Sustainability Marketing Strategy and Nigeria Tourism Performance

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of sustainability of travel and tourism industry on the Nigeria tourism performance. The study adopted survey method. The data for the study were collected through structured questionnaire administered on professionals and stakeholders in tourism industry and secondary data from the databases of the World Bank and World Economic Forum on international tourist arrivals and sustainability index for Nigeria. The study area was restricted to South Eastern States of Nigeria. The selected States include: Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi and Abia. A sample size of 150 was determined from the population of stakeholders in the industry which include; management staff of the State's Tourism Board, Travel Agents, Hoteliers and various Community Heads. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in administering the questionnaire on the respondents directly involved in tourism development and marketing in the study area. The data collected were presented and analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings indicated that there is no significant effect of sustainability of travel and tourism industry development on international tourist arrivals. It equally revealed that the aims of sustainable tourism were not seriously considered in the marketing strategies of the stakeholders. In order to attract more tourists from developed nations, issues of sustainability need to be integrated in the marketing strategy of the country's tourism industry.*

Keywords*: Sustainability, Marketing Strategy, Tourism, Nigeria.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Travel and tourism make up the largest service industry in the world and it continues to grow (World Bank, 2016) [(1)]. This industry stimulates Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in host countries and contributes substantially to government tax revenues. The sector worth US$7.6 trillion, and accounts for more than 10% of global GDP, and represents 7% of all international trade and 30% of the world's export in services (UNWTO, 2017)[(2)]. Tourism receipts provide an important source of foreign exchange for countries around the world, enabling economic growth and investment in a multitude other sectors (WTTC, 2017) [(3)]. Other contributions of travel and tourism to the host country include: increase in international trade, boosts intentional investment, drives infrastructure development, supports low-income economies, creates jobs efficiently, promotes inclusive growth, strengthens rural communities, revitalizes urban areas, improves access to income via travel technology, benefits women, bolster artisans, facilitates conservation, raises climate change awareness, propels the blue economy, protects cultural sites, sustains intangible culture, spreads philanthropy, cultivates intercultural understanding and aids post-conflict recovery (World Bank, 2016) [(1)].

According to World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), International Trade Centre (ITC) and Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) (2017) [(4)], tourism is a key factor for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and be a powerful vehicle to promote and reach the milestones of the ambitious agenda, given that it is one of the main job and wealth creator for many countries. In fact, tourism explicitly features as a target in SDGs 8, 12 and 14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production, and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources respectively. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 2017, reported that tourism can be an engine for inclusive growth and sustainable economic development. Tourism has contributed immensely to Africa's growth, employment and trade. During 1995 – 2014, international tourist arrivals to Africa grew by an average of 6% per year and tourism export revenues, 9% per year. The average total contribution of tourism to gross domestic product (GDP) increased from $69 billion in 1995 – 1998 to $166 billion in 2011 – 2014, that is from 6.8% of GDP in Africa to 8.5% of GDP. Furthermore, tourism generated more than 21 million jobs on average in 2011 – 2014, which translates into 7.1% of all jobs in Africa (UNCTAD, 2017) [(5)].

In Nigeria, the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was US$20.3bn, 4.7% of GDP in 2016, and is forecast to rise by 4.0% per annum to US$29.7bn, 4.5% of GDP in 2027. On employment, travel and tourism contributed 1,793,000 jobs to total employment, and it is expected to rise by 3.6% per annum to 2,598,000 jobs in

2027. On visitor exports, US$836.7m, 1.9% of total exports was generated in 2016. This is expected to grow by 1.7% per annum from 2017 – 2027, to US$959.9m in 2027 (WTTC, 2017) [3]. Based on the numerous contributions of tourism to host countries, it is thus, critical for countries to promote policies that foster the continued growth of tourism including sustainability (UNWTO, 2016) [6].

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS:

The concept of sustainability marketing strategy has evolved overtime but companies are slow in adopting this concept in their marketing strategy (Kumar, Rahman, Kazmi & Goyal, 2012) [7]. This is the case of many countries in sub-Sahara Africa towards tourism development and marketing especially Nigerians. According to World Economic Forum (WEF) reports, sustainability of travel and tourism industry development for Nigeria slipped from the score of 3.6 (out of 7) with a rank of 108 (out of 140 countries) in 2013 to the score of 3.4 (out of 7), with a rank of 123 (out of 131 countries) in 2015, down to the score of 2.3 (out of 7), with a rank of 134 (out of 136 countries) surveyed in 2017 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (WEF, 2013[8]; 2015[9]. & 2017[10]). This downward trend shows lack of commitment by the tourism stakeholders in Nigeria towards the integration of sustainability in the marketing strategy of the tourism industry.

In tourism industry today, there are many recognized business leaders that have integrated sustainability into their core business. However, many developing countries have not integrated sustainability into the production of tourism related services. According to Font and Carey (2005) [11], there are many surveys carried out mostly at the national level on the willingness to pay for more sustainable tourism products and the results indicated that there is a growing sensibility on sustainability issues, but product selection and purchasing is mostly not yet related to sustainability factors. The results show that many business leaders that have integrated sustainability in the mainstream of their businesses are not experiencing any real reward for their responsibility towards the host environment and communities. Contrary to this report, recent studies believe that travelers prefer companies that embed green or eco-friendly practices into their operations (WTTC, 2015) [12], and the percentage of consumers who are willing to pay more for sustainable brands that showed commitment to social and environmental values went up from 55% to 66% between 2014 and 2015. About 73% of the younger generations are more likely to pay more for sustainability (The Neilson Company, 2015) [13].

It is based on these conflicting reports that this study is based to examine the effect of sustainability of travel and tourism industry on the Nigeria tourism performance.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

This study is anchored around the Stakeholder Theory. The theory originated as a theory of organizational management and it is based on the premise that organizations have an array of different stakeholder groups. Freeman (1984) [14] is widely acknowledged to have established the conceptual and critical foundations of the theory with further contributions by Clarkson (1995).

Freeman (1984) defines a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives". Accordingly, Jones and Wicks (1999) as recorded by Fyall, Garrod and Wang (2012) [15] argue that stakeholder theory is based on four distinguishing features:

i.   The theory focuses on managerial decision making
ii.   The organization has relationship with constituent stakeholder groups, which both affect and is affected by its decision making
iii. These relationships at least partly determine outcomes for both the organization and its stakeholders; and
iv.   That the interest of all the stakeholder groups have intrinsic value, with no set of interest dominating the others.

This theory stressed the contribution that other organizations within the tourism destination can make to the individual component's overall success. It emphasizes the importance of the support, complementarity, and knowledge of other components of the destination, which may in turn serve as a catalyst for broader collaboration within the destinations (Fyall, et al; 2012). For individual success in tourism, cooperation among different stakeholders is necessary. Buhalis, Francis and Estevao (2010) [16] believe that the marketing strategies and other tourism programmes adopted by any destination should consider the desires and expectations of all stakeholders, such as the resident population, tourists, tour operators, investors, intermediaries and other interested groups. The goal is to find suitable marketing solutions that benefit both the whole destination and also its actors (Katharina, 2011) [17]. Integrating sustainability in the marketing strategy of a destination requires the cooperation of the stakeholders in building and maintaining sustainable relationships with tourists, the social environment and the natural environment.

4. CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM:

Sustainability is "positive approach intended to reduce the tension and friction created by the complex interactions between the tourism industry, visitors, the environment and the communities which are host to holiday

makers" (Bramwell & Lane, 1993) [18]. According to the United Nations, Sustainable tourism is tourism "that leads to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems". The UNWTO has defined sustainable tourism as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities". UNWTO elaborated the need for the adoption of sustainable tourism to include:

- ❖ Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- ❖ Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- ❖ Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

5. SUSTAINABILITY IN MARKETING STRATEGY:

Marketing as a field has evolved over time and still evolving. The evolution of marketing has been discussed by various authors through five concepts: production concept, product concept, selling concept, marketing concept and societal marketing concept. Until recent times, all marketing activities in organizations revolved around these concepts. According to Kumar, Kazim, and Goyal (2012) [7], it is time to include sustainability criteria into marketing, which is the need of the hour. Charter et al (2006) cited in Kumar et al (2012) [7] believe that companies should keep in mind that sustainability has become a requirement and not an option. It has become an obligation for the companies so as to achieve competitive advantage (Kumar, et al; 2012) [7]. Sustainability is now essentially a requirement in the business because the concept of marketing is not limited to intra-personal and inter-personal needs; it is getting extended towards needs of future generation (Dan & Appledoorn, 1996) [19]. In the same vein, Vagasi (2006) cited in Kumar et al (2012) believes that the concept of marketing is extending towards fulfilling the needs of future generations, which further means that creating, communicating and delivering sustainability based value to customer. Therefore, companies, organizations and destinations, have to balance their marketing strategies in such a way that customer needs can be fulfilled after maintaining profitability, public interests and ecology.

According to Belz and Peathie (2010), cited in Kumar, et al. (2012) [7], sustainability marketing is seen as the "building and maintaining sustainable relationships with customers, the social environment and the natural environment". The authors explained that integrating sustainability in marketing strategy will result in added value to customers and also help the organization in building long-term relationships with customers, which are not only beneficial for business but also for society and ecology. Whitting, (2008) in Kumar, et al. (2012) [7] believes that sustainability in marketing strategy not only helps in competitiveness advantage but also opens doors for cost savings, and innovations.

6. SUSTAINABILITY AND DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS:

Tourism is growing most rapidly in developing countries: between 2010 and 2030, arrivals in emerging destinations are expected to increase at twice the rate (4.4% a year) of those advanced economies (2.2% a year) (UNWTO, 2015) [20]. The rapid growth of tourism and arrivals have increased competitiveness among various destinations. This has led the destinations to develop and implement different marketing strategies in order to attract visitors to their destinations. One of the major strategies by these destinations is the integration of sustainability into the business and programmes.

There are various studies and reports on the knowledge, awareness, importance and impact of sustainability on business performance with contradictory results. Batra (2006) [21] believes that a very small section of people involved in tourism are familiar with the concept of sustainability and its importance, while the majority are not. In the same vein, Middleton (1998) [22] opines that "there is no clear evidence in the developed world that more than a small minority of visitors understands the concepts of sustainability and environmental good practice and draw on them when choosing products, although travelers from countries such as Germany, Holland and Scandinavia appear to be further ahead in this respect. There is even less evidence that the great majority of visitors are willing to pay premium prices for the products of tourism businesses operating to high level environmental standards.

Gossling and Hall (2006) [23] and other researchers predicted that global environmental changes are expected to have major effect on a whole range of tourism destinations. These predictions, according to Dolnicar and Leisch (2008) [24], have captured the attention of destination managers and planners who now see a need to incorporate environmental issues in their tourism planning. While some destination managers try to incorporate environmental issues as a reactionary measure to cope with climate change, others actually attempt to achieve higher levels of environmental sustainability at the destination. Gossling (2002) as cited in Dolnicar and Leisch (2008) believes that "tourists are increasingly driven by the motive of seeing unsullied natural areas and beautiful natural environments, in return, increase environmental consciousness".

Middleton (1998) [22] equally believes that there is a convincing evidence that customers turn away from what they consider to be overcrowded, polluted destinations which have allowed their environmental quality to become eroded through over development. Recent studies and reports according to Crest (2016) [25] document the sustained interest among consumers in types of tourism and tourism products that help to protect the environment and bring tangible benefits to local communities. Dhawan (2013) [26] found out from his studies that "Canadian travelers are looking to extend their green lifestyle while traveling, not wanting to abandon organic food or caring about the environment when around the globe". Other studies that reported how and what tourists expect in terms of sustainable environment include (ABTA, 2015[27]; TripAdvisor, 2015[28]; WWF, Birdlife International, Friends of the Earth Europe & European Environmental Bureau, 2015[29]; UNWTO, 2015) [20].

In response to growing demand by tourists for environmentally and socially responsible products and Services, sustainability is becoming much more mainstream within the tourism industry, with increasing numbers of businesses creating environmental departments, adopting environmental and social "good practices", seeking certification, mitigating and adapting to climate change realities, and looking at ways to 'green' their supply chain (Crest, 2016) [25]. A growing number of businesses are not just advocating for a more sustainable and efficient use of natural resources as central for their development, but equally showing that through dialogue between stakeholders, nature and businesses (WWF et al, 2015) [29].

Meanwhile, Tourtellot (2016) in Crest (2016) [25] opines that "as destination rating systems continue to develop, awareness is growing among local leaders that insuring environmental and cultural sustainability is not only a responsible policy but also a long-term economic strategy. Protecting and celebrating natural, cultural, scenic, and historic assets means safeguarding a destination's unique selling point. Its identity – a sense of place that no competitor can match". Such of the rating system includes The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) by the World Economic Forum in conjunction with the United Nations World Tourism Organization and also World Banks rating especially on International Tourist Arrivals to a particular destination.

7. METHODOLOGY:

The study adopted survey research design. The secondary and primary sources were used to gather relevant data and information used in this study. The secondary data were collected from the databases of World Economic Forum (WEF) and the World Bank for sustainability of travel and tourism industry development index for Nigeria and International Tourist Arrivals from 2007 – 2016. The index was measured using a 7-point scale from 1 – 7: 1 = Poor; 7 = Excellent. On the other hand, the primary data was gathered from the tourism stakeholders in South East, Nigeria on questions concerning the sustainable tourism development, and the questions were asked on a 5-point Likert scale; 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Purposive sampling was used to select 150 stakeholders in the region and was found suitable for the study.

8. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS:

Table 1: Sustainability of Travel and Tourism Industry Development index and International Tourist Arrivals to Nigeria.

Year	Sustainability index (1 - 7)	International Tourist Arrivals (M)
2009	4.6	1,141,000
2010	4.6	1,555,000
2011	4.7	715,000
2012	4.7	486,000
2013	3.6	600,000
2014	3.6	854,000
2015	3.4	1,255,000
2016	3.4	1,889,000
2017	2.5	-

Sources: WEF (2017) and World Bank (2017) sustainability of travel and tourism industry development and International Tourist Arrivals to Nigeria.

Table 1 shows the sustainability of Travel and tourism industry development index for Nigeria from 2009 – 2017 and the performance of tourism industry in terms of tourist arrivals. From 2009 – 2014, Nigeria recorded above average for the sustainability index, but slipped from 2015 to lowest value of 2.5 in 2017. The decrease of the sustainability index has no significant effect on the arrival of tourists to the country and the value of 2.5 shows that sustainability marketing strategy has not been fully integrated into the destination competitiveness strategy. The marketing strategy of tourism development in Nigeria is centered on quantity and volume instead of quality and value. According to the Wall Street report as documented by Statista.com (2018) [30], on countries polluting the oceans, Nigeria contributed 0.9 million metric tons of plastic waste to the oceans. Only Egypt contributed more in Africa.
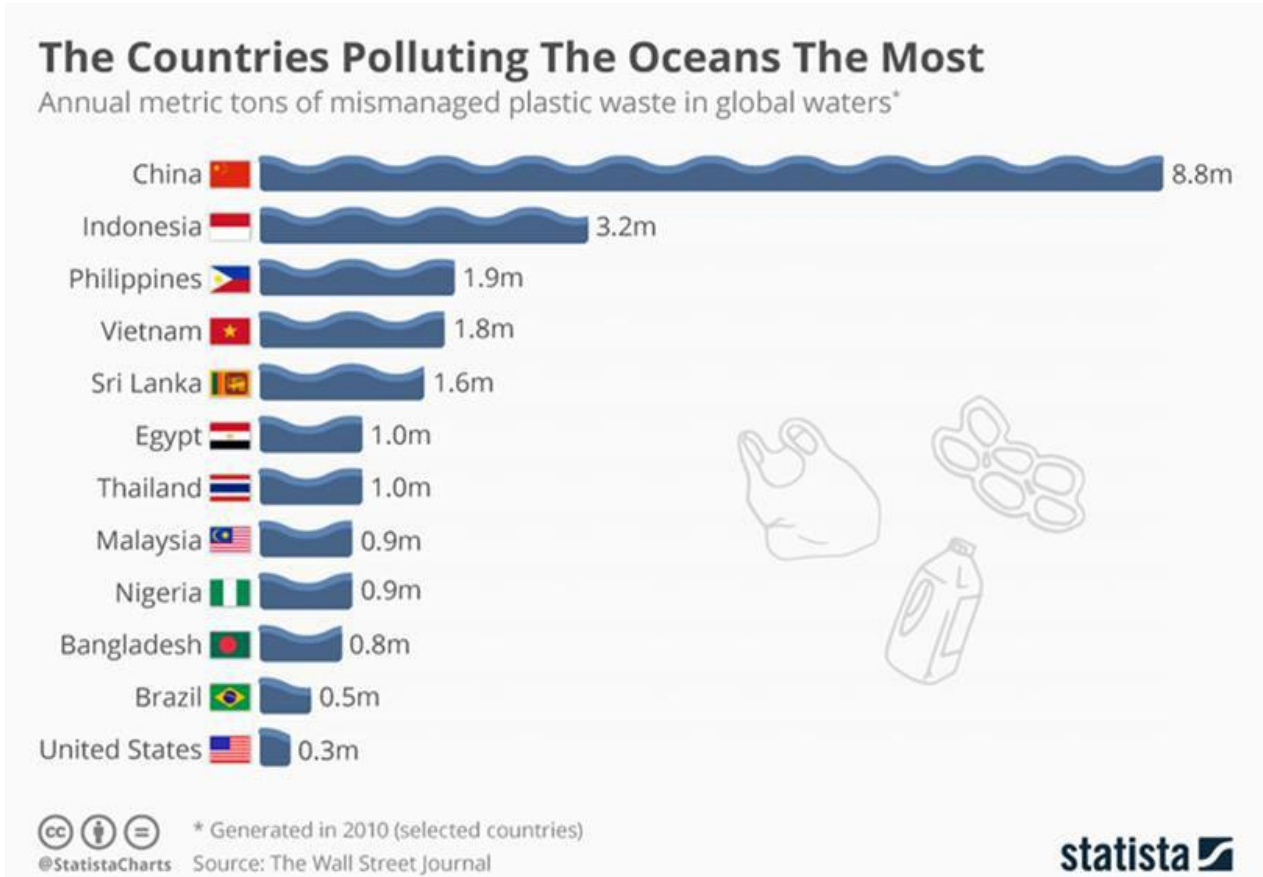
Figure 1: The countries polluting the oceans the most: annual metric tons of mismanaged plastic waste in global waters.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean
Efforts are made to minimize the pollution of air, water and land and the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors	150	2.2667
Tourism development in Nigeria minimizes the use of scarce and non-renewable resources	150	2.1667
Tourism development in Nigeria support conservation of natural areas, habitats and wildlife and minimizes damage to them	150	2.4667
Quality of landscapes is enhanced and maintained to avoid the physical and visual degradation of the environment	150	3.2000
Historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of host communities are enhanced and respected	150	2.8000
Tourism development in Nigeria maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation	150	2.4000
Local communities are engaged and empowered in planning and decision making about the management and future development of tourism in their area in consultation with stakeholders	150	2.8000
Tourism development in Nigeria provides safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination	150	2.2000

Source: SPSS version 20.0

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the responses and the mean values of the key variables from the aims for sustainable tourism. The aims covered by the questionnaire includes: environmental priority, resource efficiency, biological diversity, physical integrity, cultural richness, community wellbeing, local control and visitor fulfillment.

The questions were asked to ascertain the coverage of these aims in tourism development by the stakeholders in Nigeria. From the table, the mean scores of the aims covered are: environmental priority (2.2667), resource efficiency (2.1667), biological diversity (2.4667), physical integrity (3.2000), cultural richness (2.8000), community wellbeing (2.4000), local control (2.8000), and visitor fulfillment (2.2000). From the mean scores, only physical integrity, cultural richness and local control recorded above average. This shows that the stakeholders in the tourism industry in Nigeria are not doing much to integrate sustainability in the marketing strategies of their businesses. This lack of efforts in integrating sustainability issues in the core business of tourism marketing strategies as seen by the results confirms the position of Batra (2006) that only a very small section of people involved in tourism and familiar with the concept of sustainability and its importance, while the majority are not. UNWTO believe that many developing countries have not integrated sustainability into their core business. Font and Corey (2005) believe that many businesses are not integrating sustainability issues in the core business because many businesses are not experiencing any real reward for their responsibility towards the host environment and communities.

9. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:
The results based on the descriptive statistics and the literature survey revealed the following:
- The rating of sustainability of travel and tourism industry development in 2017 (2.5 which is below average) by World Economic Forum shows that sustainability issues are not integrated in the marketing strategies of the stakeholders in the industry.
- Attention was not paid to the aims of sustainable tourism development in Nigeria. Environmental priority, resource efficiency, biological diversity, physical integration, cultural richness, community wellbeing, local control and visitors' fulfillment recorded low mean scores showing that the stakeholders were sincere in disagreeing to doing much in integrating sustainability issues in there tourism marketing strategies.
- The literature shows that many tourist especially young ones prefer sustainable destinations and are willing to visit, donate to the cause and also revisit.

10. CONCLUSION:
Nigeria is blessed with tourism potential in abundance ranging from cultural and natural resources and many historic sites but her inability or lack of interest in integrating sustainability into her marketing strategy is negatively affecting her rating among other competing destinations. The literature reviewed made us to understand that most tourists from developed countries prefer patronizing sustainable tourism products. There is equally a growing concern by many groups and agencies in promoting sustainable tourism that takes care of the social, economic and the wellbeing of the communities.

Therefore, for tourism development in Nigeria to improve on her sustainability rating and attract more sustainable conscious tourists to the destination, the following are recommended:
- There is need for a policy formulation on sustainability of travel and tourism industry development at the national and to be followed at the regional levels.
- The stakeholders should work closely in integrating sustainability in their marketing strategy not only to improve the economic benefit of their business but also to improve the wellbeing of host communities.
- The stakeholders should work closely with the destination marketing organisation both at the national and regional levels in developing standards and sustainability certification programme to be followed by the individual business in the tourism industry.
- The destination marketing organisations should improve on their sustainability education programmes to create awareness on the need for the stakeholders in the industry to integrate sustainability in the marketing strategy.

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