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Can Tourism Drive Post Covid-19 Economic Development: Perspective on the Nigerian Case

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Abstract:

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has created disruptions in the Nigerian economy that must be systematically handled if the economy is not only to bounce back from its present state of recession but also grow and develop after the end of the pandemic. Traditionally, Nigeria has been a mono product economy wherein the petroleum sector has been the driving force behind the nation's economic and development performance. However, given the failure of previous attempts at economic diversification through agriculture and industry, and the damaging impact of the pandemic on other service sector activities especially the emerging Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) market, it becomes imperative to examine alternative activity areas for promoting growth and development of the economy post COVID-19. This paper examines the case of tourism. The paper argues that tourism can provide a platform for re-engineering the economy after the negative impact of COVID-19. It highlights some important tourist attractions in the country, the tourists experience they offer, and their revenue earning cum development potentials. The paper concludes that if properly integrated into the nation's development framework, tourism has the potential to drive economic development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Tourism, COVID-19, economic development, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), a respiratory disease caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), originated in China in December 2019. Since then, the disease has become a global threat that has been reported in almost 200 countries of the world, necessitating the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring it a Pandemic on March 11, 2020. Globally, as at June 24th, 2020, about 9.45 million cases of infections and 482 thousand deaths have been recorded from the disease since its outbreak in December 2019. While the disease entered Nigeria in February 2020 through a traveler from Italy, the total number of confirmed cases as at June 24th 2020 stood at 22,020 infections and 542 deaths (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 2020).

Since the main issue with the disease is its high rate of infectability, measures typically instituted to curtail its spread generally include physical distancing measures and the lockdown of the affected geographical area. In this regard, the Nigerian government ordered a lockdown of the economy, first in the commercial capital of the country, Lagos, its satellite neighboring state, Ogun and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, but eventually all over the country. Such lockdown measures involved the closing down of all government offices and private businesses (except a few such as food distribution and fuel stations categorized as essential services), ban/restriction on movement of people and goods including international travels, and general cessation of virtually all productive activities.

The lockdown has created both supply and demand side imbalances in the industrial sector with manufacturing activities dropping significantly due to the direct effects of the physical lockdown measures and the indirect effect of reduction in consumer demand. As consumers adjust their expenditure portfolio, demand for non-essential commodities have become very elastic as most consumers focus on procurement of basic needs due to the uncertainties of the situation and declining purchasing power as employers downsize and wage reduction measures were affected. Given the dynamics of the situation, the expectation is that many firms would have to restructure their operations, downsize the work force and instead turn to technology as part of the 'new normal'. In fact, some companies have sent their workers on compulsory leave, some employers proposed salary cuts while some planned outright downsizing of the workforce. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that 42 percent of Nigerian workers lost their jobs as a result of the impact of COVID-

19, diminishing the income of 79 percent of households in Nigeria (AllAfrica, 2020) while for those who did not lose their job, massive cuts in salary were implemented.

Indeed, unless appropriate intervention strategies are implemented, some firms, especially Micro, Small and Medium and Enterprises are likely to close down eventually. Even before the advent of the COVID-19 shock, the last cumulative unemployment rate according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) was 23.1% ranking Nigeria 21st among 181 countries in terms of unemployment. After 3 months of economic lockdown, the national unemployment rate is now put at 35%. Given such high level of unemployment and the failure of social security measures in the country, the incidence of poverty is expected to increase post COVID-19. Currently, 87 million Nigerians are estimated to be living in extreme poverty on less than \$1.97 per day and the figure is expected to worsen going forward.

Consequently, the various distortions occasioned by the pandemic, along with persistent low oil price and falling oil export volume are expected to lead the economy into a recession currently estimated at 5 – 10% of GDP (This Day Newspaper, 2020). Also, the downward review of the national budget occasioned by the effects of the pandemic will place constraint on government's ability to implement economic development programmes including social inclusion/social intervention schemes and support for the poor and this will further contribute to poverty and unemployment. This is more significant given that the country has just come out of a recession that started in 2016 occasioned by such factors as negative developments in the global oil market, public fiscal inefficiency and structural deficiencies in the overall economy which, till date, is heavily dependent on just a single revenue source, oil (Faraibi, 2016). Other than this, the lockdown has further deepened the depreciation of the Naira and this, along with the huge debt service obligations of the government that constitutes about a quarter of the 2020 Federal Government budget, spell doom for government fiscal capabilities post COVID-19. Nigeria is a mono-product economy in which crude oil constitutes over 95 percent of the export earnings and 70 percent of government revenue, a structural imbalance that makes the economy easily susceptible to the effects of negative shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hence, there is the need to map out appropriate response strategies going forward. Without doubt, the outbreak of COVID-19 will leave a long-term strain in the economy and the inability of the nation's economic managers to prepare for the pending effects on the economy may spell a doom for economic welfare. Adebayo (2010) clearly highlights the fact that while economic and financial crises are rather regular occurrences in the economy of a modern society, the failure to handle them effectively can have significant negative impact on the growth of the economy and the welfare of the citizens. The implication of such a failure ranges from general decline in output to reduction in trade volume, higher inflation rates and unemployment.

Given the inability of the nation to diversify the economy beyond oil, the poor performance of both the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, and the damaging impact that the pandemic has had on the service sectors especially the emerging Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) market, it becomes imperative to examine alternative sectors that can act as key strategic activity areas for growth and development of the economy post COVID-19. This paper examines the case of tourism. The paper argues that tourism can provide a platform for re-engineering the economy after the negative impact of COVID-19. Twining-Ward and Shiels (2017) identify twenty reasons why tourism should be built into a country's economic development agenda. There are many instances in which countries have leveraged on the tourism industry to diversify the economy and generate growth (Omodero, 2019). For example, countries like Israel and Saudi Arabia generate huge income from spiritual tourism annually and the shrine of Our Lady Fatima in Portugal is one of the largest religious tourism sites in the world from which the country earns immeasurable income. Nigeria is a big country with over 400 different ethnic groups, some of the largest landmarks in Africa, diverse cultures and numerous Arts and tourist attraction sites. It has a remarkable geographical diversity ranging from tropical rainforest and mountains to stretches of semi-desert. It is rich in cultural heritage, arts and archeology that should make it a destination of interest to tourists. Hence, tourism could be one of the fastest growing sectors in the Nigerian economy if given priority status as was done in 1990 when the National Tourism Policy was launched. The policy thrust is aimed at developing sustainable tourism by capitalizing on heritage diversity as the basis for promoting domestic and international tourism; developing sustainable tourism within the confines of the world market and open up Nigeria as a major tourist destination in Africa through development of international tourism and promotion of domestic tourism. The main objectives of the policy are to:

- Protect and promote Nigeria cultural heritage as a resource for home grown socio-economic development.
- Encourage community and public partnerships in tourism development
- Generate foreign exchange, enhance income redistribution, alleviate poverty and create employment.
- Promote Nigeria as a desirable tourism destination within the context of Africa's cultural renaissance.
- Promote geo-political integration, healthy international cooperation and understanding, and
- Ensure environmental sustainability in the development of tourism resources (Oloidi, 2020).

Unfortunately, since then, the development of the sector has remained elusive and as such the performance of the sector has remained poor. Bassey and Egon (2016) aver that several areas of the policy require appraisal which he grouped into infrastructure, transportation and communication, socio-cultural, marketing and promotion, safari and eco-tourism, private sector participation and security issues.

Given the foregoing, this paper examines the potentials of the tourism sector to significantly contribute to Nigeria's economic development post COVID-19. The paper highlights some important tourist attractions in the country, the tourists experiences they offer, and their revenue earning cum development potentials. Consequently, the paper highlights the need to better integrate tourism into the development framework of the country concluding that doing so will engender greater economic development as the nation transits into the post COVID-19 period.

2. The Concept of Tourism

Tourism could be described as purposeful journey to a place of interest or a cultural environment. It is 'a temporary, short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work' (Ikwal, 1992) and their activities during the stay at each destination. Wikipedia (2000) defines it as travel for pleasure or business which may be international or within one's country. However, the World Tourism Organization sees it beyond the common perception of being a trip limited to holiday but as staying in places outside usual environment for leisure, business, acquisition of knowledge and other purposes. The International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (IASSET) in Ladan (2003) defines tourism as 'the sum total of the phenomenon and relationship arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence'. Tourism can be domestic or international.

Arts, crafts, culture and entertainments are the major factors in pleasure tourism. The tourist at times travel to distant parts of the world to see great buildings, natural landmarks and other works of Art, learn new languages, experience new culture and taste different cuisines. However, tourism is tied to a wide range of purposes; while some engage in the trip for acquisition of knowledge, some may decide to spend their holiday somewhere or it may be a market-targeted tourism. Regardless of the purpose, tourism is a major source of revenue for many countries and it affects the economy of both the source and the host country. Apart from its direct revenue effects as tourists pay to visits various sites, tourism also has indirect trickle-down effects on employment and revenue in many sectors including the retail trade sector, transportation and airline industries, and the hotel and hospitality sub-sectors of the economy.

3. Typologies of Tourist Attractions in Nigeria

Nigeria is divided into six geo-political regions (North-West, North-East, North Central, South-West, South East and South-South regions) and innumerable number of tourist attractions exist across these regions. Using the South-West region as a case for simplicity case, these typologies of tourist attractions include the following:

3.1. Beaches

The Southern part of Nigeria is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean; hence, this part of the nation is blessed with many beaches. Lagos being largely an aquatic environment has the largest number of beaches in this region. These include the Tropical, Bar, Eleko, Aivolli and Lekki beaches. The Bar beach which is situated at Victoria Island seems to be the most populous beach patronized by both local and foreign tourists. It is a popular site for hosting Music/ Entertainment programmes, religious activities, Beach parties etc.

3.2. Parks/Zoo

Even though there are many parks located at the region, old Oyo parks, Oyo and Agodi Park Ibadan seems to be the taste of the tourists. Zoological gardens are also located at the University of Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University respectively. The old Oyo Parks is one of the national parks in Nigeria located across northern Oyo state and Southern Kwara State. The nearest cities and towns adjoining the park include Said, Iseyin, Igboho, Sepeteri, Tede and Igbeti. It has a total land mass of 2,512km² and is rich in plant and animal resources including Buffaloes, Bushbuck and varieties of Birds.

3.3. Waterfalls/Springs

Erin-Ijesha waterfalls also known as Olumirin waterfall is located at Erin—Ijesha in Osun state. Similar to this is the Ikogosi warm water spring in Ekiti State. The misery of Ikogosi water spring as a tourist attraction Centre lies on the miracle of two springs of different temperature from different sources meeting at a confluence thus producing a warm spring. The warm spring has a temperature of about 70°C at the source and 37°C at the confluence.

3.4. Rocks

Rock formations are found at Igbeti and Ikirun in Osun state and in some parts of Ekiti state. The most outstanding rock in this region is Olumo rock situated at Abeokuta, the Ogun state capital. It has a height of 137 meters above the sea level. The rock is believed to be the fortress of the Egba people in the early 19th century during the inter-tribal wars which they used as both a hideout from the enemy and a vantage point to scout the enemy's advance leading to eventual triumph in war. Tourists climb this rock (since 2006 with the help of escalators) to have a first-hand feel of the experiences of the then Egba warriors and also appreciate the beauty of the now sprawling ancient city (Abeokuta) a large portion of which they can see from the top of the rock.

3.5. Museums

A Museum is a special building meant for preservation of ancient things. It is very pertinent to note that the first local museum in Nigeria was built at Esie community in Kwara state (North Central region) in 1933 when some stone images numbering about 800 were discovered in the bush. Today, museums are located at Ile-Ife, Ibadan, Osogbo, Esie, Abeokuta and Onikan in Lagos Island (the National museum). The National museum founded in 1957 has samples of Nigeria Arts and Cultures from archeological and ethnographical exhibits.

3.6. Cultural Festivals

Festivals are numerous in Nigeria as almost each of the community has their own festivals. The most popular ones in the South West region are the *Eyo* festival of Lagos Island, *Osun* festival of Osogbo, *Ojude-Oba* festival of Ijebu-Ode, *Oloku* festival of Okuku and *Olojo* festival of Ile-Ife. The *Osun Osugbo* festival comes up yearly around the month of August. It's

attracts thousands of tourists across the globes as the day remain the Founder's Day of Osogbo community. It is a two weeks programme that involves the exclusion of old beaded crown, lighting of sixteen-point lamp, as well as procession of *Osun* River on the final day. The *Eyo* festival (also known as *AdamuOrisa* festival is a festival unique to Lagos and it presents the tourist with unique events on the history of Lagos. It is a festival in which the *Eyo* Masquerade (which is unique to Lagos alone) comes out in their thousands in procession from their various *Iga* and finally assemble at the *Oba's* (King's) palace to pay homage and offer prayers for the land. The first of such possession in Lagos was on the 20th of February 1854 to commemorate the life of the Oba Akintoye (Okunlola, 2012).

3.7. Monuments/ Groove

Monuments are ancient or historical pieces that are large in size and not moveable from one place to the other. In the South West region, such monuments include the first story building in Nigeria located at Badagry, Susanne Wenger Massive Sculptures in Osun grove, Sussanne Wenger's house at Ibokun road which Egunjobi (2010) called 'Building sculpture' Osogbo and different shrines. *Opa* Oranmiyan staff at Enuwa, Ile-Ife which is believed to be the walking stick of *Oranmiyanomoluabiodede*, the great Prince of Ife, descendant of Oduduwa and King of Oyo around the year 1300. It is believed that this royal staff was erected century before at a period known as the 'classical' Ife period.

Fig. 1below provides examples of these different categories of tourist sites and attractions.

Figure 1: Selected Tourist Attractions in South West Nigeria

Source: Authors' Compilation from Various Websites (2020) (See Reference List)

The tourism potential of Nigeria is not limited to the South West Region but is spread across the country. In this regard, a collection of various tourist attractions across the various regions and states of the country is presented in Table 1 below.

State	ATTRACTION/DESCRIPTION
South - East	
Abia	Arochukwu Caves; National War Museum, Umuahia; Akwete Weaving Center, Akwete; Long Juju Shrine of Arochukwu; Arochukwu Waterfall; Museum of Colonial History; Mbonu-Emerem Museum of Arts, Aba; National Gallery of Art, Umuahia; Azumini Blue River; Amakama Wooden Cave, Umuahia; Museum of Antiquities, Ujari.
Bayelsa	Oloibiri Oil Museum; Slave Transit Hall; Igidi Shrine
Anambra	Ogbunike Caves; Rojeny Tourist Village; Mmanwu Festival, Enugu; AguduLake/ Gully; Aguleri Game Reserve; Igbo Ukwu.
Ebonyi	UmuanaAfikpo Golden Natural Lake Sand Beach.
Enugu	Mmanwu Festival; Nike Holiday Resort;Ezeagu Tourist Complex;Nkalagu Silicon Sand; Uzo-UwaniNatural Nature's Wonder; Iva Valley Coal Mine.
Imo	Oguta Lake Holiday Resort, Oguta; Ikeji Festival,Arondizogu; Palm Beach Holiday Resort;Awo-Amama Zoological and Botanical Garden,Nekede; Amusement Park, Owerri.
South - South	
Cross River	Kwa Falls, Kuya L.G.A.; Agbokim falls, Ikom; Obudu Cattle Ranch Resort; Coercopan Zoo Calabar; Cross River National Park; Drill Ranch; Calabar; Ekpe Masquerade; National Museum Rock with foot prints.
Delta	Chief Nana's Palace; Koko Port; Escravo's Beach.
Edo	Fugar Caves; Okomu Wildlife; Igwe Cultural Festival Benin; Oba's Palace, Benin; Igun Bronze Casting, Ramat Park; Sakpoba Holiday Resort; Asoro Shrine, Samorikal Hills.
Akwa Ibom	Ibeno Sand Beach; Ibom Mobil Oil Treatment; Ekpo Masquerade Festival; Oron Museum, Oron; Mary Slessor's House.
Rivers	Isaac Boro Park, Port Harcourt; King Jaja of Opobo Monument;Okrika Aquatic Stadium; Ifoko Beach, Ifoko; Port-Harcourt Tourist Beach.
South - West	
Ekiti	Arinta Falls, Ekiti West; Olosunta Hills, Ikere; Ikogosi Warm Springs; Ureje Dams, Ado -Ekiti
Ogun	Management Training Centre, Ogere; Adire Market, Itoko, Abeokuta; Olumo Rock, Abeokuta; BilikisuSungbo's Shrine, Oke -Eri; Obute-Oni Tourism Beach; Ancient Palace of the Alake of Egbaland; Ogunde Theatre Village, Ososa.
Ondo	Idanre Hills, Idanre; Owo Museum of Antiquities; Caves of Ashes, Isarun; Smokin Hills Golf Resort.
Osun	Mat Weaving Centre, Ipetu-Ilesha; Ooni's Palace, Ile-Ife; Ife Museum, Enuwa, Ile-Ife; Osun Osogbo Festival/Shrine; Ife Bronze, Ile-Ife; Oranmiyan Staff, Ile-Ife;
Oyo	Igbeti Hills, Igbeti; Trans—Amusement Park, Ibadan; Captain Bowen Tower, Ibadan; Agodi Gardens, Ibadan; Old Oyo National Park Wildlife; University of Ibadan Zoo/Zoological Garden; Alaafin of Oyo's Palace; Calabash Carving Centre, Oyo; Ado-Awaye Suspended Lake; AsoOke Weaving Centre, Iseyin.
Lagos	Bar beach, Lagos; Badagry Beach, Lagos;KaiyetoroMaiyegun Beach; ,Eleko Beach, Lekki Peninsula; Tarkwa Bay, Lagos; Water parks, Toyin Street, Ikeja;Apapa Amusement Park;Frankid Leisure Park, Festac; Whispering Palms, Iworo; Lekki Conservation Centre; National Museum, Onikan; Slave Relics Badagry; MUSON (Music Society of Nigeria) Centre, Onikan; Oba's Palace, Lagos, Igbo Iggunnu.
North East	
Adamawa	GashakaGumti National Park; Sukur (UNESCO World Monument heritage Site); Lamurde hot spring; Modibbo Adam'sTomb, Three Sister Rocks; Mandara Mountains, Kiri Dam.
Bauchi	Marshal Caves; Yankari Game Reserve\Natural Park; Wikki Warm Spring, Tafawa Balewa Tomb, Lame/Bura Game; Goji Rock Painting.
Borno	Laffy falls, Kuya L.G.A.; Lake Chad Basin; Abba Kari, Zoo, Maiduguri; Gwoza Hills; Sambisa Game Reserve; Kyarimi Amusement Resort; Rabeh's Fort
Gombe	Tula Highlands, The Famous Tangale Dome ShapedRock; DadinKowa Dam/Tomatoes Factory& Farms; BubaYero Tomb; Ashaka Cement Factory.
Taraba	Mambilla Holiday Resort, Gembu Man-made Gashaka, Gumbti National Park, Mamara Crocodile Pond, Kparnbo and FikiyuMysteirus Rocks
Yobe	Dufuna Canoe, Damaturu; HadejiaNguru Wetland;NguruWetland/Bird Sanctuary; Kuru-WakkoDunnes, Nguru; Bula Tura Oases, Nguru; Mai Madrinama's Palace; Dokshi Spring Water; Dagona Bids Sanctuary; Barakau Festival; Kamti Festival; Bade Fishing and Cultural Festival; Goya Valley; Daura Old Settlement
North West	
Zamfara	Kalele hippo Pools, Maru LGA
Sokoto	Tomb of Usman Dan Fodio, Sokoto, Sultan's Palace, Sokoto, Sokoto Museum
Jigawa	HadejiaWetlands; DabarmaginiBirds Sanctuary,Guri;BininKudu Rock Painting, Ringim Dyeing Pits; Baturiya Birds Sanctuary, Kiri-kassamma; Wawan Rafi Lake, Kazaure; Dutse Rock Range; Gwaram Forest Reserve; Emirs Palace Hadejia, Kazaure, Dutse, Gumel, Ringim; Kabarini Mai Tunbi (Captain Phillip's Tomb), Hadejia.
Kano	Roxy Amusement Park, Airport Road, Kano; Cooky Amusement Park, Kano; Hills and Valleys Amusement Park Kano; Bagauda Lake/Tiga Lake Resort; Tourist Camp. Kano; Audu Bako Zoo, Kano; Kano Salla Durbar; GidanMakama Museum; Emir of Kano's Palace; KofarMata Dyeing Pit, Kano; Bagauda Lake Resort Conference Center, Kano.
Katsina	300 Years old Gobarau Minaret Katsina; 10 th Century Kusugu Well; 11 th Century Katsina City Walls of 7 Gates; Jibia Holiday Resort, Jibia.

State	Attraction/Description
North West	
Kebbi	Argungu Fishing Festival; Anta Museum, Argungu Museum, Girmace Shrine, Zuru.
Kaduna	Luggard Hall and Government Monument Bridge; General Hassan Usman Park, Kaduna, Nok Terra Cotta, Nok Village; Kaduna National Museum, Emir of Zazzau's Palace, Zaria, Jacaranda Pottery, Kaduna.
North Central	
Benue	Ushongo Hills, Ushongo; Ikwe Holiday Resort; Enemabia Warm Spring; Okpoya Kwag—hir Puppet festival; Dajo pottery, Makurdi; Tiv Anger Weavers; J. S Tarka Foundation Cultural Centre, Makurdi; Montane Game Reserve; The Rare Manatee; Kastina-Ala River.
Kogi	Ita-Okueta Weaving, Okene; Ata Igala's Palace, Idah; Inikpi (Shrine) Statue Idah; Kpata Rock, Bassa; Confluence Zone, Lokoja; Relics of Colonial History, Lokoja; Lord Luggard's Residence & Office, Lokoja; Warlord War Cenotaph; Iron of Liberty
Kwara	Owu Waterfalls, Owe-Kajola; Wreckage of Mungo Park Boat and Mungo Park Monument, Jebba; Owe Kajita Falls; Tomb of Past Emirs, Ilorin; Ubo Aiyegunle Lakes; Esie Museum; Asa Dam, Ilorin; Imoleboja Rock Shelter; Dada Pottery; Jebba Railway Station, National Museum, Ilorin; University of Ilorin Biological Garden
Nassarawa	Peperuwa Lake, Late Captain Maloney Tomb, Oku, Akpa Picnic Centre, Ogan Fishing and Cultural, Festival, Akiri Warm Spring with Curative Power in Awe L.G.A., Akin Salt Village, 145km, from Lafia Town, Dorna Darn, Doma L.G.A., Dyeing Pits and Calabash Carving in Lafia, Hunki Ox-Bow Lake, Awe L.G.A., Fanin Ruwa Falls, Keana Salt Village, Keana L.G.A., Nurnan Rocks, Akwaga L.G.A., Ara Rocks Eggon 1-lills and Caves Keffi Hunting Festival
Niger	Gurara Falls, Gurara L.G.A.; Zuma Rock, Near Suleija; Kanji Lake National Park; Brass/Glass Works, Bida Arts & Crafts Centre; Shiroro dam; Mayanka Water Falls
Plateau	Assop Falls, Rivom LGA, Share Hills, Near Jos, Riyom Rock formation, Rivom, International Youth Tourism Centre, Kurra Falls, Rayfield Resort, Jos; Jos; Wild Life Park Zoo, Naraguta Leather Works Centre, Solomon Lar Amusement Park
FCT Abuja	Abuja Amusement Park; Abuja gardens; Abuja Zoological Garden, ECOWAS Secretariat, Women Development Resort; Abuja Plant Nursery; Aso Rock, Usman Dam; IBB Golf Course, Jabi Dam and Holiday Resort.

Table 1: Major Tourist Attractions in Nigeria by Region and States
Source: Authors' Compilation From Various Websites (2020) (See Reference List)

4. Development Potentials of Tourism in Nigeria

Before the discovery of oil at Oloibiri in 1956, Nigeria was not a financially rich country but its macroeconomic fundamentals were good due to prudent management of its resources. However, with the breakthrough in the oil market, the government neglected the other sectors especially the productive sectors of agriculture and manufacturing eventually leading to the present poor macroeconomic and development performance of the country. Now, the advent of COVID-19 has created another opportunity for a paradigm shift from oil to an exploration of other sectors such as tourism to act as critical growth drivers so that the mistakes of the past would not be repeated. As Gonzales (2009) warned 'those who do not remember the past are doomed to repeat it'. It is in this light that the recent efforts of some state governments in Nigeria to harness the potential of tourism for economic development is commendable. For example, the Lagos State government did assessment of the impact of the pandemic on the industry while also inaugurating a committee headed by a foremost Nollywood artiste, Mrs. Joke Silva, to draw out a roadmap on how to reposition the industry post COVID-19 (Balogun, 2020).

Tourism has several economic impacts that makes it a potential driving force for economic growth and development. Firstly, tourism spending contributes to a nation's gross domestic product and has a multiplier effect on the economy. Secondly, tourism creates employment for people in the travel and hospitality industries. Thirdly, it attracts new investment (foreign and domestic) in tourism facilities like hotels, resorts, parks and transportation and leads to the build-up of new infrastructure inroads, energy facilities etc. Fourthly, through a backward integration strategy, tourism supports the agriculture sector and thereby helps in alleviating poverty (Khan, Bibi, Lorenzo, Lyu and Babar, 2020). Consequently, tourism creates income and employment directly as well as indirectly through various economic linkages that multiplies the impact of tourism spending in the economy.

The contribution of tourism to global economic activity is estimated at around 5% while its contribution to employment is estimated in the order of 6-7% of the overall number of direct and indirect jobs worldwide (Ekanayake and Long, 2012). In addition, the travel industry created about 21 million jobs in Africa for the period 2011–2014 which is 7.1% of all occupations in Africa for the period (United Nations, 2017). Tourism is one of the top three foreign revenue generating economic sectors globally representing the total of 7% of overall global export (Van der Schyff, Meyer & Ferreira, 2019). In Nigeria, Kushal (2017) in Omodero (2019) reveals that the hospitality industry contributed about 4.8% to the GDP and 1.6% to employment in 2016.

Given the variety of tourist attractions available in Nigeria as reviewed above, it is clear that the industry has the capacity to generate the investment, employment and income needed to put the economy on a sustainable development path after the current crisis. However, this calls for massive investment in the sector to improve infrastructure and facilities. Actually, the need for the development of the tourism sector had earlier been recognized by the government. In 2005, the Federal Government of Nigeria in collaboration with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) facilitated the Nigerian Tourism Development Master Plan. The Plan was aimed at developing sustainable tourism by

capitalizing on heritage diversity as the basis for promoting domestic and international tourism (World Tourism Organisation, 2006). Assessing the impact of the plan, statistics revealed in Fig. 2 shows that after its implementation, tourist arrivals into the country increased significantly moving from 1,010,000 in 2005 to 1,555,000 in 2010 before declining to a minimum value of 486,000 in 2012.

Figure 2: International Tourism, Number of Arrivals in Nigeria
Source: World Tourism Organization, 2015

Figure 3 shows the international tourism receipts (% of exports) for Nigeria for 1995 – 2014. The figure shows that international receipts from tourism as a ratio of total export earnings in Nigeria reached a peak in 2002 (1.4%) before declining in 2003 and reaching its lowest level in 2004 (0.13%). However, after the introduction of the tourism masterplan, international tourism receipt regained value increasing consistently until 2009 when it again declined due to the effect of the global financial crisis. The above performance of the tourism sector becomes significant when placed in perspective of the fact that over 95% of Nigeria's earnings from export typically comes from oil export. This signifies the fact that if properly developed, the tourism sector can significantly assist in diversifying the economy away from oil and reducing the nation's over dependence on oil export in the post COVID-19 period.

Figure 3: Nigeria - International Tourism Receipts (% of Exports)
Source: World Tourism Organization, 2015

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examines the potentials of tourism to generate revenue for the government and catalyse economic development. It is a regret that Nigeria has continued to be a country in which people are suffering from 'poverty in the midst of plenty' despite being endowed with various natural resources and tourism potentials from which it can draw huge revenue. Hence, there is need to seriously consider the exploration of the country's tourism potential as a means of boosting government revenue and driving economic growth and development. Generally, it is much cheaper to visit Africa given the weak currencies of many of the nations in the continent. However, North Africa, East Africa and South Africa have remained the primary destinations of tourists in Africa (due to better packaging of their tourism industry) with relative neglect of West Africa including Nigeria (Abdulrahman, Muhammad and Muhammad, 2014). There is therefore a need to re-package the Nigerian tourism industry while at the same time investing in critical infrastructure that will make the industry appealing to tourists. Towards achieving this in the Post COVID-19 period, the following recommendations become pertinent.

- As revealed above, statistics show that tourism arrivals and earnings respond positively to the development of the Nigerian Tourism Development Masterplan. Consequently, there is the need to ensure that the Nations Policy on Tourism and the Tourism Masterplan are revised to take cognizance of new developments since its formulation. It must also be integrated into the nation's development framework as a key driver of the economy. Policy must be friendly to private investors and the local community.
- There should be adequate funding of the tourism sector by the government. Budgetary allocation for the development of the sector should be significant and comparable to that of prioritized sectors such as education

and health. This will not only aid the development of critical infrastructure that are essential for improving the operational performance of the industry but it will also facilitate easy promotion of the industry in the global market.

- There should be significant improvement in the security apparatus of the country to improve tourist's confidence and willingness to travel to the country. It is disheartening that there has been significant increase in cases of kidnapping and violent crimes in Nigeria in recent times. This is a serious impediment as tourists would be unwilling to visit an insecure location. Therefore, government should bring the insecurity situation in the country under control and see to the provision of adequate security at major tourist centers and roads.
- The renovation, upgrade and improvement of the facilities available in the country's major tourist centers should be carried out to improve the comfort of the tourists and their tourism experience.
- There should be huge improvement in the publicity given to the country's tourists attractions and such publicity should be global in nature. Advertisement in both foreign and local media should be embarked upon to showcase the beauty and uniqueness of the centres and thus attract tourists.
- Finally, efforts should be made to improve citizen's knowledge and appreciation of tourism by including tourism education in the curriculum of higher institutions of learning as part of the general studies programme on the one hand and as an independent course on the other. This will boost domestic tourism in the long run which is a key objective of the Nigerian Tourism Development Commission's Vision 2025. The Osun State University seems to be the only institution offering tourism as an independent course presently.

6. References

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