

IMPACT OF POVERTY INCIDENCE AND SEVERITY IN NIGERIA: THE TOURISM PERSPECTIVE

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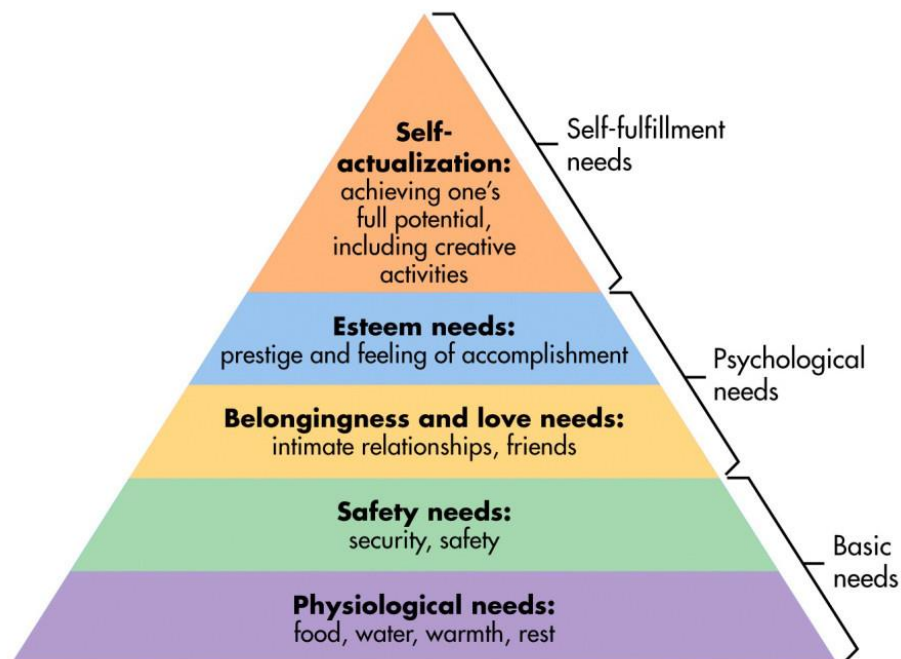
ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article History:</i> Received: 19 Jun 2021 Revised: 13 Aug 2021 Accepted: 15 Dec 2021 Available Online: 5 Jan, 2022</p> <hr/> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Poverty, Tourism, Incidence, Severity and Nigeria</p> <hr/> <p><i>JEL Classification:</i></p>	<p>This study reviews the incidence and severity of poverty as it relates to tourism in Nigeria. It examines the causes and effects of tourism and how it affects tourism participation. The study employs the Maslow's Hierarchy of needs as its basis for theoretical underpinning. The study relied on secondary data and literatures for its review. The study found out that the major reasons for underdevelopment in the area is neglect of the tourism sector of the country which in turn caused many more people to become poorer. It recommends that government should diversify and work on tourism potentials especially in host communities which are majorly rural areas. This in turn is expected to alleviate poverty in the communities. It is expected that this work will be useful for the purpose of politicking and making policies that will better the life of the poor.</p>

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria with her vast land-cover and enormous population is blessed with many resources (both natural and human) but poverty is still rampant in the land. Poverty is defined as lack of enough resources to provide the necessities of life which include food, clean water, shelter and clothing. It also includes inability to access health care, education, transportation and other goodies of life. Poverty in a broad sense refers to insecurity of good life (Okalaw, 2021). In Nigeria, the rate of poverty is alarming and ever increasing with larger population getting poorer by the day due to incessant economic problem and inflation. As at 2018, about 86.9 million of the Nigeria population is living in extreme poverty (Kazeem, 2018). Kazeem also noted that Nigeria has become the poverty capital of the world owing to the fact that almost 50% of her total population are living in abject and absolute poverty. According to World Bank, the multidimensional poverty in Nigeria stands at 45.6% in 2018 with a GDP growth of -1.8% in 2020. Poverty in Nigeria has caused more harm than good because by the day, more people are exposed to it than ever before in the country. O'Neill (2021) noted that Nigeria's inflation has been higher than the average for sub-Saharan and African countries and there is no hope of significant decrease anywhere. He noted that, when inflation rate rises, price rises in all sectors of the economy thus leading to increased unemployment and causing debt and poverty. In a report by Statistica(2021), Nigeria's inflation has increased by 16% in 2021 as against 11% in 2019.

Tourism in Nigeria has been affected by as many problems as possible but it is obvious that all these problems are caused by poverty. Tourism being an activity that rests on people's participation relies so much on money for its existence. The first needs for any potential tourist is his/her disposable income. This paper thus analyzed poverty severity in Nigeria with special reference to tourism participation. This work relied on secondary data and discusses different views of scholars and experts as it relates to tourism participation. For the purpose of this study, the Maslow's hierarchy of needs fits in into the analytics. The Maslow's hierarchy of needs according to McLeod (2020) is a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the needs are: physiological (food and clothing), safety (job security), love and belonging needs (friendship), esteem, and self-actualization (figure 1).



The basic need of man is the first stage (psychological needs). Without this, it will hard for man to achieve other needs.

Tourism does not fall in the category of physiological needs and safety needs because for any tourist centre, it must satisfy the first two needs. According to Simkova and Holzner (2014), every tourism destination must meet two basic needs – physiological needs and safety. In tourism, the physiological needs are connected to gastronomy and accommodation. In rural tourism, the supply side is usually concentrated on food and customs adherent to the particular region or village. It can be represented by products such as fruit, vegetables, home-made bread, cakes, mushroom specialties, herbal tea, milk, potatoes, or organic bio-products with distinctive traits in Czech cuisine, habits and traditions and generally safety and security of prospective patrons. It is thus concluded that tourism belong to the class of the top 3 stages of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This implies that most of the tourists must have achieved the physiological and safety level before thinking of participation in tourism. While the rich are major patrons in tourist centres, the centres are mostly located around the poor.

The Maslow's hierarchy of needs shows the relationship between levels that can be attained before engaging in tourism. In other literatures, tourism is expected to enrich the poor and make them better but the reverse is the case in Nigeria. Most tourism potentials are found in rural areas where most poor resides but could not change their lives because the poor are too poor to feed not to talk of embarking on development of these potentials that has been neglected by the Nigerian government and other well-meaning NGOs. A member of the House of Representatives, Engr. Omoregie Ogbeide-Ihama has decried the neglect of the culture and tourism sector of the economy, the lawmaker remarked that the development makes a mockery of the quest by government to diversify the economy (The Guardian, 2017). This shows that up till now, the Nigerian government over-reliant on oil proceeds has over shadowed other sectors and limited their growth and development. The tourism sector accounts for 10.4% of the world's GDP but in Nigeria, it accounts for less than 5% because of negligence on the part of government. The poor couldn't partake in tourism as a result of lack of disposable income; with tourism, they are supposed to be lifted out of poverty but the negligence of government in the development of the sector still keeps them in poverty. This study aims at looking at poverty from the tourism side. The study looked into the causes, effects and possible solution out of poverty with reference to tourism development.

2. CAUSES OF POVERTY

- i. **Corruption:** In Nigeria, the most understandable language is corruption. There is corruption in every sphere of the economy. According to trading economics (2021), Nigeria ranked 149th in 2020 as against 146th in 2019 (see figure 2). Even with the present administration’s promise to curb out corruption. It has been on the rise.

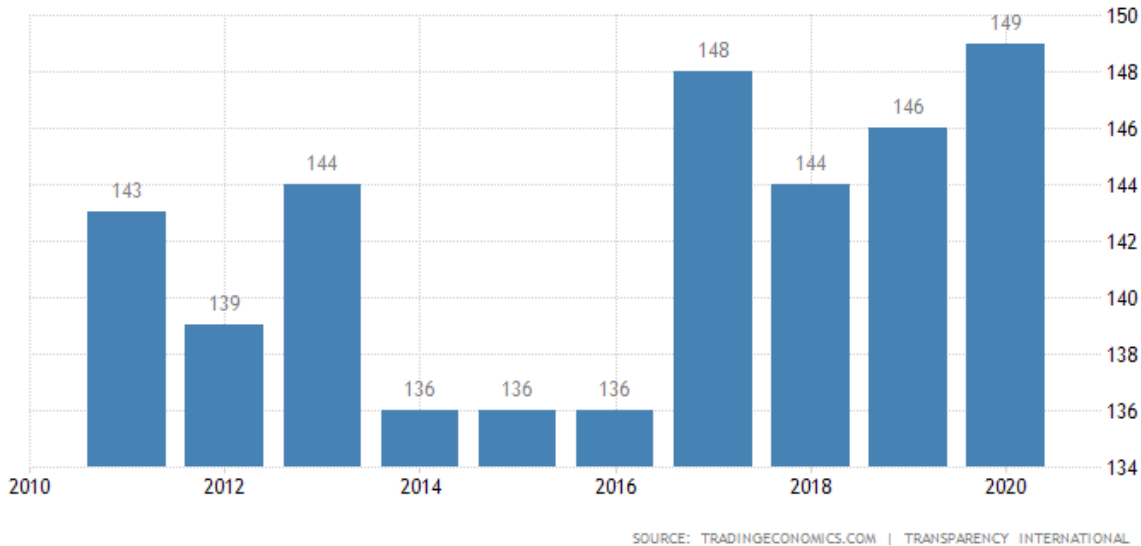


Figure 2: Nigeria’s corruption ranking (Trading Economics, 2021)

Osinubi, T.T., Osinubi, O.B., Tabash, M.I., Ajayi, A.O. and Tran, D.K. (2021) noted that the impact of corruption on tourism is negative in both the long and short-run, while individual income and foreign direct investment are affected directly. “Nigeria politics is a system of do or die affair, where thugs have taken the control of the political system denting the image of the country. Nigeria is no longer safe for foreign investors and tourism. Tourism which is a key economic sector that boasts the economy, foreign investment is now a forgotten issue” (Anatusi and Nnabuko, 2012). From the literature above, it shows that the tourism sector has been racketed by the menace of corruption as a result of the way politics is being played in the country.

- ii. **Lack of Infrastructures and Access to Basic Amenities:** Infrastructures are basic to human well-being and it is a yardstick for the measurement of poverty severity. People with no access to infrastructures are poverty vulnerable. For example, not having access to education can lead to real-time poverty. In one of his write-ups, Kofi Annan noted as follows:

- *“Literacy is a bride from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty, and a building block of development, an essential complement to investments in roads, dams, clinics and factories. Literacy is a platform for democratization, and a vehicle for the promotion of cultural and national identity. Especially for girls and women, it is an agent of family health and nutrition. For everyone, everywhere, literacy is, finally, the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realize his or her full potential.” - Kofi Annan*

Apart from education, access to pipe borne water, roads, electricity among others are necessary perquisite for not getting into poverty. While it is the duty of government to provide these things, many especially the rich have embarked on few of these that can only sustain them and their immediate family. With respect to tourism, most tourism potentials are not accessible, a reason why most of these rural areas which mostly house the poor are not accessible. Tourism potentials in rural areas if harnessed should bring life and infrastructures to the host communities but because of neglect, the ruralites did not have access to these facilities which in the real sense will increase the number of poor in the rural areas and subsequently urban areas because of migration. As a result of this, more poor migrate to urban areas for greener pastures.

The effect of poverty on participation in tourism is that the poor will not be able to participate in tourism activities, the reason cannot be farfetched, no money, no enjoyment. To partake in tourism as earlier stated, it is necessary to be capable financially. Although, there is no remuneration for partaking in tourism, you spend to partake. It is pertinent to know that poverty in Nigeria has limited lot of prospective patrons from partaking in tourism.

3. THE WAY FORWARD

Tourism can help in poverty reduction depending on the seriousness of various stakeholders in play their roles. If the government is really serious about diversification and poverty reduction, then tourism development should be taken as real responsibility.

- i. **Fighting of Corruption:** More efforts should be geared towards fighting and reducing drastically corruption. Corruption has now become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria. In previous times, corrupt politicians have all been celebrated in Nigeria, people that are supposed to be dealt with have turned into small gods because they were opportune to steal public funds. Nigeria is a country where if you steal 1 billion, you will be asked to pay 1 million as fine but poor people that stole garri or phones were sentenced to either death or life imprisonment. Stiffer penalties should be enacted especially for corrupt politicians so that corruption can reduce drastically. They should either be sentenced to death or life imprisonment without parole. Also, the money spent on politics in Nigeria is too exorbitant; likewise, the positions are too attractive. While the tax payers were yet to be paid a minimum wage of 30000 naira as approved by the government; a senator in Nigeria earns over 20 million naira per month. If the money can be slashed by up to 80%, political positions will be less attractive and people that are willing to serve will be the ones vying for different positions. If corruption can be reduced drastically in the country, poverty will likewise reduce drastically which in turn will help the development of tourism because the more people that are likely to patronize a tourist centre, the more the likelihood of tourism development.
- ii. **Infrastructural Development:** Provision of Infrastructures especially in areas where we have tourism potentials will help in the harness of the potentials. Accessibility is compulsory for any potential, pipe borne water, electricity among others are necessity for the development of tourism potentials. If and when the potentials have been harnessed thereafter, there will be positive flow of economic activities in the host community which will in turn help in the enrichment of local people.
- iii. **Tourism education:** The ruralites and the poor should be enlightened the more about tourism. The belief is that tourism activities are meant for only the rich. While the rich may be more involved in tourism activities, the poor can be involved by displaying their local culture and product, packaging it in such a way that it will look attractive to tourists; by so doing; they will be enriched either directly or indirectly.
- iv. **Harnessing of tourism potentials:** There are still as many tourism potentials in Nigeria that are to be harnessed. Over 90% of the total tourism potentials in Nigeria are still virgins. This is as a result of over-reliance on petroleum products in the country. Hardly will you get to any rural setting that you will not see attractions that are supposed to be meant for tourism. All these should be harnessed not only to better the lives of host communities but also increase earnings of the government at large.
- v. **Diversification:** The economy should be diversified, while attention is placed largely on petroleum products, priority should be placed on other sectors of the economy especially the tourism sector. If tourism can be developed alongside other sectors, there will surely be betterment of life.
- vi. **Community-Based Tourism:** While developing these tourism potentials, the community must be fully involved in the development. These will further encourage ruralites in participating in tourism activities.
- vii. **Security:** The rate of insecurity in the country is quite alarming. Before the present administration, insecurity has been in the country but during this present administration. This has resulted into fear of

partaking in tourism activities. Lasting solution should be brought to this menace. Bandits, Fulani herdsmen and other groups threatening the security of the country should be considered as terrorists and should be dealt with in the same way.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, there is presence of poverty which has become a menace in the country. Tourism should be used to alleviate poverty because most of the poor are closer to this potential. The more the development of tourism, the more tendencies that more poor will be taken out of poverty gradually and eventually have an improved standard of living. Based on the findings and prevalence of poverty ravaging the every sphere of the country, it is recommended that the Government should ensure formulation and implementation of policies that focus on poverty alleviation and eradication among the urban and rural dwellers.

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