



A study of Factors Impacting Ocean Tourism in the Presence of Government Regulations in Nigeria

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Abstract

Ocean tourism in Nigeria remains undeveloped despite its potential, profitability, and sustainability. The industry's current situation is attributed to factors that affect and impact it in the presence of government regulations. The importance of ocean tourism in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised due to the fact that it brings economic diversification, job creation, foreign exchange earnings, infrastructure development, cultural exchange, environmental awareness and conversation, community development, promotion of local business, and global visibility. Factors that impact ocean tourism in Nigeria include infrastructure, safety and security, environmental quality, regulatory framework, marketing and promotion, cultural and heritage attractions, accessibility, tourist facilities, political stability, and economic factors. Developing ocean tourism in Nigeria would considerably be a game changer in improving economic activities that create a lot of business opportunities.

Keywords: *Community Development; Economic Diversification; Infrastructure; Job Creations; Ocean Tourism*

Introduction

Ocean tourism in Nigeria is characterised by a long history and has become a strong component of the Nigerian blue economy, with sustainable fishing and aquaculture (SFA), shipping and maritime transport (SMT), and renewable marine energy (RME) (Oladele, Digun-Aweto & Van Der Merwe 2018).

The importance of the contribution of ocean tourism to the economy of Nigeria cannot be overemphasised owing to the fact that it has been able to create multiple jobs, diversify the tourism industry, open up new partners and partnerships, as well as new pathways of opportunities (Elisha, 2019).

In this context, a number of factors influence ocean tourism in Nigeria, impacting its potential and opportunities while also posing challenges (Osuji & Agbakwuru, 2024). These uncertainties both have positive and negative impacts, opening up the industry to potential investors to decide what kind of investment can be done, the extent of investment, and the return on investment (Ateme *et al.*, 2021).

Government regulations in Nigeria impact ocean tourism by ensuring safety and environmental sustainability, but they can also increase operational costs and create bureaucratic hurdles for businesses, potentially deterring investment and limiting the growth of tourism infrastructure (Osuji & Agbakwuru, 2024).

The research focuses on the examination and evaluation of factors impacting ocean tourism in Nigeria in the presence of government regulations.

Literature Review

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Ocean Tourism in Nigeria

Nigeria boasts a stunning 852-kilometer Atlantic coastline, rich with the potential for ocean tourism. Scuba diving, surfing, boat tours, and exploring the diverse marine life are just a few possibilities. However, this sector remains underdeveloped due to numerous factors, situations, and instances that have plagued the ocean tourism industry (Oladele, Digun-Aweto & Van Der Merwe, 2018).

Despite its natural beauty, Nigeria hasn't fully tapped into ocean tourism compared to other coastal nations. Experts believe this is due to a lack of infrastructure and development specifically geared toward tourists. Additionally, regulations, while crucial for environmental protection and tourist safety, can sometimes be bureaucratic and stifle innovation (Oladele, Digun-Aweto & Van Der Merwe, 2018).

There are positive signs, though. The Nigerian government recognises the potential of ocean tourism and is working toward creating a more sustainable "blue economy." This could involve streamlining regulations, promoting responsible tourism practices, and investing in coastal infrastructure (Uduma-Olugu & Onukwube, 2015).

With careful planning and development, Nigeria's ocean tourism industry has the potential to flourish, benefiting the economy and showcasing the country's natural wonders (Jamoh, 2023).

Economic Diversification

Nigeria's overreliance on oil can be a drag on its economic health. Ocean tourism offers a refreshing alternative, generating significant income and diversifying the economy. By attracting international visitors who spend money on travel, food, and activities, it loosens the grip of oil dependence. This diversification fosters a more balanced and resilient economic system, paving the way for long-term sustainable growth and increased national prosperity (Elegbede, 2023).

Job Creation

Tourism acts as lifeblood for coastal communities in Nigeria. It throws open doors to a wide range of jobs in hotels, transport, water sports, and shops. This surge in employment translates directly to improved living standards for residents, with more money flowing into the local economy. Tourists act as a catalyst, boosting infrastructure, services, and overall development, ultimately elevating the quality of life for those who call the coast home (Oladele, Digun-Aweto & Van Der Merwe, 2018).

Foreign Exchange Earnings

Tourists enhance the national economy by spending on accommodation, activities, and food injecting valuable foreign currency. This influx bolsters foreign exchange reserves, buffering against economic fluctuations and strengthening financial stability. Moreover, the increased flow of foreign currency helps stabilise the national currency, boosting economic confidence and reducing vulnerability to external shocks. This financial boost is essential for fostering sustainable economic growth and creating a more resilient economic landscape for Nigeria (Oladele, Digun-Aweto & Van Der Merwe, 2018).

Infrastructures Development

Investments in infrastructure like roads, airports, and ports are prioritised to support tourist needs, improving connectivity and accessibility to diverse destinations. This upgraded infrastructure not only enhances transportation for tourists, reducing travel times, but also benefits local residents by facilitating easier movement of goods and services. Furthermore, these improvements attract additional investments, stimulate local economies, and foster overall regional development, benefiting both tourists and the local community alike (Maza, 2024).

Cultural Exchange

Ocean tourism promotes cultural exchange by offering tourists opportunities to engage deeply with Nigeria's diverse heritage and traditions. This interaction cultivates mutual understanding and appreciation between Nigerians and global visitors. Through experiences like sampling local cuisine,

exploring traditional arts, and participating in cultural festivals, tourists gain profound insights into Nigeria's distinct cultural identity. This exchange enriches travel experiences while fostering global awareness and respect for cultural diversity, thereby strengthening cross-cultural encouraging international cooperation (Brett, 2021).

Environmental Awareness and Conversation

Tourism activities are essential for emphasizing the importance of preserving natural habitats and marine life. By showcasing the beauty and ecological value of Nigeria's coastal ecosystems, tourism enhances environmental awareness among visitors and local communities. This awareness frequently inspires sustainable initiatives such as conservation efforts, pollution reduction, and habitat restoration. Ultimately, tourism plays a pivotal role in advocating for the long-term protection of Nigeria's coastal environments, safeguarding their biodiversity and ecological well-being for future generations (Osuji & Agbakwuru, 2024).

Community Development

Tourism revenue can be purposefully redirected into local communities to improve vital services like education, healthcare, and public infrastructure. This comprehensive approach enhances residents' quality of life, supporting sustainable development and prosperity. By investing tourism proceeds in community-led projects, governments and stakeholders broaden the positive impact beyond economic benefits, contributing to societal well-being and fostering future opportunities (Okosodo, 2019).

Promotion of Local Business

Tourists significantly contribute to local economies by supporting businesses through their purchases of goods and services. This assistance not only increases sales for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) but also promotes entrepreneurial activities within communities. By stimulating demand for local products and services, tourists play a crucial role in diversifying and strengthening the economy. This economic activity leads to job creation, boosts competitiveness, and promotes sustainable development, benefiting both businesses and the overall community (Gbadegesin & Akintola, 2021).

Global Visibility

A vibrant tourism sector elevates Nigeria's international reputation, drawing increased numbers of global visitors and investors. This enhanced global image not only promotes economic growth through heightened tourism revenue but also fosters broader social advantages. It can stimulate infrastructure development, spur job creation, and encourage cultural exchange.

Furthermore, a positive perception of Nigeria as a tourist destination can attract diverse investments across various sectors, contributing to long-term economic stability and societal advancement (Ibrahim, 2018).

The importance of ocean tourism is demonstrated in various diversifications and instances, giving more insights into how it can affect the immediate environment and community. However, research has shown that certain factors affect and impact ocean tourism in Nigeria; these further determine a lot, including its feasibility, profitability, potential, and sustainability.

Factors Impacting Ocean Tourism in Nigeria

The ocean tourism in Nigeria has high potential, profitability, and sustainability owing to so many different considerations; however, certain factors have shown over time to impact the potential, profitability, and sustainability of ocean tourism in Nigeria. While some place emphasis on the strengths that showcase opportunities for ocean tourism, others shed light on the weaknesses that expose the threat (Oladele & Digun-Aweto, 2018; Yusuff & Aliu, 2019; Ashikodi, 2010; Oladokun, Adedara & Adedadamola, 2015).

Infrastructure

Well-maintained infrastructure such as ports, marinas, and efficient transportation networks are crucial for seamless access to Nigeria's coastal destinations. These components are vital for facilitating tourism, enabling maritime operations, and improving the overall visitor experience along the coast (Oladele & Digun-Aweto, 2018).

Safety and Security

Tourists' perceptions of safety and security significantly influence their confidence in exploring Nigeria's coastal regions. Implementing robust measures against piracy and other maritime risks reassures visitors, ensuring they enjoy a safe and pleasant experience. This sense of security promotes tourism growth by attracting more visitors who seek protected and secure environments for their oceanic adventures and leisure activities (Yusuff & Aliu, 2019).

Environmental Quality

The condition and conservation of marine ecosystems and beaches significantly influence tourists' satisfaction and attraction. Maintaining these environments not only enhances their visual appeal but also enriches visitors' experiences, promoting environmental stewardship and fostering sustainable tourism practices for future generations to appreciate (Oladokun, Adedara & Adedadamola, 2015).

Regulatory Framework

It is essential to have regulations that effectively balance environmental conservation with tourism promotion to achieve sustainable growth. These regulations, with clear guidelines and incentives, maintain ecological integrity while encouraging responsible tourism practices. This approach ensures that tourism development contributes positively to the natural environment, safeguarding resources for future generations (Ashikodi, 2010).

Marketing and Promotion

Effective marketing strategies are crucial for promoting Nigeria's coastal attractions and attracting tourists. These initiatives showcase the region's diverse offerings, enhance visibility on national and global stages, and ultimately stimulate visitor interest and tourism revenues, fostering sustainable economic development (Panwanitdumrong & Chen, 2021).

Cultural and Heritage Attractions

Unique cultural experiences and historical sites along Nigeria's coast significantly enhance the appeal of ocean tourism. Visitors can explore rich traditions, vibrant festivals, and diverse culinary offerings that reflect the country's heritage. Historical landmarks and coastal towns provide insights into Nigeria's past, adding depth to the tourist experience. These cultural and historical attractions not only draw tourists but also promote a deeper appreciation for Nigeria's rich and diverse heritage (Dieke, 2020).

Accessibility

Efficient transportation and connectivity to coastal regions, supported by robust road networks and nearby airports, significantly influence visitor numbers. These infrastructure improvements not only make tourist destinations more accessible but also enhance the overall attractiveness of Nigeria's coastal locales. Enhanced connectivity provides a smoother travel experience, enticing more tourists to discover and appreciate the diverse attractions along the country's coastlines (Oladele & Digun-Aweto, 2018).

Tourist Facility

The presence and standard of accommodation, dining choices, recreational offerings, and tourist facilities significantly mould visitors' experiences and satisfaction levels. These elements are pivotal in ensuring comfort, enjoyment, and convenience, thereby impacting how tourists perceive Nigeria's coastal destinations and their inclination to revisit or endorse the region to others (Panwanitdumrong & Chen, 2021).

Political Stability

Political stability and a favourable business climate are essential for attracting investments and fostering tourism growth. A steady political environment builds confidence among investors and stakeholders, motivating them to invest in infrastructure development and promote tourist destinations. This supportive atmosphere not only facilitates sustainable tourism initiatives but also strengthens Nigeria's reputation as a dependable and appealing destination for visitors from both within the country and abroad (Yusuff & Aliu, 2019).

Economic Factors

Several factors, such as exchange rate fluctuations, levels of disposable income, and the overall economic environment, significantly influence tourists' spending patterns and decisions regarding travel. Exchange rate changes can affect travel costs and destination preferences, while disposable income dictates the amount tourists can allocate to leisure activities. Moreover, economic conditions like employment stability and consumer confidence also shape tourists' willingness and financial capability to participate in travel and tourism activities (Dieke, 2020).

These factors have a way of impacting ocean tourism in Nigeria, considering diversity, opportunities, potential, profitability, and sustainability. In addition to this, government regulations become very important due to the fact that they play a significant role in the applications of these factors into reality.

Role of Government Regulation

Government regulations are crucial in moulding the framework of ocean tourism in Nigeria, exerting influence over several factors that can either support or impede its development and long-term viability. Initially, safety and security regulations are paramount; however, Nigeria's coastal regions encounter issues like piracy and maritime risks, which may dissuade tourists without proper management. Government initiatives such as patrols and security protocols are vital for reassuring tourists and cultivating a secure environment for oceanic pursuits (Ateme, 2021).

Additionally, environmental regulations play a crucial role in safeguarding marine ecosystems and coastal environments. Policies focused on conservation, waste management, and sustainable practices are essential to prevent the degradation of natural habitats and minimise disruptions to marine life. These measures not only uphold the ecological balance of Nigeria's coastal regions but also amplify their attractiveness as sustainable tourism hubs (Christiana, Akpoghomeh & Mbee, 2024).

Regulations pertaining to infrastructure are also crucial. Maintaining high standards for ports, marinas, and transportation networks is vital in ensuring easy access to coastal destinations. Government funding directed towards infrastructure development, underpinned by transparent regulations and strategic planning, enhances connectivity and enriches the overall visitor experience (Anammah & Ezenyinmulu, 2024).

Furthermore, regulatory frameworks that foster tourism development while balancing community interests are essential. Land use, zoning, and tourism development incentives can significantly influence the development and management of coastal areas. Engaging local communities and incorporating their input into regulatory processes ensure that tourism activities benefit local stakeholders and promote sustainable, inclusive development (Folami, 2017).

Effective government regulations regarding safety, environmental protection, infrastructure, and community engagement are vital for fostering a favourable environment for ocean tourism in Nigeria. By addressing these aspects, regulations can promote sustainable growth, improve visitor experiences, and optimise the economic and social benefits of ocean tourism for the nation (Anammah and Ezenyinmulu, 2024).

DISCUSSION

In retrospect, the importance of ocean tourism in Nigeria towards its prospects, opportunities, profitability and sustainability is crucial towards the development of the industry and its impact on the overall economy of Nigeria. Ocean tourism is highly important for Nigeria, providing numerous

economic, social, and environmental benefits. It aids in economic diversification by reducing reliance on oil exports and generating significant revenue through foreign exchange.

This sector also creates jobs, stimulating local economies and enhancing living standards, particularly in coastal areas. Additionally, ocean tourism encourages cultural exchange and environmental awareness, fostering a greater appreciation for Nigeria's rich heritage and natural beauty (Okosodo, 2019).

Multiple factors impact the growth and sustainability of ocean tourism in Nigeria. Key infrastructure elements, such as ports, marinas, and transportation networks, are essential for ensuring access to coastal destinations and enhancing the visitor experience. Safety and security are critical, as issues like piracy and maritime risks can discourage tourists.

The environmental quality, including the cleanliness and conservation of marine ecosystems and beaches, is also crucial for attracting and satisfying visitors. Additionally, effective marketing and promotion of Nigeria's coastal attractions are vital for attracting tourists (Yusuff & Aliu, 2019).

Government regulations intersect with these factors and play a crucial role in shaping the ocean tourism landscape. Safety and security regulations implement measures to combat piracy and maritime risks, thus instilling confidence among tourists. Environmental regulations protect marine ecosystems and coastal environments, promoting sustainable tourism practices and preserving natural habitats.

Additionally, infrastructure regulations guide the development and maintenance of essential facilities, enhancing connectivity and access to coastal areas (Panwanitdumrong & Chen, 2021).

Furthermore, regulatory frameworks that balance tourism development with community interests are essential. Regulations on land use, zoning, and development incentives influence the management of coastal areas, ensuring local stakeholders benefit and tourism growth remains inclusive and sustainable.

Engaging the community in regulatory processes ensures tourism activities align with local needs and priorities, fostering a sense of ownership and support for tourism initiatives

Overall, the interaction between the significance of ocean tourism, the influencing factors, and the role of government regulation is crucial for the sustainable growth of this sector in Nigeria. Effective regulations address these key factors, creating a favourable environment for ocean tourism that maximises economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Limitations

The study comes with its own peculiar limitations, due to the Nigerian context. Firstly, challenges in data availability and reliability arise due to potentially inconsistent or outdated tourism data in Nigeria, which can limit the accuracy of findings and hinder a comprehensive understanding of recent trends and patterns.

Secondly, analysing regulatory complexities and variations can be challenging, as tourism regulations may differ across states and regions, making it difficult to draw generalised conclusions that apply nationwide. This complexity may lead to findings that do not fully capture localised impacts.

Lastly, limitations in scope concerning environmental and socio-economic factors may impact the study, as it might not fully encompass the wider environmental and social effects of tourism regulations. As a result, this could restrict the study's capacity to capture the complete range of positive and negative implications for the sustainability of ocean tourism and community development.

This study urges policymakers to frame and adhere to more sustainable industrial practices and foster green financing. On the one hand, industries should transition to clean energy solutions, modern technologies, and recycling approaches. On the other hand, industries should follow certain best practices and increase their involvement in community development programs, skill enhancement programs, R&D activities, incubator centres, etc.

Conclusion

Ocean tourism in Nigeria holds significant potential, promising profitability and sustainability. However, its future relies heavily on various factors such as infrastructure development, safety and security, environmental quality, and a strong regulatory framework. Success in this sector also depends on effective marketing, cultural preservation, accessibility, tourist facilities, political stability, and favourable economic conditions. Comprehensive attention to these elements is essential to unlocking the full potential of Nigeria's ocean tourism.

Government regulations play a critical role, influencing how these factors impact the industry's development and sustainability. Currently, ocean tourism in Nigeria remains underdeveloped, limiting the country's ability to fully harness its economic, social, and environmental benefits. Addressing regulatory challenges and implementing supportive measures are crucial for growth.

Moreover, there is significant opportunity for Nigeria to integrate modern technology and innovative business practices to elevate ocean tourism. Embracing these advancements could improve visitor experiences, boost profitability, and promote sustainable development, ensuring the sector reaches its full potential, considering future expansion and community.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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