



Poor road infrastructure: An impediment to tourism in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria is endowed with numerous tourism attractions sites spread across the country. Road transportation is the commonest means of transportation within Nigeria and good road infrastructure is required for smooth and safe motor vehicle transportation. As such, a good transportation network is imperative for promoting tourism in Nigeria. Although Nigeria has expansive road networks, they are in very poor condition because of the extent of damage and lack of maintenance and are mostly not motor vehicle conducive. These impediments affect tourism in Nigeria consequently impacting on the country's growth and development. This article looks at the poor road quality in Nigeria as an impediment to tourism growth in Nigeria. The researcher briefly highlights the causes, and offers solutions and recommendations on how to repair and maintain the roads in order to promote tourism, safety, tourism development and ultimately tourism sustainability.

Keywords: Tourism, destination, poor roads, tourist sites, Nigeria.

Introduction

Transportation plays a critical role in society and it is generally referred to as the driver of the economic development and growth of any country because a good road system is one of the major transportation systems that connects people and places (Vuchic, 2017). There are different types of transportation systems in Nigeria such as road transport, sea, railway, and air, of which the most commonly used is the road transport. This is primarily because of its accessibility, coverage and affordability in comparison to other transport modes (Yapicioglu et al., 2017). Hence, road transportation is the major source of transportation for tourists within the country (Adedeji et al., 2014). Transportation is essential for tourism as these two items are closely linked. Without a good and effective transportation network, it will be difficult for tourists to get to tourist attraction sites in the destination country (Le-Klaehn & Hall, 2015).

In Nigeria, road transportation is expected to enhance cultural, economic, and social interactions (Simon, 2002). Unfortunately, the road infrastructure and facilities are poor and this impacts of the growth and development of the tourism sector in Nigeria. This is a serious dilemma and huge impediment (Telfer & Sharpley, 2007). Tourism is defined "as a recreational activity that takes place in leisure areas and usually includes both recreation and tourism" (Boniface, 2016). Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity, which is a service based industry consisting of a number of tangible and intangible elements (Berno & Bricker, 2001). The tangible elements include basic infrastructure such as transportation, accommodation, and tourist sites, while the intangible elements include education, culture and relaxation (Omisore & Fadoyin, 2012). Hence, the absence or lack of basic infrastructure such as good roads would make the tour in any destination to be unsafe and uninteresting and as such tourist's would experience a failure to receive quality tourism services as required by their distinctive needs and wants.



Methodology

This paper utilised existing literature on road infrastructure and tourism for purposes of examining the impact and effect of poor road infrastructures on the tourism sector in Nigeria. Critical and in-depth review of literature were conducted to better understand the impact of bad roads, challenges of good roads and solutions proffered. Literature utilised such as inter alia peer reviewed academic journal articles and books, also revealed that the tourism industry would strategically introduce their clients-tourists to a country with good road facilities and networks as a desirable tourist destination. This is so because if the tourist is introduced to where the road infrastructure is poor he or she will likely not patronise the tourist company that made the introduction again. Over and above this, data from the literature provided some useful information which were relied upon and used to address the problem and proffer recommendations and possible solutions.

Problem statement

Transportation system particularly road transportation in Nigeria continues to be in an appalling state of decaying infrastructures, despite many promises of positive changes by successive governments over the years. The continuous abysmal situation requires immediate attention as the road transportation, as the commonest means of transportation in Nigeria, is essential for the growth and development of the nation. For example, good road transportation drives thriving tourism, which promotes socio-economic growth and development in any society or country as accessibility and movement is imperative for tourism. On the contrary, due to poor road network assets, facilities, systems and infrastructures in Nigeria, the tourist sector continues to suffer tremendous setbacks hence preventing much needed inflows of revenue from the tourism sector and consequently inhibiting growth and development especially in the rural and local areas where many of the tourists' attractions are located.

Literature review

Undoubtedly, infrastructure assets, particularly road infrastructures are levers for economic growth and development, hence a country's competitiveness heavily depends on the provision and maintenance of infrastructure assets (Stevens, 2006). The tourism sector, which is highly dependent on a good transportation system and mobility, is a source of revenue to many countries, including Nigeria (Sietchiping, 2012). Hence, road infrastructure is pivotal to a thriving and sustainable tourism industry in Nigeria, as it is globally.

Unfortunately, despite Nigeria being the biggest economy on the African continent, the country also has one of the poorest road infrastructure assets in the world and this phenomenally poor infrastructure has remained an impediment to development in the country (Okojie, 2009) and will invariably damage prospects for tourism growth if left unattended to

There are many contributing factors responsible for the poor road infrastructure assets in Nigeria, some of which are decades of sub-optimal investment, poor maintenance culture and the most importantly, "...that the required infrastructure investments could not be accommodated within the available fiscal space as a result of budgetary constraints have all contributed to the Nigerian infrastructure deficit" (Soyeju, 2013). Against the backdrop of these constraints, it is apt to assert that most of the existing roads across the Nigerian landscape are generally in a decrepit state and absurdly inadequate because they make road transportation a herculean task and hence bad for business and other activities in the country. It is also important to note that due to the continuous astronomical increase in the number of vehicles plying the roads coupled with the inability of the government to provide other viable means of transportation and/or to maintain old roads and create more quality road networks, the demand for road infrastructure assets and services has grown hugely out-stripping the supply capacity of the existing roads across the country.



Road infrastructure has a remarkable effect on tourism systems, and accessibility is also predicated on good road infrastructure and networks (Tóth & Dávid, 2013). If the roads are bad, tourists will not be able to have easy access to tourist sites in the destination countries (Archer et al., 2005). This, will, undoubtedly have effects on people whose major source of livelihood is from the jobs and revenue generated as a result of tourism.

A good and effective transportation network is also a good marketing strategy for the traveling agencies that facilitate travels and organise tourism activities for individuals and organisation (Middleton et al., 2009).

Good road infrastructure serves as an integral link between transportation, product of tourism and the tourism market (Cooper & Hall, 2007). The provision of good road infrastructure will enable efficient and effective transportation which is the catalyst factor for the sustainability of tourism system without which tourism cannot survive (Omisore & Fadoyin, 2012). Therefore, there is need for the development of functioning and well-maintained road infrastructures, assets and facilities. These can be achieved through proper planning based on government policy that speaks to ensuring that the road network and infrastructure are always well maintained.

The effect of Poor Road Assets and Services on Tourism

Road transportation is one of the viable modes of transport for taking tourists to different destinations and places where they want to visit and experience novel things (Sorupia, 2005). This is said against the backdrop that good road infrastructure makes tourists enjoy their stay wherever they travel to because they are able to easily access the various tourist attractions (Prideaux, 2000) and feel safer in their journeys. However, the inability of tourists to travel to preferred destinations as a result of poor road transportation automatically inhibits the movement of tourists which might result in the tourists seeking alternative destinations where the road network is conducive for tourism (Pandey, 2018).

Road transportation plays a significant role in destination development as well as in the selection of destinations by intending tourists (Prideaux, 2010). In Nigeria, poor road assets and infrastructures are inhibiting tourists from visiting Nigeria despite the fact that Nigeria has numerous tourists' destinations spread through the landscape of the country (Abegunde, 2011). Furthermore, part of the preliminary planning of tourists prior to touring is to determine the means and accessibility of transportation to their proposed tourist sites. Similarly, the video clips on the international news media showing the poor and dilapidated states and conditions of road infrastructure in Nigeria paint an unappealing picture which can deter potential tourists from visiting Nigeria.

In addition, considering the degrading state of the road network assets in Nigeria, tourists' expenditure on transportation is likely to increase due to the distance and time to be consumed before being able to visit different tourists' destinations in the country. Undoubtedly, this poor road network will generally lead to increased transport access costs and represents a significant factor in total holiday cost for the tourists

Good Road Transportation Facilities-Impetus for Boosting Tourism in Nigeria

A respectable road network to the tourist sites is important because the more tourists visit places of interests for purposes of recreation and relaxation, the more revenue is being generated towards tourism growth and development. To this end, a sustainable tourism is highly dependent on the provision of very good road network and efficient transportation systems. These are unique infrastructure assets and amenities required for continuous patronage to tourist sites. More importantly, "transportation is inevitable for effective socio-economic interaction, cultural integration and overall regional development of the built environment" (Omisore & Fadoyin, 2012). More importantly, existing literature on tourism has



shown that the goodness and provision of state of the art of transportation facilities have huge effects on the level of patronage of tourism sites at the destination country (Omisore & Fadoyin, 2012).

For tourism to thrive in Nigeria, the country needs to invest heavily on road infrastructure especially in maintenance, improvement and construction of new roads. This would, undoubtedly enhance the level of patronage of beautiful tourist sites and have remarkable in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country considering that through this, Nigeria would earn foreign money revenue from international visitors visiting the country as tourists. In the words of Ayeni (2008), "...the economy of the nation will be boosted through the influx of tourists thereby increasing the foreign exchange value, the publicity of the attraction, product, services consumption and exploitation by the provision of a ready market for local products, goods and services."

The growth of the tourism industry in Nigeria depends mainly on patronage. The patronage to these tourist sites can therefore be enhanced through the provision of a well maintained and functioning transportation networks in which all stakeholders play a part and buy-in to the notion of tourism development (Nicolaidis, 2015). A functioning transport system includes the provision of roadways, railways, water ways and where necessary airways, in order to enhance the level of patronage of potential and existing tourists to tourism sites.

Conclusion

The state and condition of the road network, infrastructure, assets and facilities in Nigeria are extremely dire and this is having a negative impact on virtually all socio-economic activities in the country. Because of its international flavor, tourism is one of the means of a country to grow its economy and enhance development. For tourism to thrive and flourish, good road infrastructure is imperative. Thus, by identifying poor road infrastructures as the bane of tourism in Nigeria, it is anticipated that urgent action will be initiated by the government to do everything necessary to improve, rehabilitate and construct good road networks in the country which will translate into increase influx of tourists to the country and its positive impacts to the nation. For the competitiveness of the Nigerian tourism industry to be maintained, the state and other stakeholders should recognize the fact that tourism, as unique a phenomenon, depends on many factors, and that it has huge potential to develop the country. Nigeria will need to elevate its standing on the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) and this can be done to an extent by improving the quality of its many roads leading to tourist sites.

Recommendations

Nigeria government needs to invest heavily on road network infrastructure to repair, maintain, rehabilitate all roads and routes leading to tourism sites in Nigeria. Private and public sectors collaboration and partnership with strong government coordination are required to make this achievable and as such, government should involve the private sector in partnering with them to be providing the necessary skills and capacity in building state of the art road infrastructure and also be part of the maintenance and refurbishment of roads leading to tourism sites. Preventing wearing out therefore presupposes that the roads should be well maintained to meet international standards. A multi-stakeholder forum is needed to deal with transportation and other issues (Nicolaidis, 2015). Rehabilitation of the roads are also pivotal because it is important to constantly upgrade the roads and any damaged or falling bridge road should be promptly attended to so as not to end up in state of total disrepair or damage. More importantly, the development of road infrastructure for purposes of tourism, undoubtedly make tourists want to visit the desired sites and this will attract development to the areas and communities and invariably leads to sustainability.



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