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**Domestic Tourism: A Panacea for Peace in Contemporary Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

Tourism is widely said to be the world's largest business sector, accounting for one in every twelve people globally. It is the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more one year for leisure, business and other purposes. Domestic tourism involves the residents of a given country traveling within that country in the manner aforementioned. In studying the impact of domestic tourism on peace in Nigeria, secondary source of data involving text books, government publications and journals were utilized. Findings using descriptive analysis show that domestic tourism has some characteristics which make it easy to promote. It was also discovered that domestic tourism brings about social interaction between the tourists and the host community thereby breaking ethno-religious barriers. It also engenders peace by generating employment, providing infrastructure and creating economic diversification among others. This study ends by recommending that Domestic Tourism exhibitions be carried out from time to time through the collaboration of the relevant government agencies.

**Keywords:** Domestic Tourism, Peace, Co-operation

**Introduction**

Tourism is widely said to be the world's largest business sector, employing one in every twelve people globally (Pierret, 2010). The United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism as the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (Sinha 2012a). It is travel-for-leisure that is supported by a multi-layered global service industry (Salazar, 2006). Domestic tourism therefore involves the residents of a given country traveling within that country (Sinha 2012b). It follows that domestic tourism (like other tourism spheres) is all about bringing people together to learn about each other, and embrace the connectedness of all peoples and things in a peaceful manner.

Peace is expressed through the principles of unity, justice, cooperation, partnership, creativity and trust (TFP, 2013). A broad definition of peace refers to peaceful relationships not only between nations, but also between groups or communities, between individuals, and between people and nature. Although implicitly assumed in the often-used metaphor of 'building' peace, peace does not necessarily have to be something humankind might achieve some day. It already exists and changes constantly; we can create and expand it in small ways in our everyday lives (Salazar, 2006). Tourism has been hailed as "the global peace" industry, and, it is frequently implied that there is a natural link between tourism and peace. In 1929, for instance, the British Travel and Holidays Association declared "Travel for Peace" as the theme of its inaugural meeting (Honey, 2013). Going further, Salazar (2006) pointed out that while tourism and peace have often been linked, conditions on both sides of the equation must be right. Therefore, peace must be more than an absence of conflict, and tourism must be crafted so that it truly benefits local communities and the environment (Honey, 2013).

Among the positive benefits attributable to the social and cultural impacts of tourism are the promotion of goodwill, understanding and peace between people of different nationalities. In 1980, the World Tourism Conference in Manila declared that 'world tourism can be a vital force for world peace'. In 1986, the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) was founded. D'Amore (1988b) called tourism "the world's peace industry". The conferences and summits throughout the world have promoted higher purpose of tourism. In the words of Saint Augustine some sixteen centuries ago, "the world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page". Some sixteen centuries later, the "book" is becoming a page-turning bestseller. Travel and tourism has established itself as the world's largest industry, revolutionizing our understanding of ourselves, others and the world.

Nigeria, a country endowed with human and material resources seems to be on the brink of abyss as a result of seemingly endless crises. The spate of bomb blasts, the dare devil activities of kidnappers, ethno-religious upheavals, the pulsating political turmoil fueled by regional dichotomy and perceived and/or real marginalization of some tribal minorities to mention but a few have virtually brought Nigeria as a country to its knees (Ugbabe *et al*, 2012). Domestic tourism, bringing about closer social interaction between people of the various regions is sure to do the country a world of good especially as the violent crises have dented the reputation of Nigeria in the minds of international tourists. This study strives to identify the impact of domestic tourism on peaceful

coexistence of Nigerians and to recommend ways through which this can be accomplished.

### **Research Methodology**

In writing this paper, secondary sources of data collection involving the use of text books, government publications, journals and online articles were utilized. Objective efforts were made to assess the relevance of tourism to peace building in the face of almost uncontrollable social violence.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Peace Initiatives through Tourism**

D'Amore (1998a) points out some key approaches for promoting peace through tourism and prominent among these is Citizen Diplomacy. Former United States (US) President Dwight D. Eisenhower knew from his experience as a military commander that ordinary citizens of different nations could bridge political and social divides where government could not. Toeing the same line President J. F. Kennedy said: "travel has become one of the great forces for peace and understanding of our time, as people move throughout the world and learn to know each other, to understand each other's customs, and to appreciate the qualities of the individuals of each tribe, we are building a level of understanding which can sharply improve the attitude for world peace." Kennedy's recognition of the importance of travel and intercultural exchange led to the formation of the Peace Corps by executive order on March 1, 1961. Other presidents and world leaders have affirmed the important role of tourism in promoting understanding and peace. US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev both saw the vital role that travel can play in breaking down historical barriers of isolation. In the same vein, many tourism conferences in the past had themes related to the promotion of peace as can be seen below:

**Table 1: Statements establishing link between tourism and peace**

Year	Place	Demand	Citation
1980	Manila, Philippines	Declaration on world tourism	Tourism a vital force for peace and international understanding
1985	Sofia, Bulgaria	Tourism bill of right and tourist code	(Tourism's contribution to) improving mutual understanding, bringing people together and consequently, strengthening internal cooperation
1999	Santiago, Chile	Global code of ethics for tourism	Through the direct, spontaneous and non mediatized contacts, it engenders between man and woman of different cultures and life styles, tourism presents a vital force for peace and a factor of friendship and understanding among the people of the world

Source: Salazar, N. B. (2006)

### **Tourism Poverty Alleviation and Peace**

Tourism is today projected as an engine of economic growth and an instrument for eliminating poverty through curbing unemployment problems, opening up new fields of activity and the upliftment of the downtrodden sections of the society. New opportunities are being tapped to promote eco, adventure, rural, postage, wildlife and health and herbal including medical tourism in many counties (Sinha, 2012b; Verma, 2013). Tourism promotes peace by solving the problems of poverty, unemployment, among others. These are achievable if effective inter-linkages are established between "tourism initiatives" and "peace", and appropriate action plans are devised accordingly. Community-based initiatives anchored on people's participation have been quite effective in India in the continent of Asia and Kenya in the continent of Africa in solving the socio-economic problems of the people.

However, they have also been successful in building up strong collaborations based on people's efforts which have led to creation of a peaceful and cordial atmosphere (Verma, 2013). As one of the largest industries in the world, tourism has a significant impact on many societies. Although this impact is most often viewed in economic terms, an increasing number of researchers believes that specific forms of tourism can bring about peace, or at least decrease the possibility of conflict (Lefevre, 2012). The simple experience of tourism – getting to know another place and its people – can positively contribute to peace. A meaningful tourism experience can change prejudice and stereotyping into

positive dispositions such as tolerance, compassion, goodwill, justice and respect. Tourism is able to contribute to peace by providing experiences which involve communication and hospitality (in the broadest sense), and by expressing an ethic incorporated into tourism education and training, tourism experiences can be managed to encourage the adoption by individuals of attitudes conducive to more harmonious relationships among people of different cultures.

### **Nigerian Tourist Destinations and Domestic Travel**

Nigeria is blessed with some tourist destinations much better than those of many other countries. Pristine and unique tourism destinations are even in remote areas of this country. According to the Imoke (2013), if one per cent of Nigerians choose to visit a tourist destination in a year, it will mean a record 1.6 million visitors for all the destinations. Domestic tourism involves pocket-friendly costs in that it excludes visa fees, international flight charges and other ancillaries that would scare the low income earners.

Prominent among natural attractions in Nigeria are:

**Assop Falls, Jos, Plateau State:** The water gushes from an impressive height providing a beautiful sight, for picnics, swimming and outdoor parties, chalets are provided for guests.

**Agbokim Waterfalls, Cross River State:** The falls are an impressive sight, situated in a pleasant forest surrounding.

**Zuma Rock, Suleja, Niger State:** The rock is a major land mark on the way to Kaduna. It is a natural sight and has the potential of becoming a tourist center.

**Foot Bridge at Abraka Turf, Delta State:** Consisting of a sandy beach on the river with tables and umbrellas, boat hire facilities and canoe facilities. The water is safe for swimming. It has an attractive setting with lawn tennis, squash and badminton courts, well-apportioned accommodation, a spacious conference center and appetizing cuisine. Other interesting destinations includes the *Ox-bow Lake, Awe, Nassarawa State, Olumo Rock, Abeokuta, Ogun State.*

Wild-Life based Attractions are, *Yankari Games Reserve, Bauchi, Jos Wildlife Park, Old Oyo National Park, Peacock at Abuja Park, Abuja, Obudu Cattle Ranch, in Cross River State* which is on the Obudu hill and is over 1,524m above sea level with cool and pleasant climate. The landscape has rolling grassland, deep-wooded valleys and waterfalls. It has sport facilities such as tennis court, squash racket court, golf course and race course for horse riding. There are chalets for tourists' accommodation.

Others are *Kainji Lake, National Park, Oban Forest in Cross River State, Gashaka Gumti National Parks, Adamawa State* among others.

All these and other natural attractions, cultural festivals as well as other man-made attractions abound in nearly all the ethnic regions in Nigeria for both domestic and international tourists.

### **Characteristics of Domestic Tourism**

In contrast to international tourists, domestic tourists know the destination, its language, its customs, its laws, its climate, its cultural context. They seek a very wide diversity of types of destinations and tourism activities. In other words, the range of product offerings should be as broad as possible. At the same time, domestic tourism is practiced more in a sedentary (staying in the same place) than a nomadic manner, the latter being more suited for more distant destinations.

Another characteristic is that domestic destinations are nearer to the tourists. Visits are more frequent and there are more repeat stays, notably with family and especially in the rural region of provenance of many urban residents. Similarly, as the destination is nearer and land transport is used more, the cost of trips is lower. Given that the barrier represented by trip cost is brought down, domestic travelers seek the best price-quality ratio, or often the lowest possible price, in all segments of the tourism value chain: accommodation, food services, tourism activities, shopping, among others. They therefore seek alternative, non-hotel accommodations because, among other things, they are going to return several times to the destination and, while there, they prepare subsequent stays by informing themselves about the local accommodation offerings.

Of importance also is that tourists stay for longer periods. The combination of these basic characteristics (knowledge and proximity of the destination, lower cost of transport) brings about an entire series of other consequences that enhance tourism. The social composition is broader, and domestic tourism involves all social strata, from the richest to persons with modest (but stable) incomes. Certain social categories are much more highly represented in domestic tourism than in international tourism:

- families
- children and teenagers
- seniors
- disabled persons

- households with modest but stable incomes

This social diversity gives rise to a large diversity in the demand, in terms of accommodation and tourism products as well as other activities at the destinations. Domestic Tourism has become a significant form of tourism in an Africa country like Kenya where it is found that it can cushion off the tourism industry during low periods of international tourist arrivals aside from the fact that it can be used as an instrument for the promotion of peace.

### **Peace-Promoting Benefits of Domestic Tourism**

As Mendiratta (2011) pointed out, destinations promoting their domestic tourism sectors unlock peace-engendering opportunities for destination growth at several levels. Some of these opportunities are:

**Revenues:** generation of significant revenues as domestic tourists keep their spending money within their home country. There is no financial loss to foreign countries and as such revenues can be used for domestic development of aggrieved communities. The United Nation World Tourism Organization estimates that tourism accounts for up to 10% of global gross domestic product, making it the world's biggest industry. The potential for tourism to contribute significantly to poverty alleviation is considerable. Work since 1998 by the Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership has demonstrated that tourism can contribute to poverty reduction and that for many of the least developed countries, and in many rural areas, tourism is one of the few current viable strategies for economic development.

**Spread:** dispersion of travelers across, and deeper into the destination, stretching tourism activity and attractions beyond the main city centres. This helps to erase negative opinions of the host communities about people of other ethnic nationalities and vice versa.

**Participation:** increased employment of people of the destination in the tourism economy (both direct and indirect) as a result of increased, ongoing tourism activity as well as management and training interventions, by investing in people and ensuring that increasingly senior posts go to local employees. Also domestic tourism ensures that operators work with local communities and micro enterprises to guarantee supplies of food and beverages, furnishings, maintenance, arts and crafts and entertainment.

**Seasonality:** creation of year-round momentum of traveler activity, lessening the troughs in the seasonality curve, and enabling '365' industry operations.

**Security:** creation of a tourism culture across the destination (including understanding of the value of the tourism economy to national growth), which naturally creates a responsibility for tourist-protection within local communities.

**Solidarity:** generation of pride and ambassadorship for one's own country through understanding, experience and appreciation of all of its offerings. This is because through domestic tourism people of different socio-economic and socio-cultural background interact with the host community who could be of different socio-economic and socio-cultural background. The interaction could result in two scenarios: removal and/or mending of social barriers and mutual understanding between the tourist and the host (Din, 1988; Rovelstad, 1988; Var *et al*, 1993). Collectively, the impact of domestic tourism clearly illustrates the segment's rightful place on the A-list.

Domestic tourism, when developed in a meaningful, sustainable and complementary way to international tourism, offers destinations an exceptional platform for year-round tourism economy growth and development. And, as importantly, domestic tourism creates a destination that stands proud as a place for both the people of the world, and those of the destination, to explore and enjoy as their own. Aside to the social benefits mentioned above there are also economic benefits which individually and collectively promote peace. Some of these according to Tourism and Events Queensland (2013) are jobs, increased spending, economic diversification and infrastructure.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has analyzed issues relating to domestic tourism and peace building process in Nigeria. Focusing on domestic tourism which will in addition to revenue generation foster peaceful coexistence among the various ethnic nationalities will be a right step in the right direction. As has been argued here people who visit places other than their immediate environment have the least tendency to promote ethno-religious violence and have the higher propensity to promote socio-cultural cohesion with people of different ethnic nationalities.

### Recommendations

- Domestic Tourism exhibitions should be carried out from time to time through the collaboration of the relevant government agencies.
- Frank public enlightenment at ward levels should be carried out to rid the country of the present security imbroglio to enable domestic tourism have a new lease of life.
- Tourist attractions should be aggressively marketed through constant product investigation and analysis with domestic tourists as the target market.
- Government at all levels should maintain a constant in and outflow of information and data pertaining to Domestic Tourism.
- Tourism media, comprising of both electronic and print should be put in place to propagate domestic tourism activities.
- Motorable rural roads should be provided to enhance tourists' movement to tourist destinations located in rural areas.
- Hotel accommodation is often a rarity in the rural areas, so camp sites as well as rural inns that provide bed and breakfast to tourists should be provided by local developers through the acquisition of soft loans.

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