

Human Resource Management and Development of the Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Nigeria

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Abstract

Tourism as an activity of movement and discovery of new places, peoples and its affiliates has always been with man. This inherent multifaceted activity generates enormous income among nations and contributes to national GDP more than certain sectors of a nation's economy when it is properly harnessed, deliberately planned, positioned and repositioned over time. Most times, the key to the success of tourism amongst other sectors has been human resource management. The outcome of human resources if untapped, mismanaged and underutilized is counterproductive to growth and development in all ramifications. This paper, therefore, relies on content analyses of secondary documents to discuss the impact of human resources management on the development of the tourism and hospitality industry in Nigeria. The study finds that human resource management is essential for the successful development of any sector of the nation's economy and recommends amongst other things the professionalization and training of personnel in the tourism industry. This will enhance the growth of the industry and attract international and local tourists to Nigeria; help in job creation, increase foreign exchange earnings and contributes to the socio-economic development of the nation.

Key words: tourism; tourism destination; tourism system; motivation; human resource, management

Introduction

The movement and discovery of new places and people known in a simple form as tourism has become a major factor in the world economic development. Its global impact is enormous in multiplier terms. Despite the security challenges, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2008) noted the gigantic progress in world's tourism as it contributes about 10.3% of world gross domestic product; with an annual turnover of about \$87 billion (US); and that the world travel and tourism industry supports about 234 million jobs which is about 8.7% of total world employment.

Despite this information, the potentials from the tourism sector are greater than can be imagined; especially in developing nations dependent on very lean sources for national income. Nigeria has sought to key into this industry in recent years through government and non-governmental participations. These stakeholders range from the National Tourism Development Cooperation (NTDC), Federal and States Ministries of Culture, National Parks Commission, Nigeria Conservative Fund, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and local and foreign investors in the sector.

The extent of having vast return on investment in the tourism industry at any given period is anchored on facilities, infrastructural facilities and policies connected with the industry and adequately trained manpower to manage the sector effectively. It is clear that tourism is a business of human relations. Therefore, availability of competent personnel in the tourism industry amongst other factors translates to sustained socio-economic growth and development. In Nigeria, this is obvious given that her diverse people and culture with its vast natural resources and sites form a basis to achieve multi-sectorial growth and

development. To this end the human resource problems facing the tourism sector are examined.

The attraction of people to any tourism destination anywhere in the world lies on multiple factors. These are infrastructures - roads, healthcare system, transport, hotel, restaurants, recreation facilities, communication, and financial intermediation, as the exchange of currencies, credit cards among other things; and competent managers who can stand proudly up to say “we are here; we have what will make you happy! please come over”. The prevailing public policies and the human resources available in the tourism industry are at the apex of the requirements. This is besides peace and security that crowns it all.

In specific terms, Nigerian tourism development has gone through many phases. Before the arrival of the colonialist, we indeed had our diverse cultures, cultural sites, natural habitats from the mangrove swamps and forest in the Niger Delta region in the south to the flat savannah grassland in the north. Nigeria though geopolitically detached and not infrastructural developed, had tourism in practice in the pre-colonial and colonial era. This is displayed in the continuous attempt to preserve our objects of art, cultural heritage, forest as games reserve and develop new tourist destination as the Obudu Cattle Ranch and TINAPA holiday resort all in the Cross River State, amongst other sites and tourist destination locations across Nigeria. The scope of Nigeria’s tourism is as great as her land mass and size, as all 36 states and the federal capital territory, Abuja have tourist sites. The socio-economic benefits in the short and long run are determined by the extent of proper synergy of human and material resources already endowed upon Nigeria.

Okpoko and Okpoko (2002) and Okpoko (2006) identified some key elements that affect or influences tourism development and human resources as the level of economic and infrastructure development in the country (transportation – railways, roads, water navigation, and air services; communication and accommodation); the amount of capital investment by public and private investors in the sector; aggressiveness of marketing and sales programmes; socio-political stability; and the herd of qualified management and skilled personnel. To this end the problems of tourism development in Nigeria under study are summarized as the lack of investments in tourism projects; inadequate promotion and information; Lack of tourist destination managers (poor human resources management); negligence by the governments (federal, state and local); and other stakeholders; terrorism and insurgency; and militancy and kidnapping; and human resource management needs which forms the focus of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Human resource is essential for the success of any given business venture. When the right caliber of personnel are not available in any business venture, that business falters, fails and dies, and that particular sector of the economy remains underdeveloped. This study looks at the manpower needs of the tourism and hospitality industry in Nigeria and how this has affected the development of the sector. In doing this, the following problems were raised and addressed: what are the manpower needs of the tourism and hospitality industry in Nigeria? Are these manpower needs available in the country? What are the impacts of the absence of the right caliber of personnel on the development of the sector? And what should be done to remedy the situation so that the sector can contribute to the socio-economic development of the country?

Theoretical Framework

Tourism as an academic field of study is interdisciplinary in nature, and it derives some of its theories from other disciplines. Theories of economic development, and a good number of theories have been advanced to explain the process of economic development in society, especially the balanced and unbalanced growth approaches (Nafziger, 1997), and retention of a workforce within any given sector of the economy through juicy and equitable reward system and satisfaction of expectations (Vroom, 1964).

The first theory is examined and explained within the features of tourism development as it borders on the basis of general economic development. The balanced and unbalanced growth approaches scrutinize whether development occurs across all sectors of the economy or whether there is development in a few leading sectors that will act as a springboard for the development across the economy as a whole. To this end, the balance growth theory advocates that it is not possible to overcome the natural forces in a stagnant economy by investing in and developing only a few export sectors. This is the situation with Nigeria, which has operated as a mono-economy since independence in 1960.

Cooper et al. (2008) who discussed these theories argued that unbalanced growth at where investment occurs in just a few leading sectors is far more achievable with resources of developing countries and that these leading sectors will drag the other sectors up eventually. This is evident as the recent interest and investment across the South-South State of Cross River with the development of the TINAPA Holiday Resort in Calabar, and the Obudu Cattle Ranch Reserve in Obudu; and developments in other geo-political zones in the country. The second theory used in this study which is within the human resource management context is the expectancy theory. This is predicated on the idea that people are influenced by the expected result of their action. Vroom (1964) anchors this on motivation as a function of performance. Though expectancy theory cannot be linked to a single scholar, Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory aimed specifically at work motivation. His model is based on three key variables: valence, instrumentality and expectancy. Based on this theory, managers should give attention to a number of factors including the following:

- (1). Use rewards appropriate in terms of individual's performance. High incomes with high fringe benefits that attract the required workforce should be used.
- (2). Attempt should be made to establish a clear relationship between efforts and benefits, especially to make workers perceive a clear relationship between their performances and rewards.
- (3). Establish clear procedures for the evaluation of individual levels of performance.
- (4). Pay attention to intervening variables such as amities and traits, role perception, organization procedures and support facilities.

Based on the above, the tourism sector in Nigeria as any other around the world is sustained by the caliber of human resources available in them at all levels and their proper management. Tacitly, the trends of the human relations movement of the early 20th century, researcher such as Abraham Maslow, Elton Mayo, Mary Parker Follet, and David McClelland formed the basis for studies and created business values through the strategic management of the workforce. This is evident due to globalization trends and issues of diversification of the economies of the developing countries of the world.

Conceptual Clarification

Tourism

Scholars, researchers and professionals in the field of tourism and beyond have accepted that, the concept “tourism” is conceptually weak and ambiguous. Though Cooper et al (2008) have argued that tourism lacks the basic rigors and focus common in the academic field of study, yet it can be classified as an interdisciplinary discipline and therefore conceptually diverse in explanation. Tourism is coined from the word ‘tour’ which connotes movement. This could be moving for different purposes, but acceptable tourism is a means to an end. In more concise form, tourism arises out of the movement of people to and from where they stay, to various places or destinations furthermore, there are two important elements in tourism - the journey to a destination and the stay (including activities) at the destination. The journey and stay take place outside the usual environment or normal places of residence and work; therefore, tourism gives rise to activities that are distinct from those at resident and work places. Indeed most times, the movement to destinations is temporary and short in outlook, and this could be within (domestic) or outside (international) a country. Tourism in terms of purpose could be for leisure and recreation i.e. holiday, sport, cultural, visiting friends and relatives. It could also be for study, health, and business and professional purposes. In Nigeria, this word is not common but it is practiced inadvertently.

Tourism System

According to Cooper et al. (2008), all other academic disciplines view the activity of tourism as an application of their own ideas and concepts. In order to avoid a somersault of ideas, they anchored this subject matter on the Leiper’s model (1990). Leiper’s model takes into account many issues that border on the activity of tourist. Given this, the model considers a range of an external environment such as the society, its culture and norms; its politics and political processes; and the economy as the constituent elements and determinants of tourism.

Human Resource Management

Human resource management has been described in its basic form as the discipline that focuses on finding and keeping the best employees and focuses on employees as the foremost resource in any enterprise. The leading firms whether in the public or the private sector in the world are driven by great minds. To this end, Greer (2001) is of the opinion that human resource management aims primarily at ensuring that any given organization has in place, the people's capabilities and culture to support its strategic direction or objectives. Thus, human resource management is the process of getting the best work from each employee by providing the right incentives and job environment, all with the goal of meeting the objectives of the organization. Within this context, the Nigerian tourism industry aided by good policies and infrastructural development can be a money spinner for the economy, if and only if the industry is driven by the right kind of personnel in all its ramifications.

Human Resources and Tourism Development in Nigeria

Tourism in Nigeria has developed through various phases of our national history. At the governmental level, the development of tourist’s facilities was taken in a planned manner from the colonial era. This was followed-up with the colonist laying the general ground-work to preserve our national arts and cultural heritage, as well as our natural forest and game reserves.

As noted by Archibong (2004), tourism in Nigeria centers largely on events due to the country’s ethnic diversities and wide geographical features which include rain forest, savannah, waterfalls and other natural attractions. These were all in existence before the

arrival of the colonist in the 18th century. The tourist sites in Nigeria including festivals and cultural celebrations (such as durbar festivals in the north; the Oshun festival of Oshogbo in the west; the offala festival in the east), the nation's national parks located in old Oyo, Yankari; Cross River, Kamuku and Kainji. And new ones at Gumti-Ghasaka, Mambilla Plateau Aso rock in Suleja, Kwa water falls in Cross River, and museums amongst many-natural attractions, were preserved and developed for tourism purposes. The industry by the estimates of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2007) put Nigeria's revenue related to tourism and travel at over \$10 billion (US) dollars; and is approximately 6% of the nation's GDP per annum. The potentials are enormous in the terms of diversification of the Nigerian economy, but the tourism industry suffers from the country's epileptic power supply and archaic railways, poor roads and costly air travel and very recently terrorism. The human resources management aspect within the context of this study requires that we identify the manpower needs that can support the industry, and that can give to the stakeholders within the sector and to the government the highest returns on investments. Besides the tourism sites which have tourism guides and other operators who make up the workforce, the accommodation/restaurants and transportation sectors are identified as vital to the industry.

As Wanhill (2003) observed, there are local and global forces representing historical, political, economic, socio-cultural and technological factors that influence the tourism sector, and the interplay of these forces (environmental determinants) is the main cause of the sector's heterogeneity. Accommodation for instance covers hotels, guest houses, farmhouse accommodation, bed and breakfast establishments and composites; the human resources available needs improvements in their productivity through the use of technology, and training for efficient and management effectiveness. Most of the accommodation facilities (70%) are privately owned since after the strong push by the winds of privatization in the late 1990s; hence there is the challenge of human resources with the professional aura within the sector.

The transport sector in Nigeria is highly lopsided with most movement by roads, few by air, sea and rail. The use of the railway system which is solely owned by government has declined since the late 1980s and its deliberate usage in the tourism industry very minimal. The personnel involved in the transportation and accommodation sectors and the other support services of the tourism industry are most times in the private sector. The peculiarities of those involved are that they are highly underemployed in terms of wages, placement and conditions of service; there is a wide gap between workers who are undereducated and unprepared for jobs in the contemporary business environment and few thoroughly bred professionals in the hospitality and tourism industry; the absence of policy friendly conditions of services i.e. hiring, safety, unionization, compensation, health, pension standards, etc. The commercial cities of Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Aba, amongst others in Nigeria, which ought to have measures of standardized operations as per personnel in the tourism and hospitality industry are in reality very few and limited by international standards hence the need to look at the manpower needs of the tourism sector in Nigeria.

What are the Manpower Needs of the Tourism Industry in Nigeria?

People make a business successful. Human resource management is the direction of people to achieve desired goals within an organization. It starts with matching the people within the workforce with their positions when they are employed, and motivating them toward a full realization of their potentialities and at the same time achieve organizational goals or objectives. Since the right caliber of a workforce is essential for the achievement of

organizational goals, the first question that comes to mind is: what caliber of manpower is required by the tourism industry? Does Nigeria have enough of it presently, if no why?

The manpower needs of a typical tourism and hospitality outfit will among other things include the following: graduates of tourism and hospitality management; bi-lingual graduates, bilingual secretaries and linguists; graduates of international relations; engineers (civil, electrical, mechanical, computer); medical personnel - doctors, nurses and technologists; marketers and business administrators; accountants; botanists and florists; security experts; geographers and environmentalists. All these are required at the West African School Certificate (WASC); Ordinary national Diploma (OND); Higher National Diploma (HND); Bachelor of Science (B. SC.); Bachelor of Arts (B.A.); Master of Science (M.Sc.); Master of Arts (M.A.) and at the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) levels. But most establishments in the hospitality industry do not have most of these manpower needs in their employment.

While most of these manpower needs are available in Nigeria, there is the acute absence of the graduates of tourism and hospitality management across the country. This is because the educational institutions charged with the training of this manpower only produce or train the middle level manpower needs of the industry and not for the high manpower needs of the sector. Only the polytechnics, in Nigeria, train people for the tourism and hospitality management industry in Nigeria and only very few polytechnics have the facilities to train this level of manpower need. The universities in the country have not really developed courses in tourism and hospitality management to train for the high level manpower needs of the industry because they have not recognized the potentials of tourism in contributing to national development. Even if they are to do so now, they would need to recruit foreign nationals into the departments if they are to produce high level manpower needs for the industry. Only very recently did a university in Nigeria – the Imo State University Owerri start a degree course in Catering and Hotel Management.

Secondly, only very few universities in Nigeria offer courses, in History and Archeology, which has relevance to tourism. Because history and archeology are not quite rewarding in terms of employment, only very few students register to study history when they cannot get admitted into other courses of study in the universities. This has forced the history departments to change the name from “Department of History” to “Department of History and Diplomatic Studies Departments” in order to attract students into the department. Most high level manpower found in the tourism sector trained abroad, and a good number of them are foreign nationals. Because the country cannot produce the right caliber of staff for the industry, most reputable hotels and tourist sites in the country are owned and managed by foreign nationals with Nigerians as supporting staffs. This is not good for the sector.

Nigeria also has very few bi-lingual graduates, bilingual secretaries, and linguists. Those available are not willing to take up employment in the tourism and hospitality industry because of the poor reward system in the sector. They would prefer jobs with some other private enterprises with appealing reward systems. So also are the other manpower needs of the industry - graduates of international relations, engineering, medicine, marketing, accountancy, botany (florists), security experts, geography and environmental sciences. When the universities come to realize the proper place of tourism in national development, they would develop academic disciplines to train the required manpower. When the required manpower is developed, this manpower will then develop the industry to be what it should be and to contribute to national development.

The next problem is the reward system in the industry. Investors in the industry do not want to hire trained staffs due to the high reward expected by the staffs. So to keep

down cost and maximize profits, investors would prefer employing local middle level manpower and use them in high level positions and on very low rewards. Investors would not want to train their staffs for their high level manpower needs for the fear of losing such staffs to other investors after training.

Another factor for the absence of qualified manpower for the industry is poor public perception of workers in the industry. These perceptions are based on cultural and traditional values of the society. Holidays and leisure are unknown to most Africans except during festivities. Any one that patronizes hotels and leisure parks within a local setting is usually seen as a societal misfit and a good-for-nothing. This has affected people in seeking employments in the sector until very recently, and also in their choice of tourism as a course of study. Even in the polytechnics that offer the course, only students with very weak academic backgrounds are found in the departments. They study the course as a last resort when admissions to other departments fail.

Do we have such calibers of staff in abundance?

To ensure that the sector has the required personnel, there is the need train those on the jobs already in academic institutions at home and abroad. There is also a need to establish academic departments in universities to train high level manpower for the sector and encourage people to study tourism and hospitality related courses, and to take up employment in the industry. This we know was done after the Local Government Reforms in Nigeria in 1976 for the local government administrative sector. Then, there is a need to make firms in the industry to endow chairs in the universities and polytechnics and to contribute at least 2% of their annual profits to institutions offering the courses. This will further help to develop a course of study and the industry in the country.

What do we do to retain the right caliber of manpower within the industry?

To retain the people already on the job, there is the need to give to the employees' good incentives to remain on the job when employed. An enhancement of their take home pay and their access to other fringe benefits would make the job more appealing to prospective applicants and help to change public perception of people who work in the industry, and encourage the local communities to accept the development of tourist sites or destinations within their communities. Certain percentages of the equity holding of the tourist destinations should be given to the staffs and the local communities to encourage the local communities to co-own the facilities and employees to stay on their jobs rather than seek for alternative or more rewarding employments elsewhere. And the operators of the tourist destinations should adopt viable and responsive social responsibilities towards the host communities to encourage safety of the destinations and to encourage their patronage by tourists.

What will be the impacts of having the right caliber of staff within the industry?

When the right calibers of staffs are present at the tourist destinations, the destinations would attract other businesses into the community and help to develop the community into a new town. This would change the nature of the local economy. There would be improved and competitive services in all sectors of the economy within the localities and of course more returns on investments.

The trickling effects would flow into all sectors and regions of the nation and the nation would develop economically. There would be employment and poverty reduction at tourist destinations through job creation. New towns and cities would grow, and old towns would demand urban renewal. There would be a growth in the national GDP because the

economy is diversifying; more tourists would be attracted and more foreign exchange earned. Economic growth and development would ensure through infrastructural development (water supply, new and better road networks; electricity supply would be made available and improved; schools and academic institutions would develop around the destinations to cater for the educational needs of the population; there would be markets for local products; healthcare facilities would spring up to cater for the people and the tourists as more tourist destinations develop, and more profits would be made by the investors.

Developments in infrastructural facilities would certainly increase longevity as the quality of lives would be improved. People would afford to live more comfortably, happier and satisfied lives. Their obituaries would now start with “with gratitude to God for a life well spent...” rather than “with heart full of sorrows, we announce the death of...”

Politically, the nation would be more stable as there would be cultural exchanges through tourism. More cultural festivals would develop to attract tourists into the societies, and these would create the much needed national integration and improve the citizen’s sense of national identity. It would encourage inter-ethnic marriages; reduce inter- ethnic cleavages and leads to more cultural exchanges. This would create a good image for the country abroad and encourages international relations, trade and cooperation.

Conclusion and Future of Tourism Development in Nigeria

Some of the noticed peculiarities of the tourism industry discussed above, in conjunction with the personnel need in the tourism industry in Nigeria paints a picture of the work environment full of uncertainties, and high labour turn-over. This invariably will leave a highly de-motivated workforce and in turn could lead to drop of revenue earnings in the sector which has the potential to diversify the Nigerian economy in the long run. The future of human resources management in the development of the Nigerian tourism industry should be anchored on the following:

- (1). Revalidation of the 2006 Tourism Development Master plan with the aim to incorporate it into Nigerian’s national legislation as well as the establishment of the Nigeria a tourism bank.
- (2). Establishment of professional training programs to transform the largely undereducated personnel in the industry to a formidable team.
- (3). Affiliate all training centers for the tourism and hospitality industry in the public and private sector to universities, polytechnics and monotechnics in Nigeria. This is aimed at standardizing input and output for best global practices.
- (4). Encourage unionization and professionalization of personnel in the sector towards better conditions of service. This will reduce the levels mediocrity and ameliorate high labor turnover in the sector.

This emphasis stems from the understanding that tourism is a high-touch, high-tech, high involvement industry where it is the ‘people’ that make the difference. To this end, the ability to witness the much expected diversification of the Nigerian economy through the tourism industry depends largely upon the skills, empowerment, training and knowledge of the human resources available in that particular sector of the Nigerian economy.

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