EXAMINING THE INDISPENSABILITY OF SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR TOURISM AND TRAVEL TRADE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract- Safety and security are commonly desired conditions under which travel and tourism flourish. Security has become more important issue than ever before due to increasing wave of terrorist acts, local wars, natural disasters, epidemics and pandemics, which significantly affect all sphere of life. More researches have to face the issues of safety and security in tourism in order to prepare the stakeholders and future specialists in the industry for the emerging challenge with a view to developing strategies to ameliorate the effects of the security incidents on tourism business. This paper reviews the security incidents in Nigeria in the recent times which have been occasioned by the activities of Niger-Delta militants, the Fulani and Boko haram insurgents. Adopting the method of content analysis, the frequency and severity of the incidents with their attendant impact on the tourist, the tourism industry and the host community have been examined. A total approach for understanding and a corporate strategy for handling tourism security challenges by both the private and public sectors have been recommended.

I. INTRODUCTION

Safety and security are two commonly desired conditions under which life is pleasurable and adventurable. They are indispensable for travel and tourism and indeed, any kind of trade. Since the September 11th terrorist attack at the trade centre, USA in 2001, there have been persistent spread of threats to safety and security worldwide. Examples include the great turmoil in the Middle East, coordinated bus bombing in London, the ever lingering hostility between Israel and Palestine just to mention but a few. Security has become more important issue than ever before due to terrorist acts, local wars, natural disasters, epidemics and pandemics, which significantly affect all sphere of life.

After the civil war, 1967 – 1970, Nigeria has enjoyed some degree of relative peace except for occasional robbery incidents, religious and communal clashes. However, this state of affairs quickly disappeared with the restoration of democratic regime in 1979. The activities of sects such as the Bakassi boys in the East, the Oduduwa Peoples' Congress (OPC) in the South and the Maitasines in the North constituted threats to peace. The breakdown of law and peace became more pronounced since 2006 when the Niger-Delta militancy, led by Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), came to the center stage with reported cases of kidnapping, killing and vandalization of oil pump lines (Adejoh, 2014). When the government of President Yar'adua succeeded in tackling the Niger-Delta problem through 13% oil derivation allocation and amnesty, the most dreadful Boko Haram insurrection followed with several cases of bombing, invasion of villages and abduction, claiming over 1830 lives in few months (Adejoh and Fada, 2014)

No nation grows economically amidst violence and terrorism. The most affected sector of the economy when there is no safety and security is tourism. Due to persistent terrorist acts and armed conflicts, promising small nations like Sudan, Afghan and Pakistan fail to appear on the list of countries that enjoy the huge economic and socio-cultural benefits of viable tourism (Adeyinka 2012). Therefore, Nigeria as a rich tourism destination (inbound and outbound) depends on a safe and secure environment for visitors. Many have argued that the tourism industry in this country has not fared well in the past few years compared with other African countries like Kenya, South African, Egypt and Tanzania that have embraced tourism as a veritable tool for nation building. This fact is not unconnected with the state of security. There are several viable attractions, activities and facilities (for examples, Yankari Game Reserve, Bauchi; OsunOsogbo festival, Olokun festival in Badagry, Obudu cattle ranch annual mountain race, the Annual Africa Movie Award (AMAA) in Yenogoa, Mambilla Plateau in Adamawa State, Durbar festival in Kano, Bird sanctuary in Yobe state, Nok village Kaduna, Tula mountains in Gombe state, UthmanDanfodio tomb Sokoto and various sporting and game events etc.) dispersed through the country that could contribute immensely to the economic mainstay but which are hindered by raging mayhem and insurgencies. Analysts are of the opinion that if not systematically dealt with, crisis, political unrest and insecurity are capable of wiping off the giant strides witnessed in the tourism industry in the last few years (Adora, 2010; Mwathe, 2011).

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There exists a symbiotic relationship between tourism, safety and security. Researchers are unanimous on the opinion that the absence of terrorism or violence with its associated evils is

usually a pre-condition accepted for the development of tourism industry (Wahab 1995; Sonmez 1998). It was established that tourism responds sharply to crisis of any form by sudden reduction, especially in the number of inbound tourists which in turn depletes the economic fortunes of the host community or destination.(Goodrich, 2002). The negative impacts that terrorism and insurgencies are having on global tourism are the focus of discussions by Wahab (1995), Pizam and Mansfeld (1996) and Adam and Sinclair (2002).

III. TOURISM AND THE CONCEPT OF SECURITY

Pizam and Mansfeld (1996) opined that the relationship between tourism and security revolves around three groups of theoretical discourse, which include concepts relating to the nature of tourism-related security incidents and crises; concepts relating to the impacts of security incidents and crises on the tourism industry, the tourists, and host communities; and concepts relating to the short-, medium-, and long-term reactions of all tourism stakeholders to existing and potential security incidents and crises. Based on potential impact on tourism, Pizam and Mansfeld identified four major types of security incidents that could trigger some form of negative impact on the host communities, the tourism industry, and the tourists themselves. The four possible generators of a given security situation that might harmfully impinge on the tourism system are: crime-related incidents, terrorism, war, and civil/political unrest. Empirical evidences have shown that the higher the frequency of such incidents and the more media coverage they obtain, the greater the negative impact on tourist demands. A high frequency of security incidents causes changes in tourists' booking and cancellation behavior, selective spatial behavior in the affected destination, and other tourism demand characteristics.(Adejoh and Fada 2014, George, R. 2003., Hall et al 2004). Pizam and Mansfeld (1996) observe that the impact of security incidents on tourism, tourists, and hosts is directly correlated with the severity of the incidents. The number of security incidents within a given period of time as well as its frequency determines how serious the effects could be on tourism growth.

It was observed by Hall et al (2004) that though most security problems are motivated by political, social, religious and economic factors, their undeclared targets or sufferers are mostly tourists on the way to and from their travel destinations; tourists vacationing in a given travel destination; tourism and hospitality installations and facilities; strategic and non-strategic transportation facilities serving tourists; and public and private services and businesses also serving tourists. For example, the raging insurgency in the North –east paralyzes such services as transportation, hospitality services and business activities as people are afraid to go about their usual businesses.

The severity of security incidents on Nigerian tourism industry is manifested in the extent of overall damage caused to lives and private and public sectors tourism properties across the nation.Pizam and Mansfeld (1996) and WTO (1991, 1996) assert that the closer the security location to tourist destination, the more severe would be the impact of the security incident on the tourism industry. This follows that the proximity of activities of militants, insurgents and Fulani herdsmen to tourist destinations such as Obudu Cattle Ranch, Tinapa Business Resort, Yankari Game Reserve, Jos Wildlife Park, Shambesi Game Reserve, etc and events like the OsunOsogbo festival, Olokun festival in Badagry, Obudu cattle ranch annual mountain race, the Annual Africa Movie Award (AMAA) in Yenogoa, Durbar in Kano, Jarawa Cultural festival in Bauchi and various sporting and game events etc. poses a great challenge.

Negative Impacts of Security Incidents on Tourism

Studies have shown that negative impacts of security incidents on tourism and its associated components are numerous and multifaceted. Pizam and Mansfelds (1996) and Caric (1999) identified six subgroups of impacts of security incidents on tourism, which include the impacts on tourist destination, tourists' behavior, tourism industry, host governments, governments of generating markets and media behavior, During crises and insurgencies, tourist destination faces low and fragmented inflow of tourists. For example, in a study by Adejoh and Fada (2014), it was discovered that the number of tourists visiting Yankari Game Reserve between 2010 and 2013 dropped by 48% which was attributed to the Boko Haram activities in the North east sub-region. A low number of tourist inflow will eventually result in low tourist receipts for any given period of time. Similarly, the tourists' travel decisions are influenced by their perception of risk arising from insecurity of lives and properties. This may result in cancellations of booked trips, avoiding bookings to affected locations, moving to a safer destination or avoiding travel altogether. For instance, Adeyinka (2012) found a significant variation (6.712: 0.000) when he tested for variation in the records of tourists' visitation to the sites at Niger-Delta area between 2007 and 2008. Similar result was gotten when the records for 2008 and 2009 were compared. Hence, perceived vulnerability to specific types of crises and familiarity with safe and unsafe areas within a destination actually impinge on the travel decisions of the tourists (Wilks, and Page 2003)

The impact of insecurity on tourism industry is manifested in the activities of tour operators and travel agents both at the generating and receiving

destinations. A change in security climate can influence the operators' decisions to evacuate tourists, include destinations in brochures, project destinations image or participate in tourism business at destinations (Pizam and Mansfelds 1996). When the tourism industry is threatened, the host governments (national, regional and local) stand to lose its numerous contributions to the economies, especially the foreign exchange earnings. It is on this realization that Steene (1999) recommends government involvement in operational, financial and marketing policies on tourism to combat adverse effects of insecurity. In most cases, the responses of governments at the generating tourism markets, occasioned by security incidents, have great impact on tourism. Governments at generating destinations For instance, following the September 11th, 2001episode, US directed her citizens to avoid visiting many nations identified with high rate of insecurity (Goodrich, 2002:73). The behavior of the news media also influences the travelling decisions during the period of crises. Security incidents are always regarded as very important news item by the media as they will want to provide their customers with up to date information on the risk assessment of the affected destinations. In most cases, as observed by WTO (2003), this news may be biased or exaggerated in such a way that its effect on the travelling decisions at the generating markets can be adverse.

IV. EMPIRICAL IMPLICATIONS

Drawing inference from the timeline of activities of militants, insurgents and terrorists, the frequency and severity of security incidents in Nigeria are marginally significant to impact adversely on tourism business. There have been multiple types of security incidents over a short period of time at same locations and wanton damage to tourism products. The closeness of the incidents and the marginal loss of life and property involved each time, coupled with the wide media coverage they received make the situation grave to have detrimental impact on tourism demand. For instance, there have been reported cases of several bombings, gun attacks and burning of houses in Borno, Kano, Adamawa and Benue States leading to loss of hundreds of life and property worth millions of naira. Many people have deserted their ancestral homes where some of the tourism attractions are located.

Whether motivated politically, religiously, socially or economically, these destructions and mayhem are directly and indirectly affecting the tourist inflow to Nigeria, depriving the country of the most valuable benefits of the tourism industry (Adejoh and Fada 2014). Tourist destinations are symbols of national and cultural identity and a strike against them is a strike against a nation and its culture. At security affected destinations, tourists are more likely than residents to be victims of violent crimes such as murder, rape, and major assault (Pzam and Mansfelds 1996). Infact, due to lack of awareness of high risk crime areas, tourists are more vulnerable to street and property crimes since they carry more money and valuables than the local residents.

The mass destructions of life and property at various locations in the country have devastating effects on tourist arrivals and demand. This is more so because of the way the media portrays the severity of the incidents each time they occur. As a result, the would-be tourists perceive the level of severity of these incidents more seriously than those tourists who are already onsite. This view is in line with Wilks and Page (2003)

One startling fact about the effect of terrorism on tourism demand is that, it is not limited to the immediate community alone where the crime occurs but also to the surrounding environs – towns and states. Therefore, where majority of businesses rely heavily on tourism, their profitability will be negatively impacted and this in turn will affect the community well-being. The high cost involved in providing security for both the private and public sectors increases the cost of providing services to tourists and makes the affected destinations far less competitive (WTO 2003).

Personal security is a major concern for tourists. Thus, most tourists will seek safe and secure destinations and avoid those that have been plagued by all sorts of violent incidents.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Peace, safety, and security are the primary conditions for successful tourism development. Where terrorism, insurgencies and insurrections rein, the tourist destinations within and near the areas will experience diminishing tourist arrivals. Consequently, affected destinations lose both professional employees and entrepreneurs, who are essential for the successful operation of the tourism industry.

Moreso, host governments may lose interest in investing and promoting tourism while governments at the generating markets may evolve policy that would discourage flow of tourists.

Tourism is very essential to Nigeria as a nation, more especially that the performance of the extractive industry has been on decline in the past few years. There is a growing conscious that the tourism industry can offer a complementary, potential avenue for boosting a nation's earnings, To recover from the decline in tourist visitations caused by security challenges in Nigeria, the private sector at the

affected destinations should reduce prices and offer a variety of incentives to bring the tourists back to the destinations. Aggressive marketing campaigns and offering special events can go a long way to increase demand. On the part of governments, there should be concerted efforts to address security issues with a view to fighting terrorism to a halt.

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