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Exploring the Three-Way Destination Safety Solution to Crisis Management in Tourist Destinations in Rural Nigeria

Elochukwu A. Nwankwo

Abstract

Development of tourist destinations is among topical issues in national discourse for economic growth and sustainability. The past two decades have witnessed massive development and investment in tourist destinations in rural areas. This is owing to the fact that rural tourism has been identified as among the development options for rural communities in most developing nations. Of recent, crisis and other safety issues have been among the militating factors against tourist destinations hence the cry for destination safety. These are said to emanate from the activities of the three major principals in the management of tourist destinations (hosts, tourism resources, and tourists/visitors). Incidentally, destination safety discourse is source of worry for these principal factors in tourist destination management. This has left many tourist destinations devastated, abandoned and abused. However, this chapter proposal would seek to identify the way out of this predicament. It tends to explore the meaning and application of the three-way destination safety (TWaDeSS) model in the management of crisis at tourist destinations in rural Nigeria. This will not only promote harmony among the three major principals in tourist destination but also enhance the rate of investment as a result of quality crisis control in these destinations.

Keywords: crisis management, tourist destinations, destination safety, three-way safety solution, rural areas, tourist safety, rural tourism

1. Introduction

It is no more news that the state or nature of tourist destinations promotes tourist inflows. This is applicable to all kinds of tourist destination not minding the location and/or ownership. Some notable tourism theories, like Sunlust and Wonderlust theory [1], pull and push theory [2] and inner-directed and out-directed theory [3], give further explanations to the position of tourist destinations in the determination of the extent of tourist inflows as a result of tourist choices. The implications being that the destination's image and nature control over 75% of tourist choices to visit or not to visit the destination. Adequate branding and relevant sustainable management practices are among the solutions to sustainable tourism development.

Various kinds of tourist destinations abound, but emphasis here is on rural tourism which has been defined as a kind of tourism experience that has to do with visits to rural communities or villages that are separated from urban areas. Attractions that motivate such tourism experiences include sociocultural life styles and astonishing natural landscapes, among others [4, 5]. Moreover, Nwankwo et al. [6] informed that rural tourism is a motivation for self-development option for those living in the rural areas. This view was also supported by Tsephe and Obono [7] when they gave benefits of rural tourism to include foreign exchange earnings, creation of employment, opportunities for culture exposition and improved infrastructural and superstructural base, among others.

Many rural communities from various geopolitical zones of Nigeria have made frantic efforts to benefit from the gains of rural tourism, through harnessing of various tourism resources that have been lying fallow in their localities. Also many relevant academic researches and media documentations have directed the focus of these rural communities to those areas they have comparative advantage, to generate more tourist/visitors inflows to their communities. Despite these, rural tourism in Nigeria has been faced with some problems over the years, thereby depriving most of these rural communities of the opportunity to maximize the gains of rural tourism to rural development and sustainability. Among the critical aspects of these challenges is the issue of destination crisis that have ravaged the growth and sustainability of rural tourism initiatives in rural areas in Nigeria. However, this study is an attempt to seek for ways of tackling these challenges and to check various crises that have huge negative implication for sustainable tourism development in rural areas. To this regard, this study is aimed at considering the application of three-way destination safety solution to crisis management in rural Nigeria.

2. Concept definitions

There are some concepts in this study that may need further clarifications to enhance understanding of the basic argument in the study. Some of these concepts include tourist destination, tourist safety, host safety, tourism investment safety and destination safety, among others. Both the general understanding of these concepts and their peculiar understanding for the purpose of this study shall be briefly considered.

First and foremost, tourist destination has to do with a definite location with interesting tourist attractions/motivations. Such locations have the tendencies of attracting tourists and other visitors from different places. Alyward [8], Mannell and Iso-Ahola [9] and Basher and Ajloni [10] in their separate studies see tourist destination as a particular location with active pull factors for tourism experience and that of visitor experience for nontourists.

Tourist safety is another widely used concept in this study that needs clarifications. For the purpose of this study, tourist safety is defined as all the hazards and their control measures that pertain to tourists in a given tourist experience. From this definition, *tourist safety* is approached from two dimensions. The first looks at all the hazards and threats against the lives, properties and peace of tourists including their causes, while on a particular tourist experience. Measures have to do with all the control measures that have been designed to check those hazards whether sufficient or insufficient, active or passive or efficient or inefficient [11–13]. The state of tourist safety for a particular tourist destination is among the determining factors for the growth and sustainability of the destination.

Host safety as a concept has to do with the total state of safety for the members of the host community who are living within the tourist destination. For the purpose of this study, this safety has to do with the feeling and condition of safety of the host with respect to tourism activities in their locality. This is pertinent; hence their feeling of perilous in their environment as a result of an existing tourism project in their area could be detrimental to the growth and sustainability of such tourism projects.

Moreover, tourism investment safety is the state of safety of tourism projects or schemes in a given locality. This is comprised of safety threats, their causes and existing measures to check those safety threats, for a particular tourism project or investment. Unsafe tourism investment will not only deter further or future investments but will equally hamper sustainability of the existing tourism projects and undermine the potentialities of various underdeveloped tourism resources in a particular locality. Activities of members of the host community, dubious visitors/tourists and unchecked criminal activities can contribute to poor safety state of tourism projects.

Another notable concept used in the study is destination safety. This is quite different from host safety. Destination safety has to do with overall safety of the tourist destination. In this case, both the safety of hosts, tourists/visitors, tourist attractions, tourism projects and some other safety demands in the destination are considered. Unsafe tourism destination undermines existing and prospective tourism projects in a particular locality [6, 11, 14]. The state of safety for tourist destination has many implications for the *pull factors* of the destination in tourist's perceptions and assumptions while making destination choices.

I have tried to briefly look at the definitions and meanings of some of the notable concepts in this study. The next discourse will be on rural tourism and crisis management in rural Nigeria.

3. Rural tourism and crisis management in rural Nigeria

Rural tourism as a concept was briefly considered in the previous subheading as a kind of tourism activity that is motivated by tourism resources in the rural areas. In such tourism activities, the "pull factors" are always from the socio-cultural aspects of the people and their natural landscapes, where some natural formations like forests, caves, rivers, rock shelters and mountains, among others, form part of the pull factors. Nigeria as a nation has many rural areas with high poverty level as a result of much public and private sector concentration on the urban and semiurban areas for meaningful development and investments in the infrastructural superstructural base. Also, the incessant rural to urban migration has not helped matters as the constant desire of rural dwellers to migrate to the urban and semiurban areas has contributed to huge instability in the labour and skill force of the rural areas in the country. Agriculture and tourism are being explored to give relevance to these rural communities by boosting their economic base.

Most of the rural communities in Nigeria are blessed with notable tourism resources that have potentialities for socio-economic development if carefully harnessed. These tourism resources in the rural areas in Nigeria are classified into two: natural tourism resources and cultural tourism resources. Natural tourism resources in these rural communities include caves, rock shelters, rock overhangs, waterfalls, mountains, rivers and streams, forests and other natural formations. The cultural tourism resources include the sociocultural aspects of the people like

traditional dances, notable festivals, masquerading, attractive ceremonies, food typologies, belief systems and ritual practices and traditional outfits or attire, among others.

However, some of these rural communities have harnessed some of their tourism resources for meaningful tourism development that would improve their standard of living. While some of these communities have actualized their rural tourism base and transform their respective communities to *rural tourist destinations*, their counterparts have not been able to achieve similar heights, thereby leaving their tourism resources in a deplorable state.

Crisis has been defined as "...negative changes in the security, economic, political, societal, or environmental affairs, especially when they occur abruptly, with little or no warning" ([15] p.3). In tourism studies or management, crisis can be said to be unwanted circumstance that come with huge negativities on the tourist destination, host community, tourists, visitors, tourist attractions and tourism schemes or project in a given area. The consequences are better imagined than witnessed as it might lead to the closure or abandonment of tourism projects or schemes in a given area. In most cases huge capital investments and natural resources are lost to this situation. The causes could either intrinsic or extrinsic depending on the nature of the crisis. Intrinsic has to do with those crises that are caused from within the tourism project circle, i.e. the stakeholders and/or natural factors. The stakeholders may include members of the host community, visitors/tourists, tourism project managers, tourism project developers and tourism resources (developed or undeveloped), among others. The natural factors has to do with some unforeseen natural occurrences like earthquakes, erosion, heavy rains, weather conditions, volcanoes, land movements and some other similar natural occurrences that are not within the control of man. Then the extrinsic factors have to do with some other factors that could cause crisis that are not within the list given above. It could be persons outside of the defined stakeholders, intercommunal crisis, invaded criminal activities and legal litigations from outside the community, among others.

Crisis management on other hand has been defined as "...the overall coordination of an organisation's response to a crisis, in an effective, timely manner, with the goal of avoiding or minimizing damage to the organisation's profitability, reputation, or ability to operate and often involves the need to make quick decisions on the basis of uncertain or incomplete information" ([15] p.3). In tourism management, crisis management can be said to be programmes designed and implemented to check possible crisis in tourist destinations or on tourism projects with the aim of either avoiding the crisis and its consequences or managing or controlling the consequences of both expected and unexpected crisis at tourist destinations. This view was supported by Colpofer [15] in the following lines:

> *CM includes the development of plans, based upon an integral approach with internal and external organizations to reduce the risk of a crisis occurring and to deal with any crises that do arise, and the implementation of these plans so as to minimize the impact of crisis and assist the organization to recover from them and restart its normal activities as quickly as possible. ([15], p. 3).*

However, safety issues has been identified as among the major sources of crisis at rural tourism destinations [6, 11, 14, 16–19]. Rural tourism projects in Nigeria of recent have been faced with multiplicity of crisis arising from safety issues. Poorly managed safety issues have given rise to high safety and risk perceptions among major actors in rural tourism projects in Nigeria and in some other sub-Saharan countries. This has sandwiched rural tourism projects in a

crisis state with negative consequences on the sustainability of these tourism projects and investments. Untold consequences of crisis at rural tourist destinations in Nigeria are major concerns for the principal actors in this type of tourism. It discourages participation and involvement among these actors who may prefer to be alive and/or unembarrassed than engaging in an adventure or practice that may put his life or properties to avoidable risks. Suspension and/or refusal of rural tourism projects is a major blow for the socio-economic development of rural areas in Nigeria.

4. The concept of three-way destination safety solution to crisis management (TWaDeSS model)

Three-way destination safety solution otherwise known as TWaDeSS model is a new concept in destination management that is proposed for tackling crisis arising from safety issues at rural tourism destinations. This model is product of long-term field/research experience on rural tourism development in Nigeria. It is anchored on three variables of host community, tourism resources and tourists/visitors to guarantee sustainable crisis management in rural tourism destinations. The TWaDeSS model is expected to be conducted by the developer/investors at the various stages of the rural tourism project. The model has three major stages that are to be followed accordingly by the developers/investors of tourism projects in rural areas to yield expected positive results (**Figure 1**).
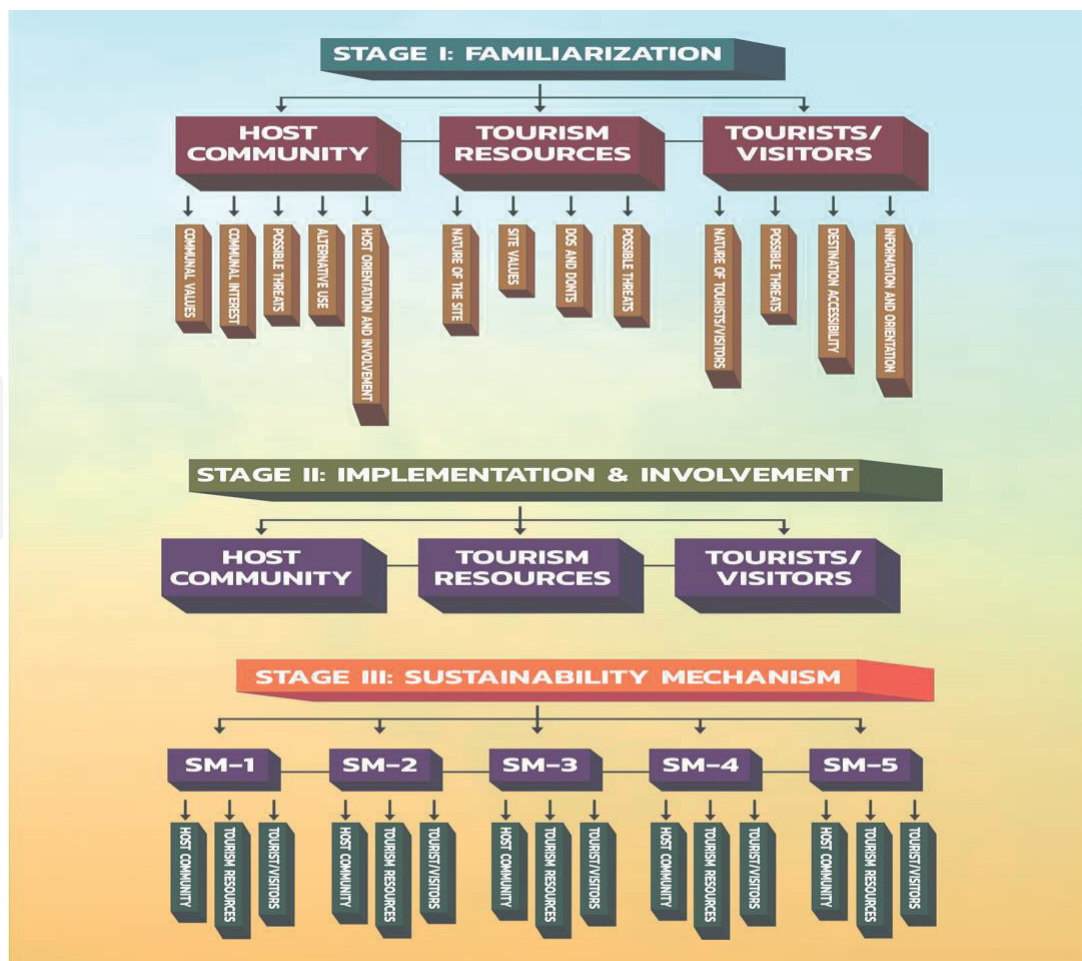

Figure 1.
The flow chart for TWaDeSS model and its application.

5. The structure and premise of TWaDeSS model

Stage I: familiarization (pre-project execution). This has to do with sustained efforts to have a prior knowledge of the three principal actors in the tourism destination (host community, tourism resources and tourists/visitors) through provision of answers to some basic questions (**Figure 2**). The premise of TWaDeSS in this stage is anchored on the following variables and their basic questions:

a. Host Community: The following findings and considerations are necessary:

- Communal Values: what are the indigenous values of this community? What do they hold tenaciously in common since their inception?

- Communal Interest: what is their interest as a community with respect to the targeted tourism resources and rural development needs?

- Hazards from Tourists/Visitors: what are the possible hazards and other hazards that are likely to be experienced from the presence of tourists/visitors in their community? And how do you intend to handle such hazards on a long-term basis?

- Alternative Mechanisms: A close consideration would reveal that the targeted tourism resources serve one or more needs to the community. How do you intend to provide alternative sources to serve the need(s)? Would they appreciate or make do with the alternative provision?

- Orientation and Involvement: How do you inform them of the proposed projects? How do you get them involved in the proposed project? Would they be comfortable with the nature of their involvement?

b. Tourism Resources: The following findings and considerations are necessary:

- Nature of the Site: What is the historical background of the site? What is the expected carrying capacity of the site?

- Site Values: what is the primary and secondary value of the site to the host community? Does the site have any tourism value? Is the tourism value significant enough to merit tourism development initiatives? What is the nature of tourists/visitors the site is likely to attract?

- Dos and Don'ts: What are the dos and don'ts of the site? Can these dos and don'ts be managed if the site is developed? Are these dos and don'ts significant enough to deter possible site development for tourism schemes?

- Hazards/Threats: What are the possible hazards the site is likely to experience from visitors/tourists. How can this be checked if developed? What are the possible threats or hazards the site may likely experience from developers? And how can they be checked to guarantee sustainability of the site and the tourism project?

c. Tourists/Visitors: The following findings and consideration are necessary.

- Nature of Tourists/Visitors: What category of tourists/visitors is likely to be attracted to the site? What is the geographic and demographic characteristic
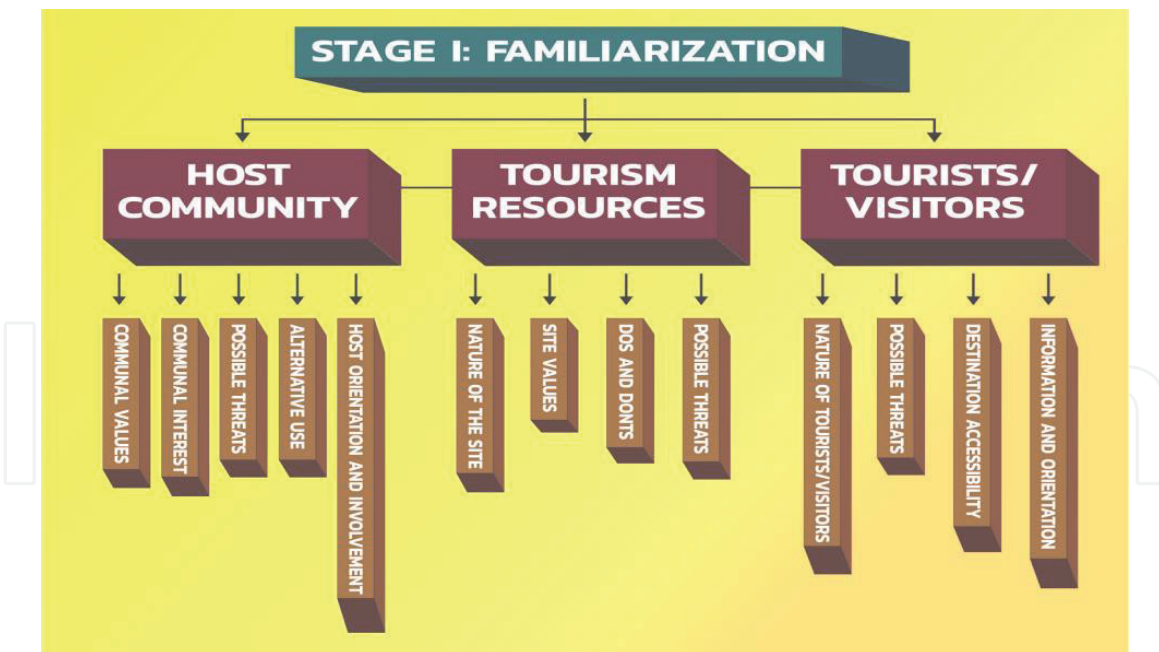
Figure 2.
Pre-project execution stage of TWaDeSS model.

of expected tourists/visitors? What are the possible attitudes of the expected tourists/visitors?

• Hazards/Threats: What are the possible threats or hazards tourists might face at the site? What are the possible threats tourists/visitors might face from the host community? What are the possible threats tourists visitors might face from the infrastructural and superstructural provisions at the site? Are there possible threats/hazards against tourists and visitors from people outside the community? How do you check these categories of threats?

• Destination Accessibility: How is tourists/visitors' access to information pertaining to the site like? What about physical access to the site? Are there encumbrances to physical access to the site? What is the friendlier medium for access to the site? What is the level of comfort on the site for tourists/ visitors as it concerns accessibility? Can tourists/visitors move alone or with guides in the destination?

• Information and Orientation: What is the necessary information the tourist/ visitor need to know about the site? How do you package the information? How do you put across the information? Will there be need for orientation programmes? How do you package the orientation to yield the needed result?

Stage II: implementation and involvement (project execution). In this stage, answers to basic questions are provided on how best to integrate these principal actors in the project implementation through involvement and other necessary considerations (**Figure 3**).

a. Host Community: What is the role of members of the host community in the project implementation? How can they get involved to achieve sustainable result?

b. Tourism Resources: With the prior knowledge of the tourism resources aris-ing from the first stage, there is need to make necessary considerations on the

Figure 3.
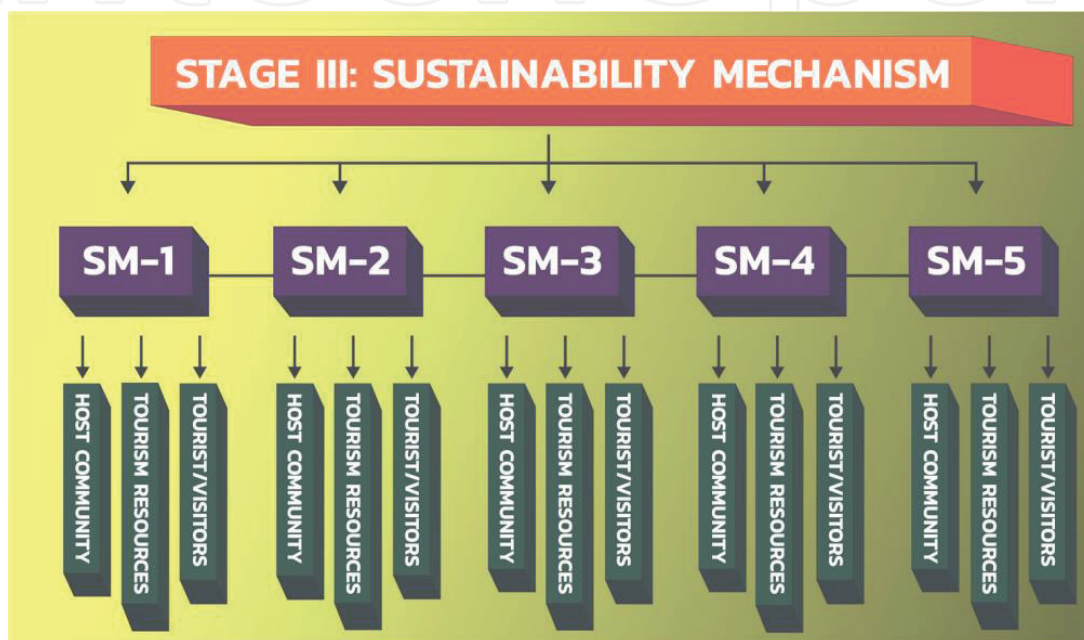*Project execution stage of TWaDeSS model.*

Figure 4.
Post-project execution stage of TWaDeSS model.

nature and value of the tourism resources during project implementation and involvement plans.

c. Tourists/Visitors: There is need to factor in the position and preference of the tourist/visitor during implementation to reduce the risk of wasteful investment.

Stage III: sustainability mechanism (post-project execution). This stage comes after the completion of the project, and the project is put to use. It targets the consolidation of the project towards ensuring its sustainability in the rural area. The five mechanisms are to focus on the three principal factors at the tourist destination (**Figure 4**). And the process is expected to be carefully followed from the first mechanism to the last mechanism. It has the following processes:

d. Sustainability Mechanism 1—Consultation and Opinion Gathering Mechanism (SM-1):

- Host community

- Tourism resources

- Tourists/visitors

Consultation and opinion gathering mechanism is aimed at eliciting critical and genuine information on the existing project as it concerns the three principal factors with a view to evaluating the existing project in the subsequent mechanism.

e. Sustainability Mechanism 2—Evaluation and Feedback Mechanism (SM-2):

- Host community

- Tourism resources

- Tourists/visitors

Evaluation and feedback mechanism is targeted at evaluating the existing tourism project as it concerns the three principal actors and giving of feedback to guide future policy directions as it pertains to rural tourism projects in Nigeria and other developing nations.

f. Sustainability Mechanism 3—Restrategization and Consolidation Mechanism (SM-3):

- Host community

- Tourism resources

- Tourists/visitors

This mechanism which comes after the evaluation mechanism is focused on addressing the major concerns of the existing project as was revealed during the evaluation. This is done from the perspectives of the three principal factors in the tourist destination (host community, tourism resources and tourists/visitors).

g. Sustainable Mechanism 4—Future impact concerns (SM-4):

- Host community

- Tourism resources

- Tourists/visitors

This mechanism is focused on impact concerns of those identified strategies as they affect the three principal actors in the tourist destination. This is expected to give direction for the final mechanism which focuses on efforts to bridge the gap between these three principal actors and the tourism project in the rural area.

h. Sustainability Mechanism 5—Dialog and Orientation Mechanism (SM-5):

- Host community

- Tourism resources

- Tourists/visitors

This mechanism is the last of them in stage 3 of TWaDeSS model. The emphasis of this mechanism is on how to maintain cordial relationship and tolerance among the three principal actors in tourist destination. This is expected to motivate the sustainability of the existing tourism project.

6. Conclusion

Safety threats, considerations, perceptions and expectations are the major stimulus for crises at rural tourism destinations. The understanding of this fact within the confines of the three principal actors in tourist destinations is among the responsibilities of investors and developers in rural tourism projects. TWaDeSS model is proposed in this study to manage these challenges at rural tourism destination with a view to maximizing the gains of rural tourism development to rural developments in Nigeria.

The technicality in the application of this model is that it demands great attention to details. Each of the stages of the model demands through consideration and application to yield expected results. Results from the previous stage inform the nature of the next stage. Also the model will be more useful in those rural communities with respected traditional authorities. Both public and private sector investments in rural tourism projects have to understand these technicalities to have a good return on investment. The periodic use and/or involvement of stakeholders and/or constituted management committees is highly recommended; hence it will aid in establishing tolerance and coexistence among these principal actors to manage upsurge of destination crisis at the rural tourism destinations.

Efforts have been made to propose a viable model in this work to enhance the gains of rural tourism initiatives to rural development in Nigeria and some other sub-Saharan countries. Application of this model to other situations and constructive critiques would strengthen the depth of the model in rural tourism development. Each stage of this TWaDeSS model is critical and significant in sustainable crisis management at tourist destinations. It is however the principal responsibility of the developers/planners of tourism projects to follow these stages to completely eradicate crisis at tourist destinations or reduce the occurrence to the barest minimum.

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