Social Disorder And Its Implications For Tourism Development In Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria's tourism resources are rich and diverse and include the numerous visitor attractions that dot the country's geographical landscape. These tourism assets, if properly harnessed, protected, packaged and presented, could provide the base for a thriving tourism industry that is capable of changing the socio-economic fortunes of the country. It is known, however, that one of factors that can impact negatively on the pattern of demand in tourism is social disorder. This is because social disorder in all this ramifications, can lead to a drastic reduction in the flow of tourists to those countries or regions considered to be unsafe. Nigeria as a nation and an important tourist destination has had its share of social disorder especially in the last couple of years and this could go a long way in diverting foreign tourist traffic from the country to other regions. In this paper, therefore, we shall attempt to identify the various types and causes of social disorder that have bedeviled Nigeria and make suggestions on how they could be curbed or minimized so that an enabling environment can be created for tourism to thrive and play its enviable role in the nation's socio-economic development.

Introduction

Tourism as a social phenomenon and a leisure activity can best thrive in an atmosphere of peace, completely devoid of violence and any form of crime. The tourists, on their part, usually leave the place where they normally live and work to destinations in search of fun, solace other pleasure-related pursuits. Very often, however, such momentous trips, as envisaged by the tourist, have sometimes turned out to be mere illusions as the tourists may be confronted with one tourism-related crime or the other at the destinations. Such social vices which are more than what the tourists bargained for before taking the trip often tend to mar the travel experience. Tourism as an industry can hardly develop under conditions of social disorder as tourists usually shun crisis-prone areas, choosing instead, places with records of peace and order.

Nigeria, as a nation, has a plethora of visitor-attractions that are capable of marking her out as an international tourist destination, if her tourism products are properly packaged and marketed. Unfortunately however, this dream of becoming a preferred destination in the world can hardly be realized, due to a number of obstacles among which is the problem of social disorder. This has manifested itself in various forms in Nigeria including militant activities, as experienced in the Niger Delta region of the country, armed robbery,

kidnapping and ethno-religious conflicts. In the face of these unpleasant activities, a conducive atmosphere can hardly be created for tourism to grow in Nigeria. In this paper, therefore, an attempt will be made to examine those forms of social disorder that can hinder the development of tourism in Nigeria. Measures will also be suggested on how they can be stemmed or minimized so that tourism can be allowed to contribute to the social, political and economic transformation of the Nigerian nation.

Forms of Social Disorder Visible in Nigeria and their Causes
Various forms and shades of social disorder have manifested themselves in the country in the last couple of years. These include drug and child-trafficking, rape, armed robbery, kidnapping and hostage-taking, ethno-religious conflicts and militant activities, which sometimes degenerate into terrorism. For the purpose of this paper however, only those forms of social disorder that impact directly and negatively on tourism will be discussed as a way of drawing attention to these negative effects on tourism and suggest how they could be mitigated.

Militant Activities in the Niger-Delta
For some years now, the oil-rich Nigeria Delta region of Nigeria has been embattled by the activities of groups of militia men, who have unleashed series of unprecedented attacks mostly at western or foreign oil facilities in the area. In response to these attacks and vandalization that virtually paralyzed oil explorations and exploitation in the region the Federal Government of Nigeria set up a Joint Task Force (JTF) comprising members of the armed forces and the mobile police to safeguard the oil facilities and the huge work-force of the industry and to help arrest the situation. This intervention by the government quickly fuelled the anger of these militant groups who mobilized themselves and engaged the Task Force in a series of gun-battles both on the mainland and in the creeks of the Niger-Delta. These attacks and counter attacks left on their trail causalities on both sides of the combatant groups, the oil installations and the civilian population of these areas. During this period of fighting, oil pipelines were attacked and vandalized, oil-bearing vessels and their crew were abducted, offshore plat-forms and facilities were blown up by rocket fires from the militants while the lives of the civilian population, especially the oil workers were endangered. Operations in most oil-fields ceased, forcing some foreign oil companies to relocate to other parts of the world. Consequently, some non-oil based companies whose businesses depended largely on these oil companies also moved away from the Nigeria-Delta region. This episode affected not only the fortunes of the Niger-Delta region but the economy of the nation as a whole which depends heavily on crude oil exports as production figures dropped by more than fifty percent (50%) or more. However, it took the wisdom of the Federal Government Administration to bring the situation under control through the generous offer of amnesty to the repentant Niger-Delta militants. The genesis of this social disorder in the Niger-Delta region was the tension that developed in the relationships between the foreign oil companies operating in the area and a number of the minority ethnic groups in the region particularly the Ogoni and the Ijaw, who fell-dissatisfied with the way of oil resources of the region were is being exploited without adequate compensation to the people. The people expressed gross dissatisfaction with the way the "environmental, social and economic apparatus of the region were rapidly deteriorating" (Mogbo 2009). Although militant activities have virtually ceased in the region, the scars and ripples are still very much with us as huge sums of money will be

spent to repair the damaged facilities and installations and rehabilitate the ex-militants through the post-amnesty programmes. Some energy will also be expended to restore confidence in the travelling public, especially, the foreign tourists that the region in safe and secure again to visit as a destination.

Kidnapping and Hostage taking

The terms kidnapping and its counter-part hostage taking remained relatively unknown to the ordinary Nigerian until the outbreak of the Niger-Delta crisis when they became popular vocabularies in the languages of every Nigerian. Kidnapping has been generally defined as "the abduction of a person with intent to hold him/her as a ransom or reward, or use him/her as a shield or hostage, or inflict physical injury upon him/her, or to violate or abuse him/her sexually, or even interfere with the performance of any government or political functions" (Nwogbo, 0.2009) .

A hostage, on the other hand, is seen as "someone who is seized by a criminal abductor in order to compel another party such as a relative, employer, law enforcement or government to act, or refrain from acting, in a particular way' often under threat or serious physical harm to the hostage(s) after expiration of an ultimatum" (Nwogbo, O. 2009). As a fall-out from the Niger-Delta crisis both kidnapping and hostage-taking, as forms of social disorder, were initially confined to that region but today, like a wildfire, they are raging uncontrollably across the country. The incidents started with the kidnap of expatriate oil-workers or members of their families who were held hostage either in some unknown locations in the oil cities of the region or abducted to remote creeks where they were confined until ransom was paid as condition for their release. Gradually, however, the crimes started, spreading to the neighboring states of Abia, Imo, Enugu and Ebonyi and today they are common occurrences across the country as no week passes without reported cases of crimes. Although these crimes are targeted at the rich or affluent in the society, sometimes the poor relatives of the targets like their parents or brothers and sisters can be abducted as baits until the ransom is paid. Some cases of kidnapping and hostage taking that have made headlines in recent times include those involving the father of the immediate past governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, the attempted kidnap of two former Federal Ministers and the kidnap of the Secretary to the Niger State Government. The ransom demanded usually ran in millions of naira and were often negotiated between the kidnappers or hostage-takers and those acting un-behalf of the unlawful captives.

Armed Robbery

Another very serious social crime that has gripped the country today is armed robbery. This problem which has been ravaging the social and economic fabric of the Nigerian society has a history that dates back to the end of the Nigerian civil war when war veterans, mainly youths, who were impoverished by the war took to armed robbery as a means of livelihood. Initially, individuals were the major victims as they were either robbed in their homes or on the highways as they travelled. Sometimes communities were threatened in writing by these robbers who demanded the payment of ransom as condition for avoiding being attacked. Today, however, the major victims of armed robbery attacks are the commercial banks which have been relentlessly attacked by these dare-devil bandits. During such dastardly attacks, millions of naira are usually carted away while several lives may be lost during gun-battles with the law-enforcement agents who are stationed to guard these

banks. The robbers sometimes target the movement of cash by these banks and they seize such opportunities to waylay and abduct bullion vans conveying cash from one branch of the bank to another after overpowering the policemen escorting such cash movements. Armed robberies especially those involving commercial banks have assumed such an alarming sophistication in their operations in the country that the law enforcement agents are hardly able to face the superior fire power of these bandits.

Ethno-Religious Conflicts

For nearly four decades now, the northern parts of Nigeria have witnessed several violent religious crises. According to Isawa Elaigwu, president of the Job-based Institute of Social Research, the number of such crisis that have occurred in the north between 1980 and 2004 has been put at 50, though 'the region has recorded many other cases since then (Newswatch, November 2, 2009). It is estimated that over 100,000 lives have been lost while properties worth billions of naira have been destroyed as a result of these ethno-religious crises between 1976 and today. "The Kano/Kaduna axis has witnessed some of the worst inter-religious crises in Nigeria with the bloodiest occurring in Kano in 1976, 1977, 1980-1981 and 1990" (Newswatch, November 2, 2009).

Kaduna itself witnessed three major crises between 1987 and 2000 with the worst occurring in 2000. The Kaduna crisis of 2000 is said to have claimed over 2000 lives while about 1,944 houses and 746 vehicles were burnt, although the police tried to underestimate the casualty figures in their own report.

Another town that has also witnessed one of the worst of these ethno-religious hostilities, is Jos, the capital of Plateau State. The town also known as the "home of peace and tourism" used to serve as a place of refuge for people fleeing from religious crises in places like kaduna, Gombe and Bauchi and some other volatile areas of the north until in 2001 when it experienced its own bloody religious conflict. Since the Jobs crisis of 2001, other towns in Plateau State such as Bassa, Wase Lantang, Kanam, Yelwa and Shendan have witnessed one form of ethno-religious conflict or the other. Other towns in the north that have had their share of these crises include Katsina, Funtua, Kaltungo, Minna, Numan, Hadeija Agyaragu and Limanakara (Newswatch, November, 2, 2009).

These series of ethno-religious crises have definitely affected the region both socially and economically. For instance, there has been population dislocation and alterations in the living pattern of the people as the spirit of cohabitation formerly existing between the adherents of Christianity and Islam has been lost. Beyond that, several people relocated with their businesses from these volatile cities in the north to Abuja, Makurdi and to other towns in the south considered to be relatively more peaceful such as Lagos, Enugu, Benin and Ibadan.

Among the inter-ethnic unrests and conflicts that have occurred in Nigeria mention must be made of those between the Ijaws and Itsekirir of the Western Delta region that claimed human lives in their thousands and destroyed properties worth millions of naira.

Implication for Tourism Development

Acts of terrorism, kidnapping and hostage-taking, armed conflicts, ethno-religious conflicts and other forms of social disorder are among those factors that can affect the patterns of demand in tourism. As crises events they can greatly limit the flow of tourists/visitors to a destination or region. This is especially so when most of these crimes are

targeted on tourists. Such crises events can go a long way in diminishing tourism revenues that could accrue to the destination or region. It is even stated that such crises events can wipe out tourism demand (Cook et al 2006. 343). A few examples can be cited to buttress the fact that these forms of social disorder can constitute the greatest threat to both domestic and foreign travels. The former Yugoslavia was said to be visited by millions of tourists every year during the 1980s, but this market almost completely disappeared in the 1990s when civil wars broke-out in that country. Also, the various wars in the Middle East drastically reduced travel to that region (Holloway, 2006).

In most African countries the greatest obstacles to tourism development have been identified as civil war and ethnic clashes. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on New York City and Washington are said to have had devastating impacts not only on United State tourism but on global tourism, generally. The U.S. tourism market was said to have dropped by 25% at the end of 2001 while all the world's airlines witnessed double-digit declines in passenger number (Cook et al 2006:344). The overall effect of this was a worldwide loss of millions of jobs in virtually all the sectors of the tourism industry including its supplier industries, such as aircraft manufacturers (Beirman D. 2003 in Cook et al 2006).

Table showing major global terrorist attacks 1995 – mid 2005

Date	Site	Death toll
19 April 1995	Oklahoma	169
23 November 1996	Ethiopian Airlines over Indian Ocean	127
7 August 1998	Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salam, Mozambique (US Embassy Complexes)	253
11 September 2001	Twin Towers New York	2,749
12 October 2002	Bali Indonesia	202
11 March, 2004	Madrid, Spain	191
7 July 2005	London, England (Followed by a series of failed attacks two weeks later)	56
23 July 2005	Sharm el-Seikh, Egypt	C.88

(source: Holloway, J. C. 2006).

These escalations in the number of attacks and the predictions by officials in the tourism industry that the tempo may increase in the near future has created doubts and fears about the growth prospects for global travel (Holloway, 2006), and by implication the entire tourism industry.

Nigeria, the focus of this paper, is blessed with a rich assortment of visitor attractions that can substantially increase international travel to the country. These include cultural/historical attractions like the just concluded Abuja carnival, the Argungu fishing and cultural festival in Kebbi State, the Osun Osogbo festival in Osun State, the Mmanwu (masquerade) festivals in Anambra and Enugu States, the famous Eyo festival of Lagos State

and the numerous archaeological/historical sites in Nigeria such as Igbo-Ukwu, Nok, Sukur, Benin, Ife, Daima and Ugwule. Others are the natural and man-made attractions like the Yankari Game Reserve in Bauchi State, the Kaniji National Park in Niger State, the Obudu cattle Ranch in Cross-River State, and the various museums across the country. With this array of visitor-attractions, the country stands the chance of becoming an important leisure country in the world.

Unfortunately, however, the various crises events like militant activities, kidnapping, hostage-taking, armed robbery that have bedevilled the country in recent years can hardly encourage the choice of Nigeria as a preferred destination by foreign tourists. These crises events can make Nigeria dangerously unsafe for tourists thereby helping to diver foreign tourism traffic from Nigeria to other countries viewed as being safe, since no tourists would like to take the risk, of visiting a socially or politically volatile destination. This in turn could have grave consequence for tourism development in the country.

Tourism, as a labor-intensive industry is supposed to generate foreign exchange and other income from wages and salaries, interest, rent and profits; create employment, especially for the host populations; solve balance of payment problems. Socially it can help build bridges a cross cultures, promote global peace and unity and help to conserve as well as beautify the natural environment. These gains that can accrue from a well-developed and property managed tourism industry can hardly be realized if the free flow of tourist traffic is interrupted or hundred by crises events such as are experienced in Nigeria even till today.

Discussion and the way forward

Social disorder, can threaten human welfare, undermine the growth of tourism and the hospitality industry, social development, impact on businesses and could constitute major obstacle to investors and investment (Mogbo, O. 2009),. In most countries and destinations the number of tourist arrival decreases as crime rates increase and this goes to affect the image of such destinations or countries and most importantly the income generated from tourism. To reverse this ugly trend and make Nigeria reap the benefits that can accrue from a robust tourism industry, a number of intervention measures need to be put in place. Fortunately some of these measures are already in place and will be discussed along with other suggested measures.

Intervention Measures already taken

In Rivers State, kidnap now attracts life imprisonment as the Governor of the State has signed a bill passed by the State House of Assembly into law. The law is the River State Kidnap Prohibition Law No 3. Under the River State kidnap Prohibition Law No 3 of 2009, anybody caught in the act, upon conviction, shall be sentenced to life imprisonment without any option of fine (Mogbo O., 2009). This bill would impact positively and help to promote free movement of people in the State including tourists. Both Abia and Ebonyi States have followed suit by enacting similar laws. The law enforcement agents in the country, especially the Nigerian Police have stepped up security measures against these social crimes. For example, the Nigerian police and the Nigerian Army have mounted series of joint urban and highway patrols to check the activities of miscreants in the society with the support of State Government who have been providing them with patrol vehicles. Another important intervention measure already taken is the amnesty programme with its package of incentives that the Federal Government has extended to repentant Niger-Delta Militants. The essence of

the programme is to re-orientate, rehabilitate, integrate them into the wider society wit which they have lost touch a result of their long stay in the remote creeks. In local communities and urban areas across the country, community vigilante groups have been formed to combat these forms of social disorder such as armed robbery, kidnapping and hostage-taking. The rebranding campaign by the Federal Government is another avenue adopted for rescuing the battered image of the country that has been caused by some of these forms of social disorder.

Suggested Measures

In addition to the measures already taken to combat forms of social disorder that have hindered progress in this country especially in the area of tourism development, a number of other measure are suggested here. These measures include increased surveillance at the various entry points across the country and highly visited attractions to ward-off attacks of criminals. There should he increased security in area considered to be "Hot Spots" for crimes against tourists. "Hot spots" are what authorities like Ryan and kinder describe as "crimogenic" places where there are lots of bars, night clubs and strip joints catering to tourists and proving ancillary services such as prostitution and drugs (Crotts 1996; Ryan and Kinder 1996 in Mogbo, 2009). Tourists who frequent these areas, whether looking for these activities or not, area much more likely to be victims of these crimes.

Summary and Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt has been made to look at the implication of social order for tourism development in Nigeria. It identified kidnapping and hostage taking, militant activities, ethno-religious crisis and armed robbery which are forms of social disorder as important factors that can influence changes in tourism demand. Since these forms of social crime abound in Nigeria the likelihood of their impinging on tourism development in the country as they have done in other parts of the world was made apparent by this paper. To avert these problems the paper suggested some intervention measures that should be adopted taking into cognizance the ones already put in place.

Therefore, to combat social crimes against tourists and help make the country a preferred destination in the world, a comprehensive security plan, that should involve security officers and other law enforcement agents using the state of art equipment and adopting the best safety procedures should be drawn.

By these efforts tourism can contribute meaningfully to the nation's re-branding project which is geared towards the realization of Nigeria's vision 20-20-20.

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