves a unique set of challenges (Ndanusa *et al.*, 2014). For instance, most parts of Nigeria are facing one form of security challenges or the other ranging from political assassination, abduction, kidnapping, communal clashes, farmers/herders' clashes, ritual killings, violent armed robbery and Boko Haram terrorism in the North.

Funding

Availability and accessibility to fund plays major role in regional tourism development. For instance, most commercial banks do not have the capacity to fund large tourism projects and some may not do so. This is simply because tourism projects involve a lot of capital and they are not as attractive as short-term business loans. Regional development may be disapproved when support from the government to finance the tourism sector is lacking or not adequate (Ijeomah, and Eniang, 2018)

Attitudinal Change

In any tourism business, attitude of the personnel involved in it is very crucial. Where the attitude is questionable, then, there is need for attitudinal change by the personnel in charge of this very

important internationally driven industry. For instance, some Nigerians are humble and diligent while some possess high potentials of fraud and corrupt related tendencies. The ground personnel at the points of entry in any tourist attraction sites should be courteous, polite and appealing both in physical appearance and manners (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1985). This will promote the business more.

Low level of Awareness

Low level of awareness is another problem confronting regional tourism development especially in developing countries. There are many wonderful tourist attractions of international standards that are not well developed. As a result of this, the sites are latent and are not being explored. This has affected the development of many regions. Examples in Nigeria include Apado cave in Ilorin East and warm spring in Arandun, Kwara State, Turunku hills in Kaduna State, Dumi hills in Bauchi State, Alko Ikom Monolith in Cross River State among others. Another problem facing regional tourism development has to do with insufficient information about attractions and other places of leisure at international events. For example, at international events, average visitors

to many African countries including Nigeria are usually surprised as they stumble into places of interest and sites of wonders. This lack of or inadequate information has detrimental effect on tourism performance. In essence, the marketing image of the destination is extremely low (Chang, 1997 cited by Ndanusa, 2014) hence, the need for some drastic measures is required for further transformation of the region.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper has attempted to make a geographical contribution to the study of tourism and regional development. It establishes that tourism, if properly developed, can play a crucial role in the development of any region. It is however important to put the necessary infrastructure for its development in place so that significant revenue can be generated from it. This will equally improve the well-being of the people as it can reduce inequality, poverty and unemployment within the region. Hence, there is need for government to present policies and programmes that will assist in the improvement and development of tourism through provision of adequate and necessary infrastructure.

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