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**The impact of security concerns on Nigeria's tourism: Understanding the challenges and exploring solutions for recovery**

**El impacto de los problemas de seguridad en el turismo en Nigeria: comprender los retos y explorar soluciones para la recuperación<sup>1</sup>**

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## Abstract

Nigeria, a country with rich cultural heritage and stunning natural surroundings, has the potential to become one of Africa's top travel destinations. However, the country's tourism economy has suffered due to security challenges, particularly in rural banditry and terrorism. This article explores the impact of these dangers on travel and offers suggestions to improve safety and restore Nigeria's international reputation. The study uses secondary sources to conduct qualitative research, revealing a link between instability and a decline in foreign travel to Nigeria. This has led to a decline in tourism-related revenue, employment losses, infrastructure damage, and negative press. The report also identifies progressive causes of national insecurity, such as poverty, political instability, and religious extremism. To rebrand Nigeria as a desirable and secure location, the paper proposes increased community involvement, improved security measures, infrastructure development, international relations, and strategic marketing. It also suggests conducting additional research on the losses sustained during the tourism industry downturn and explaining why travelers choose not to visit Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Nigeria; Tourism development; Insecurity; Terrorism; Travel safety; Destination branding.

## Resumen

Nigeria, un país con un rico patrimonio cultural y una impresionante belleza natural, tiene el potencial de convertirse en uno de los mejores destinos turísticos de África. Sin embargo, la economía turística del país se ha visto afectada por los desafíos de seguridad, especialmente en el bandolerismo rural y el terrorismo. Este ensayo explora el impacto de estos peligros en los viajes y ofrece sugerencias para mejorar la seguridad y restaurar la reputación internacional de Nigeria. El estudio utiliza fuentes secundarias para realizar una investigación cualitativa, revelando la conexión entre la inestabilidad y la disminución de los viajes extranjeros a Nigeria. Esto llevó a una caída de los ingresos relacionados con el turismo, pérdida de empleos, daños a la infraestructura y publicidad negativa. El informe también identifica las causas progresivas de la inseguridad nacional, como la pobreza, la inestabilidad política y el extremismo religioso. Para reposicionar a Nigeria como un destino deseable y seguro, este trabajo propone una mayor participación comunitaria, medidas de seguridad mejoradas, desarrollo de infraestructura, relaciones internacionales y marketing estratégico. También se propone realizar investigaciones adicionales sobre las pérdidas causadas por la caída de la industria turística y explicar por qué los viajeros no deciden visitar Nigeria.

**Palabras clave:** Nigeria; Desarrollo turístico; Inseguridad; Terrorismo; Seguridad en los viajes; Branding de destinos.

## Introduction

Nigeria is located in West Africa, and renowned for its cultural diversity, rich heritage, and scenic landscapes. From ancient monuments and vibrant festivals to ecological wonders, the country holds immense promise as a leading tourism destination in Africa (Nana & Daniel, 2023; Ezenagu, 2020). Notwithstanding this potential, the tourism sector has been struggling to prosper due to continual security challenges most especially terrorism and rural banditry.

The central problem addressed in this paper is the negative impact of insecurity on Nigeria's tourism industry. Terrorist organisations such as Boko Haram and ISWAP have carried out sadistic attacks that have brutally damaged the country's international image and discouraged

tourist inflows (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2019; Amaechi, Anjide & Okolie, 2024; Agumadu, 2025). In the same vein, rural banditry characterised by armed robbery, cattle rustling, and kidnapping has intensified in remote regions, further threatening tourist safety and undermining sector development (Ukoji, Ayodokun & Eze, 2020). The objective of this research is to basically examine how terrorism and rural banditry have affected tourism in Nigeria, identify the key factors contributing to the decline in tourist arrivals, and explore strategies for mitigating these threats. This line of inquiry is particularly relevant given the economic importance of tourism, which contributes to job creation, foreign exchange earnings, and infrastructure development in Nigeria.

Several scholars have written about the consequences of insecurity on tourism. Adeleke (2020) noted that regions such as the North-East and North-West have seen a sharp decline in visitors due to continuing violence. Eja, Otu, and Iwara (2019) emphasised that Nigeria's reputation as a high-risk destination has weakened its global competitiveness. The situation is compounded by inadequate infrastructure and limited government responsiveness to violent incidents, which hinders efforts to advance Nigeria's cultural and ecological assets. Statistical evidence supports these observations. According to the World Bank (2023), international tourist arrivals in Nigeria fell from 1.2 million in 2012 to 753,000 in 2018. CEIC (2023) and NTDC (Nigeria, 2013) confirm this downward trend, relating it to poor road networks, unstable electricity, and insufficient healthcare services in affected areas (Ogunbodede & Ayodele, 2017).

**Table 1.**

S/N	Indicator	Statistic	Source
1	International Tourist Arrivals	~25% decline between 2014 and 2018	World Bank, 2019 – <a href="https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL?locations=NG">https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL?locations=NG</a>
2	Tourism Revenue	\$2.62B (2017) → \$1.98B (2018), a 24.4% drop	Macrotrends, 2019 – <a href="https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/nga/nigeria/tourism-statistics">https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/nga/nigeria/tourism-statistics</a>
3	NTDC Profitability	Estimated 40% decrease in tourism-related profits	Statistic NTDC, 2019 – <a href="https://ntdc.gov.ng">https://ntdc.gov.ng</a>
4	Job Losses in Tourism Sector	Over 200,000 jobs lost between 2014 and 2018	NTDC, 2019 – <a href="https://ntdc.gov.ng">https://ntdc.gov.ng</a>

Compiled by the authors

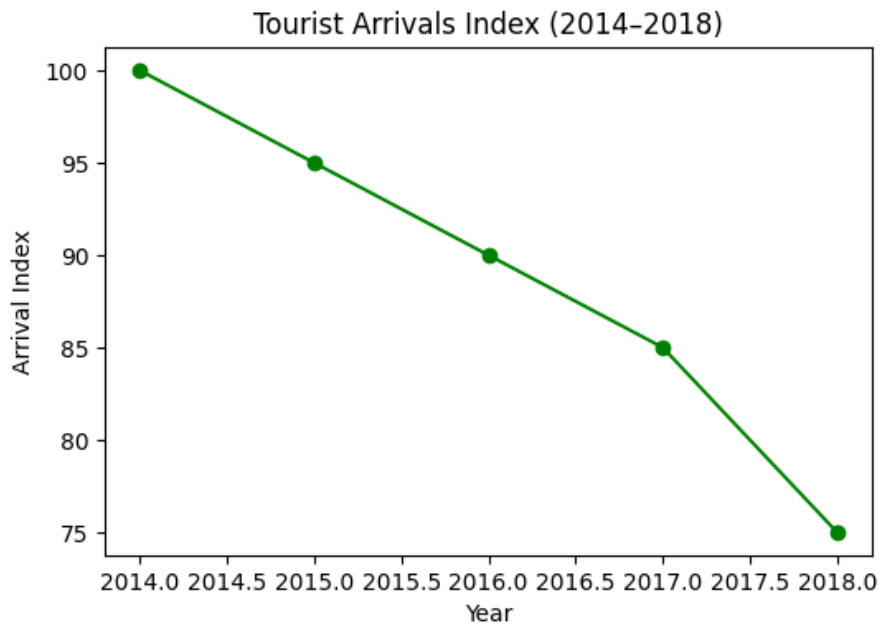


Figure 1. Line Chart – Tourist Arrivals Index (2014–2018)

This chart shows the trend in international tourist arrivals, reflecting a ~25% decline

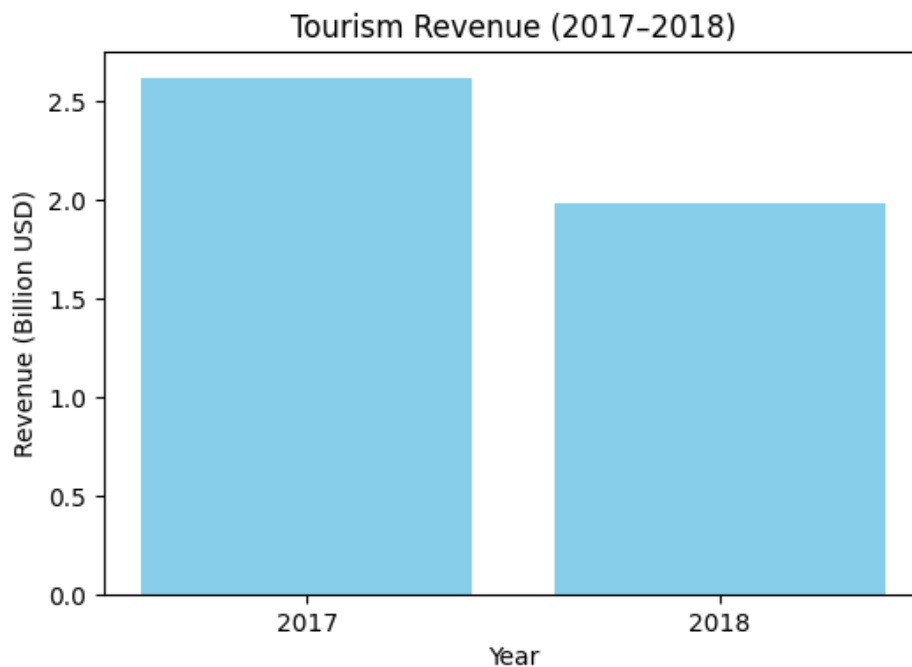


Figure 2. Bar Chart – Tourism Revenue (2017–2018)

This chart displays the revenue drop from \$2.62B in 2017 to \$1.98B in 2018.

### Nigeria Tourism Sector Charts (2014–2018)

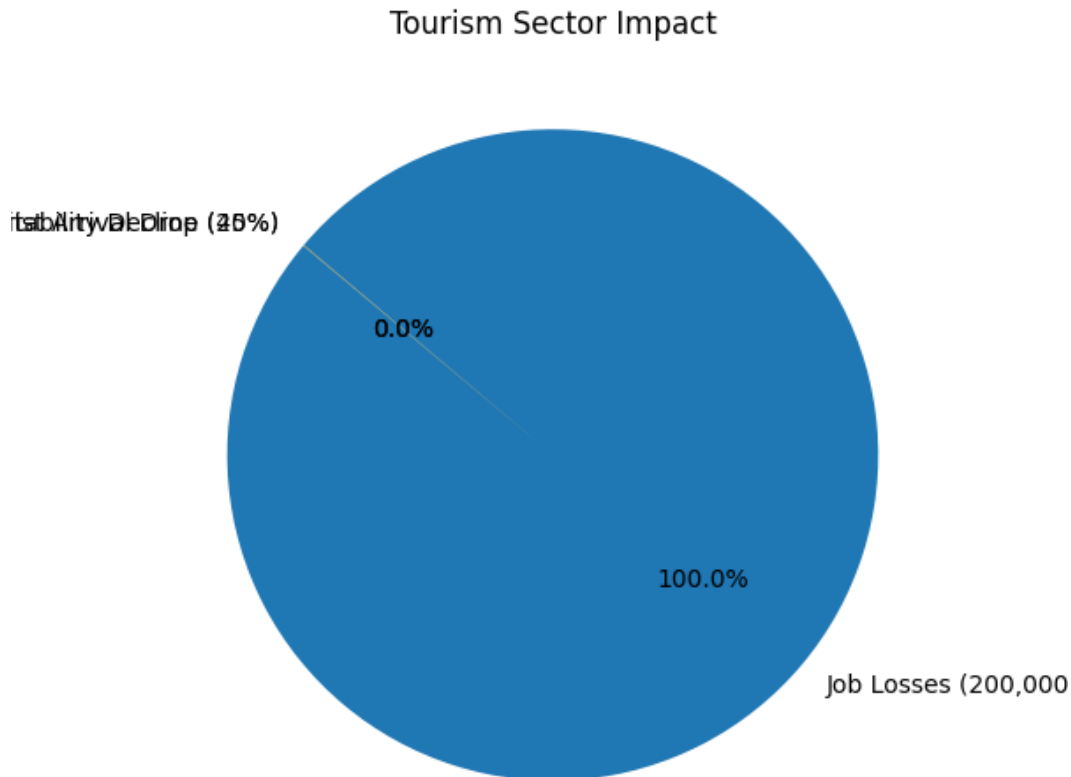


Figure 3. Pie Chart – Tourism Sector Impact

This chart visualizes the distribution of job losses, NTDC profitability decline, and tourist arrival drop.

The broader economic implications are important. The decline in tourism has led to reduction in government revenue, job losses, and weakened performance in other related sectors such as hospitality, transportation, and handicrafts. This study is therefore apt and crucial, as it seeks to understand the root causes of Nigeria's tourism decline and propose actionable solutions to restore confidence in the sector.

## Research development

### *Conceptual Clarification of the Impact of Terrorism and Rural Banditry on Tourism in Nigeria*

Generally, tourism facilitates the development of the economy, cultural enlightenment, and long-term development. This sector in Nigeria contributes more than 7.5 per cent of the country's overall economy and generates approximately 5.1 per cent of total employment (UNWTO, 2015; Dawodu & Olaleye, 2023). Tourism business, however, is constantly faced with threats such as terrorism and local crimes that have compromised its success. This literature review pays special attention to the extent to which these issues influence the field of tourism and discusses how they can be mitigated. According to the African Union (AU) Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (1999), terrorism is any criminal act that is intended to frighten, intimidate, or compel governments or others to do or abstain from doing a specific action, which mainly causes harm to people, property, or services. Such a definition is important to Nigeria since terrorism has become a multifaceted issue, primarily due to radical organizations such as Boko Haram and ISWAP. Local crime, on the other hand, incorporates armed robbery, kidnapping, and cattle theft, among other violent crime acts, and these are likely to occur mainly in the rural regions of Nigeria. Omitola (2023) describes local crime as a social issue created by the unfair systems, open borders, and weak government that result in the people being less secure and discouragement of tourism. Terrorism has now also become a global concern, and Nigeria has undergone extreme types of terrorism, including bombings, mass kidnappings, and attacks on key government buildings. Tourism in the country, especially in the northern region, has reduced considerably due to the Boko Haram uprising. According to Dawodu and Olaleye (2023), terrorist activities negatively impact tourist attractions for money and the level of tourists' contact in Northern Nigeria, in particular. Onuoha (2017) concurs that fear of terrorism influences the choice of location among tourists, resulting in reduced international and local travel. The impact on the economy is dire. The decreased number of tourists implies that there will be less inflow of funds through other countries, a loss of jobs, and the cessation of other related businesses such as hotels, transport, and the conservation of different cultural sites.

Kincl and Oulehlova (2018) also mention that terrorism not only impacts physical safety, but it also leads to the fact that tourists feel less confident, which complicates the recovery. Nigeria has been experiencing localised crime that has been a significant safety concern, particularly in states such as Kaduna, Zamfara, and Niger. These regions, which have in the past been recognised as the cultural and natural tourist areas, are now faced with frequent attacks, kidnappings and people being forced out of their homes. Upon highlighting the issue of local crime, Umar (2019) notes that it has caused the closure of tourist destinations, reduced tourist

activities, and high losses in the tourism industry. According to Awotayo, Yusuf, and Adedayo (2024), the safety problems affecting Nigeria are caused by the unfair system, historical problems, and political marginalisation. Their article is a criticism of the manner in which Nigeria typically responds to any act of terrorism, stating that temporary military interventions are unlikely to resolve social and economic issues that begin causing rebellions and criminal activities. They advance the full safety agenda, comprising peacebuilding, equitable government, and community participation. Omitola (2023) also describes poverty, unemployment, exclusion, and the absence of basic services as the primary causes of crime that result in an environment in which criminal groups will thrive. The impacts on tourism are horrendous: unsafe rural territories scare off domestic and foreign tourists, negatively affecting local economies, and making Nigeria a destination that people are unwilling to visit. These are some of the factors that influence the extent to which tourism is affected by terrorism and crime: Media Coverage: The media influences and moulds people's opinion, which cannot be underrated. According to Okorie and Okafor (2018), journalists ought to take responsibility, and they ought not to make things sound worse than they are, as they will only create fear and lower the desire to travel. Government Response: The effectiveness with which the tourism sector will recover can be measured by the government stepping in by policing, collecting information and collaborating with the community. According to Ogunbado and Adeniran (2018), the cooperation of government groups, security forces, and local populations should enhance safety and gain confidence. Public Perception and Safety: Tourists' perceived safety is influenced by the real safety conditions and the news coverage broadcast by the media and the government. As Lee et al. (2021) claim, the world events significantly impact investment and tourist behaviour, which is why it would be beneficial to minimise the risks to the sustainability of tourism. The tourism industry of Nigeria has been severely affected by terrorism and local crime, which has resulted in a reduced number of tourists, money lost, and historical sites being closed. Nonetheless, the country can be a vibrant and secure tourist destination again with clever measures due to collaboration, community engagement, and a responsible government in Nigeria. The study highlights the urgency of having a plan to help address short-term safety concerns and long-term system problems.

Terrorism and banditry in Nigeria are not recent phenomena but deeply rooted issues that have evolved over decades. Understanding their historical trajectory is essential to grasp the complexity of Nigeria's current security challenges. The seeds of religious extremism were sown in the 1980s with the Maitatsine movement, led by Mohammed Marwa. His radical Islamic sect launched violent uprisings in cities like Kano and Yola, targeting state institutions and civilians in a bid to impose a puritanical religious order (Oyewole, 2016). Though eventually suppressed, Maitatsine's legacy laid the ideological foundation for future extremist groups.

In the early 2000s, Boko Haram emerged as a more virulent strain of religious terrorism. Unlike Maitatsine, Boko Haram fused anti-Western sentiment with a rejection of secular governance, leading to a campaign of violence that included bombings, mass kidnappings, and attacks on schools and places of worship (Joshua & Chidozie, 2020). The group's affiliation with



the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) transformed it into a transnational threat, complicating counterterrorism efforts. More recently, new factions like Lukarawa and the expansion of IS-Sahel into Nigerian territory have further regionalized the threat (Global Terrorism Index, 2025).

Terrorism in Nigeria is multidimensional, encompassing religious, political, and criminal motives. Religious terrorism is driven by extremist interpretations of Islam, with groups like Boko Haram and Fulani militias at the forefront (Oyewole, 2016). Political terrorism is exemplified by insurgent groups in the Niger Delta, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta Avengers, who target oil infrastructure to protest environmental degradation and economic marginalization. Criminal terrorism, meanwhile, is often carried out by vigilante groups like the Bakassi Boys, whose activities oscillate between community protection and organized violence.

The drivers of terrorism are deeply embedded in Nigeria's socio-political landscape. High youth unemployment, poverty, and limited access to education create fertile ground for radicalization (Chinwokwu, 2012; Akanni, 2014). Marginalized communities, especially those with weak state representation, are particularly vulnerable. Political exclusion and systemic corruption further exacerbate grievances, eroding trust in government institutions and fostering a sense of alienation among citizens (Oyewole, 2018).

Banditry, while distinct from terrorism, shares many of its underlying causes. Predominantly affecting the North-West and North-Central regions, rural banditry involves armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and cattle rustling. These crimes are typically committed by loosely organized gangs operating from forested enclaves and exploiting porous borders and weak law enforcement. In recent years, some bandit groups have adopted the tactics and rhetoric of terrorist organizations, blurring the lines between criminality and insurgency (Ezeogidi, 2020).

The economic toll of terrorism and banditry is staggering. Between 1999 and 2019, Nigeria lost billions of dollars due to disruptions in oil production and tourism (Ezeogidi, 2020). Attacks on pipelines and refineries have deterred foreign investment, while the persistent threat of violence has tarnished Nigeria's image as a tourist destination. According to the Global Terrorism Index 2025, Nigeria ranks sixth globally in terms of terrorism impact, with 565 deaths recorded in 2024 alone.

Tourism in Nigeria, once a promising sector, has been severely affected by insecurity. Historically, Nigeria has been a hub of cultural exchange, with festivals, trade, and religious pilgrimages dating back to the pre-colonial era. In the 19th century, European explorers, missionaries, and colonial administrators were drawn to Nigeria's diverse landscapes and rich cultural mosaic (Onokerhoraye, 2013). Today, Nigeria offers a wide array of tourism products,



from cultural festivals like Osun-Osogbo and Argungu Fishing Festival to ecotourism destinations such as Yankari Game Reserve and Obudu Mountain Resort.

Despite its potential, the tourism industry faces significant challenges. Inadequate infrastructure, insecurity, lack of promotional activities, and weak political commitment have stifled growth (Okafor, 2018). Transport networks and lodging facilities often fall short of international standards, limiting accessibility and comfort for tourists. The threat of insurgency, banditry, and kidnappings has further discouraged both domestic and international tourism (Bamidele, 2019). Recent data underscores the severity of the decline. Between 2014 and 2018, international tourist arrivals dropped by 25%, and over 200,000 tourism-related jobs were lost (World Tourism Council, 2019). The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported that in 2022, tourism contributed \$17.3 billion to Nigeria's GDP, accounting for 3.6% of the total (WTTC, 2022). However, this figure remains far below the sector's potential.

In an effort to rejuvenate the tourism sector, the Nigerian government restructured its tourism ministry to improve strategic oversight and sectoral performance (New Telegraph, Monday, October 6, 2025). Experts have emphasized the need for targeted investments in infrastructure, strengthened security frameworks, and comprehensive promotional initiatives to reposition Nigeria as a culturally vibrant and secure destination (Vanguard Travel & Tourism, Friday, October 10, 2025). Recent reports underscore the sector's economic potential, estimating contributions of up to ₦7 trillion and urging immediate reforms to unlock growth opportunities (New Telegraph, 2025; Vanguard Travel & Tourism, 2025). Ultimately, Nigeria's tourism sector holds immense promise, but realizing this potential requires addressing the structural and security-related obstacles that have long hindered progress. Collaboration among government agencies, private stakeholders, and local communities is essential to transform Nigeria into a leading global tourism destination. The country's natural attractions, historical sites, and vibrant cultural heritage are unparalleled but they must be safeguarded and promoted to unlock their full economic value.

### *An Examination of the Tourism Industry in Nigeria in Comparison with Other African Nations*

In a comparative analysis of the tourism industry in Nigeria and the GDP contribution in other African countries, a wide gap is created by the contribution of tourism to those respective economies. It has been established that the contribution of tourism to Nigeria's GDP by the World Travel and Tourism Council stood at 1.7 per cent in 2019, far lower than that of other African countries. For example, while tourism contributed 8.6% to South Africa's GDP, tourism contributed 17.5% to Tanzania's GDP. The below table presents a comparison of the contributions of Nigeria's tourism industry and other African countries

**Table 2.** Comparative analysis of GDP contribution in Nigeria other African countries

Countries	Tourism Contribution to GDP (%)
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<b>Tanzania</b>	17.5%
<b>South Africa</b>	8.6%
<b>Kenya</b>	10.3%
<b>Rwanda</b>	9.0%
<b>Botswana</b>	11.0%
<b>Ethiopia</b>	4.5%
<b>Nigeria</b>	1.7%

Sources: WTTC, Worlddata.info, African Travel Herald

Nigeria's tourism industry is struggling with several structural, security-related issues that negatively affect its development and competitiveness in the world. The poor road networks, poorly maintained airports, and poor hospitality infrastructure have ensured that travelling in the country is bulky and unappealing to prospective tourists (Yusuff, 2016). The lack of these logistical deficiencies is aggravated by the ongoing lack of security, such as insurgency, banditry in the rural areas, and frequent kidnappings, all of which have tarnished the image of Nigeria as a safe destination to travel to (Ajogbeje, Adeniyi, and Folarin, 2017). Compared to countries such as Rwanda and Botswana, where the promotion of the tourism sector and the extensive use of global promotion campaigns have brought significant success, Nigeria's promotion is divided and poorly funded (Agusto & Co., 2017). Moreover, Ndajiya, Muhammad, and Abubakar (2014) mention the incoherent tourism policy and the lack of political commitment, which have led to the stagnation in the sector's development. These interdependent challenges serve as pointers to the necessity of urgent reforms that will help to open the potential of tourism in Nigeria. This low contribution of tourism to the GDP is associated with specific reasons, including poor infrastructure, insufficient security and less marketing by the government. So much has been accomplished in terms of tourism, marketing, and promotion infrastructure compared to other African countries such as South Africa, Tanzania, and Kenya, hence its high contribution to the GDP. This, in general, implies that the role of tourism in the Nigerian economy is the least important in Africa compared to other countries such as South Africa, Tanzania, and Kenya, which have much higher contributions. Hence, to become a better sector, the government should invest in infrastructural development, security and marketing, which will increase the number of tourists visiting the country.

The economic losses of the tourism sector in Nigeria can be observed by comparing it to those of African countries, which do not have significant tourist attraction sites. Ethiopia: There is no significant natural tourism attraction in this country. Nonetheless, the tourism industry has experienced colossal growth in this country. The revenue in the tourism industry grew by 48 per cent in two years, between 2014 and 2018. It invests 4.5 per cent of the country's GDP. Rwanda and Botswana are renowned for gorilla trekking and wildlife tourism, as well as wildlife reserves and safaris. In both these countries, tourism has been growing at a rate of 14 per cent and 15 per

cent, respectively, between 2014 and 2018. Today, the industry makes a 9 per cent contribution to Rwanda's GDP and 11 per cent to Botswana.

Other African nations such as Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Botswana stirred themselves to pretty high levels of political stability, and they were either spared or immunised against security predicaments emerging, as has happened in Nigeria. These nations have immensely invested in infrastructure, including airports, roads, and the accommodation sector, coupled with a good marketing campaign to attract tourists to the nations. Eco-tourists are directly interested in such campaigns since conservation programs in opposition to the destruction of natural attractions and the killing of wild animals have been established effectively. The security issues have emptied the Nigerian economy because of tourism. Adjacent to the coin was the decline in visitors, less generated revenues and joblessness. Comparisons of other African nations that are not big in tourism sites highlight opportunities Nigeria has missed. The recommended policy changes will be used to overcome these challenges and enable Nigeria to realise its economic potential due to tourism.

#### *A Prospect of Nigeria Tourism as an Alternative to Oil*

Nigeria is a nation whose economic empowerment has long been sustained thanks to its large oil reserves; recent global economic trends have reversed, requiring the economic impetus in diversification; so other alternative sectors have been under exploration upon which the country's economic growth of the country can be tapped; and tourism has positioned itself as a number one candidate, providing a hefty potential to the economic development of the country. This essay discusses the opportunities of the Nigerian tourism industry as an alternative to oil with reference to economic, social, and environmental gains. Creation of Employment: Tourism can create employment in hospitality, transportation, entertainment and handicraft sectors. According to WTTC (2019), 1.8 million people in Nigeria received jobs in the tourism sector in 2019, constituting 1.8 per cent of overall employment. By extension, tourism will help generate a substantial foreign exchange figure in the Nigerian economy through the international tourist attractions. This brings revenue through foreign currency inflows. The defence of the NTDC states that tourism had an impact of up to 1.07 billion on Nigeria's GDP in 2019. NTDC, 2020. Cultural Preservation: Nigeria, as a country rich in culture and historic sites and most notably, the richness of the ethnic groups, has been capable of contributing to tourism activities. (Olawale 2019)

Tourism development is an effort to ensure and promote such cultural assets, thus leading to national pride and identity. In the end, tourism development will improve the local infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, and water supply, which will benefit both the tourists and the locals. In addition, the growth of the tourism sector boosts the development of small and medium-scale businesses and consequently strengthens the livelihood of the local entrepreneurs. Tourism strengthens cross-cultural practice for both the tourists and the host community;

therefore, it fosters understanding, tolerance, and respect for different cultures, enabling social cohesion and peacebuilding in Nigeria. Nigerian tourism provides an alternative to oil, which is viable and has profound economic, social, and environmental benefits (Okoko, 2017). The improvement of the tourism infrastructure, cultural heritage promotion, and sustainable practices will bring international tourists to Nigeria, which will help diversify the economy and decrease oil dependency. Nigeria can become one of the most popular tourism destinations and advance its economy with appropriate strategies and investments in sustainable development.

### *Challenges Faced by Tourists as a Result of Terrorism and Rural Banditry*

Tourism has played an enormous role in most countries' economic growth and development. However, due to the emergence of terrorism and rural banditry, the tourism industry appears to have a snag. Killings and ransacking by rural bandits and terrorism cause fear and uncertainty to the tourists, thus giving a poor reputation to the destinations where these activities have been taking place. This will lead to tourists opting to alter their travel arrangements and shun areas or countries with high incidences of terrorism or banditry. In this instance, a behaviour change, the decrease in tourist arrivals, results in an economic loss to the tourism business. This is because the potential tourists are not confident about visiting these places due to the fear of specific attacks or violence.

An example is that following the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, the number of foreign tourists visiting the city reduced by huge numbers (Gössling et al., 2019). Other than loss of jobs and revenue, reduced tourist flows drastically impact the tourism industry, affecting the local business and infrastructure. In addition, the wide publicity of terrorism and banditry in the rural areas scares away potential tourists who would otherwise have considered going to these areas. Media coverage tends to focus on what is bad, making the fear and insecurity they cause greater. The effects of such adverse publicity are felt longer than planned by the destinations, even in cases where the situation is incorrectly reported. As Sharpley and Stone (2019) point out, the result of a terrorism and rural banditry event is a 20% decline in tourists within five years. The places where such incidents happened might take years to regain their reputation and get tourists back. These incidents could create a poor image that takes a long time before it fades, and reflects fewer arrivals and sustainable earnings. As Cetin and Bilgin (2019) observe, fear and uncertainty caused by such events cause tourist arrivals to be reduced by 15 per cent and cause substantial destruction of local infrastructure. The high interference with the local economies also affects intercultural interactions to a greater extent, deteriorating the already vulnerable state of the tourists. However, all these adverse effects can be overcome by the proper reaction of the government, collaboration, and investment in the security systems, which will result in the restoration and prosperity of the tourism sector.

Terrorist activities in Nigeria have also contributed to a reduction in the number of tourists by 30 per cent because of the belief in violence and intimidation, which scares away

possible visitors. Extremist groups such as Boko Haram attacks on popular tourism destinations have led to a reduction in the tourist inflow and tourism revenue. Another causative factor that has led to the downward review of tourism in Nigeria is rural banditry, since it is a cause of crimes like kidnapping, highway robbery, and cattle rustling. Such a crime would mostly be committed in rural settings, especially in areas with tourist attractions such as wildlife centres and national parks. This has scared tourists away to such places because of the armed bandits and the fear of insecurity and a loss of economic income through the tourism industry. (Oladimeji & Akinbola, 2019). Terrorism and rural banditry are security issues and interconnected by-products that lead to direct spillages to the tourism sector in Nigeria. The events that are being operated by terrorist groups and armed bandits cause fear and insecurity, a condition that is not conducive to allowing tourists to travel to Nigeria.

On this note, specific and believable countermeasures and mitigation efforts, including strengthening security in tourist destinations and upgrading information exchange among security agencies, need to be embraced to enable the country to eliminate the negative impact of terrorism and rural banditry on the tourism sector in Nigeria. This could include the physical security aspect of tourist destinations, better information exchange among security forces and the proactive inclusion of local communities in the activities of the security agencies. Furthermore, the international cooperation and help in combating terrorism and rural banditry would restore lost confidence in Nigeria among the visitors and potential investors as a secure tourist destination. Smith (2018) also substantiated this claim by saying that terrorism and banditry affect the tourism industry in Nigeria, causing a decrease in tourist activities and revenues. The negative security implications of these challenges can be countered through effective countermeasures and strategies, including enhancing the security at tourist locations and including local communities in security-related programs. The sustainable efforts to deal with the causes of the security issues will make tourists flock to Nigeria and boost the economy, enhancing the residents' livelihoods.

Nigeria has implemented a multilateral strategy, which involves using military campaigns, the development of security institutions, deradicalisation, and external collaboration, to fight terrorism and rural banditry (Onuoha, 2014). Although specific military actions have achieved minor progress in the power reduction, they have been accused of human rights violation and their incompetence to eliminate the threat (Adibe, 2020). In addition to these military interventions, the government has attempted to enhance the functions of the security institutions, military, police, and intelligence services regarding training, equipment and coordination. (Agbibo, 2013). Nevertheless, corruption, lack of resources and morale have continued to ensure that such institutions have been too ineffective in their operations. (Onuoha & Oyewole, 2018).

The government has been using deradicalisation and rehabilitation initiatives like Operation Safe Corridor to reintroduce ex-members of the Boko Haram sect to society (Onuoha



& Oyewole, 2018). Although there have been comparatively promising consequences of these programs, it is still to be determined how effective they will be in deterring further recruiting of new members and the overall strength of the Boko Haram group. (Mahmood & Ani, 2018). Besides, Nigeria has tried to improve its coordination with its neighbours by establishing the Multinational Joint Task Force in cross-border counterterrorism. MNJTF partially succeeded in targeting the activity of Boko Haram but encountered difficulties due to logistical and political constraints (Anugwom, 2019). In the aspect of the anti-banditry efforts, the government has become entangled in the community policing efforts aimed at empowering the security forces by ensuring closer ties with the rural population, where such bandits are prevalent. Olaoluwa and Akinyemi (2020) assert that these community policing programs have remained haphazard because they have been faced with the problem of earning the confidence of local communities and making them commit to such programs.

The government has also attempted to negotiate with the bandits and give them amnesties in exchange for stopping the attacks and handing over the weapons they had taken. Though this solution has worked short-term in curbing violence in select states, there have been criticisms that the solution does not work in the long term since it is unable to curb the causes of rural banditry. (Idris, 2020). There have been some attempts to reduce rural banditry by addressing the socioeconomic factors of poverty, joblessness, and inaccessibility to basic services. Nevertheless, it has been moderated by resource scarcity, bad implementation, and hanging variables like climate change and resource shortage. (Abazie-Humphrey, 2020). In the same vein, the government has deployed security personnel to the rural regions, introduced security surveillance systems in the rural regions, and provided security equipment to the rural communities to improve security in rural regions. Although they provide a reasonable extent of defence to the indigenous population, the solutions become overwhelmed by the agility and flexibility of bandits in the expanses of the rural lands. (Idris, 2020). The development of grazing reserves and anti-rustling strategies that will help to enhance livestock management has been sought to minimise the confrontations between the farmers and the herders. This has led to limited success as such initiatives have faced problems balancing the various interests and addressing the multifaceted sources of farmer-herder conflicts. (Abdulkadir et al., 2020).

## Methodology

This paper uses qualitative method to investigate the impacts of security threats on the tourism industry especially the terrorism and the bandits in the rural areas of Nigeria. Using secondary data as the sole material, the study uses a wide range of sources to offer a detailed insight into the problem. Reports done by the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) and the Ministry of Information and Culture provide an official national view of the tourism policies and national security. The online academic journals add a bit of knowledge on the interaction of insecurity and tourism. The study is augmented by policy analyses contributed

by think tanks such as Brookings Institution, WTTC, Worlddata.info, African Travel Herald. Newspapers such as The Guardian Nigeria, Premium Times, and Daily Trust provide real-time reports of security incidences, and how they affected a tourist directly. Thematic analysis was applied to discover the trends of the development of security threats, changes in tourist behavior, economic consequences, and responses to the stakeholders. This approach has allowed this study to pursue an intricate examination of how insecurity influences the tourism performance in Nigeria.

### *Findings of the Study*

The findings show that the unremitting security risks especially terrorism and rural banditry have played a major role in destroying the potential of Nigeria as a leading tourist destination. The problems have resulted in a significant reduction in the number of tourists, contributed by the adverse media images of the country in the international setting and perceptions of insecurity. The impact on the economy is obvious with decreased earnings of businesses that rely on tourism, loss of jobs, and poor infrastructure. Instability is also worsened by such root causes like poverty, political dissatisfaction and religious tensions.

### *Discussion of Findings*

The findings reveal that the security threats, including terrorism and rural banditry, have seriously compromised the gains Nigeria would have achieved by being a destination worth visiting. The theme coming out strongly in this research is related to the reduction of tourist arrivals; the fact that security issues are overriding discourages serious consideration of the fact that the country is unsafe, a constant factor that prompts people to travel and invest in the tourism industry. In addition, identifying security incidents in Nigeria with the international media has continued to give Nigeria a negative image. This will result in the uncertainty of enhancing the rich cultural heritage and natural attractions, which are holding back elements that tourists choose such a destination. The analysis indicates that insecurity has economic implications for tourism. The lost tourists also translate to the lost direct businesses among hotels, restaurants and tour operators that rely on the industry. The industry has suffered due to the fall in terms of loss of jobs, thereby impacting livelihood and overall economic stability. Secondly, security threats will destroy the infrastructure related to tourism, and their costs are prohibitive to repair, which deters further investments. The research has established many root causes of the continued terrorism and banditry. This covers a high degree of poverty, which may be favourable to violence and criminality; the political dissatisfaction with unresolved problems that breed ready materials of grievances that result in insecurity; and the religious disparity that breeds additional conflicts that destabilise the tourism industry.

This paper, as such, offers some suggestions to reduce the challenges. Tourism development should be involved at the local community level so that it may have ownership and



security. Strict security must be offered to protect the tourists and overcome the mentality of potential visitors. Secondly, there will be payoffs in infrastructural betterments that enhance the tourists' experiences. International collaboration should be enhanced to enhance security and make Nigeria a secure destination. Lastly, repositioning activities that seek to highlight the attractions can go a long way in highlighting the attractions, besides helping in de-escalating the security concerns that are rife. This paper recommends conducting further studies on the quantification of losses that Nigeria suffers due to the decline in tourism. To be more exact, the deterrent factors must be comprehended well, and effective measures to restore the tourism potential in Nigeria must be formulated.

## Conclusion

Rural banditry and terrorism are crucial in slowing the development of tourism in Nigeria. Tourists associated with rich cultural heritage, beautiful natural sceneries, and historicity of past events are nose-diving faster than ever, getting to visit Nigeria because of the security threats to the sector by acts of terrorism and countryside banditry. Attacks, kidnappings, and killings are caused by Boko Haram as well as bandits in the northeastern and northwestern parts of Nigeria. The attacks are severe to the lives of tourists and have damaged mainly the reputation of Nigeria as a safe tourist destination, as well as significantly undermining tourism in Nigeria. Most resorts, hotels and tourist locations have seen a decline in numbers, therefore, receiving lower financial earnings, with some resulting in retrenchments. The issue of insecurity also scares away potential investors who would have invested their money in Nigeria's tourism infrastructure.

### *Recommendations*

**Increase the intensity of Security:** The Nigerian government needs to emphasise the security of tourists by ensuring that more security forces are present in tourist spots. This would prevent terror attacks and, therefore, bandits and guarantee a safe tourist environment.

**Increase intelligence-sharing processes and information systems** to detect and mitigate possible threats and make security measures more proactive. Cooperation with foreign forces can also be highly effective in dealing with and chasing terrorists and bandits.

**Public Awareness Campaigns:** Conducting awareness campaigns among the people about the safety of tourists and the government's development on the issue of terrorism and banditry could be one way of reclaiming Nigeria's reputation as a country to visit.

**Community Engagement:** This will allow the local community in the affected areas to play a key role in combating terrorism and banditry. Cooperation with the local leadership, sensitising the masses and creating employment opportunities can serve to prevent some of its recruits from turning to terrorism and banditry by the government.

**Tourism Infrastructural Development:** Once tourism infrastructural development is done through better roads, upgraded airports, and comfortable and befitting accommodation, more people will come to Nigeria and improve their domestic and international travels. Therefore,

concerted action between the government and the private sector will be necessary regarding funding and implementation issues.

Conduct specialised advertising in multiple media outlets to promote the tourist attractions in Nigeria, communicate with travel agencies, and attend related international tourism functions to get more tourists.

**Sustainable Tourism:** In light of the long-term viability of tourism, the term sustainable tourism is used. Sustainable tourism is emerging. To this extent, the negative impact of tourism on the environment ought to be minimized, and greater consideration ought to be given to cultural heritage in every dimension. This would require an increase in responsible tourism behaviour. Therefore, the government has the role of formulating policies and strategies on sustainable tourism with the local communities and the business people associated with the tourism business.

**Infrastructure Development:** To conclude, tourism promotion is a significant measure to fight against the terrorist threat in Nigeria. Economic opportunities, cultural exchange, and development can make communities less susceptible to extremism due to tourism. The safety and security of tourists, sustainable tourism practices, and investing in infrastructure development are the main aspects of the tourism industry that can open the door to a flourishing tourism industry in Nigeria.

Consider global collaborations in sharing intelligence, training security services on technical aspects and capacity building to facilitate organizational effectiveness of counterterrorism operations. When put into force, these initiatives will drastically reduce the effects of terrorism and rural banditry on the country's tourism industry. They would be significant in opening the industry by restoring tourists' confidence and safety.

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