

A REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the multifaceted impact of government policies on the tourism industry, exploring both positive and negative effects. Through a comprehensive analysis, the study dissects into how government interventions can shape the tourism landscape, either fostering growth and sustainability or posing challenges and constraints. Through the investigation of specific examples of government policies that have positively influenced tourism, such as financial support during crises, promotion of domestic travel, and strategic investments in marketing, this research aims to provide insights into effective policy measures for enhancing the tourism sector. The study adopted a desk review research method and the relevant reviewed literature were subjected to content analysis. This study utilizes a comparative analysis approach to examine existing tourism policies, planning strategies, and economic impacts, focusing on case studies relevant to Nigeria. Data from academic literature, reports, policy documents, and official publications related to tourism policy, planning, and economic impact in the selected case studies between the years 2015-2024 were analysed and compared to identify common trends, challenges, and best practices in tourism policy formulation, planning, and economic contribution across the selected case studies. The findings highlight the importance of tailored policy approaches that balance economic development with environmental and social considerations, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and sustainable tourism ecosystem.

Keywords: development, government, industry, policy, tourism.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has been significantly impacted by government policies, both positively and negatively. During the COVID-19 pandemic for instance, governments worldwide implemented measures to support the tourism and hospitality sector, such as financial aid, communication strategies, and subsidies (Khalid, Okafor, and Burzynska, 2021). These policies aimed to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic on tourism businesses and promote domestic travel, contributing to the sector's recovery. Aguinis, Yu and Tosun (2021), note that on the other hand, tourism development can have detrimental environmental impacts, such as resource depletion, pollution, and physical effects on ecosystems. Government policies and support play a crucial role in moderating these negative outcomes, as they can influence the relationship between tourism growth and environmental factors. Governments can help ensure that tourism development aligns with environmental protection goals through the implementation of sustainable tourism practices and regulations (Denstadli and Veisten 2020). Moreover, economic growth, environmental quality, and tourism policies are essential for developing sustainability in tourism growth. Favorable and effective tourism policies, along with increased GDP, NNI, and FDI, can enhance tourism growth and help sustain it. Conversely, environmental pollution and the COVID-19 pandemic can hinder tourism growth. It is apparent that government policies significantly influence the tourism industry, shaping its growth, sustainability, and environmental impact. Governments can foster a resilient and responsible tourism sector if they implement supportive and sustainable measures (Aguinis, Jensen, and Kraus, 2022).

The tourism industry is intricately linked to government policies, which can have a profound impact on its development and sustainability. Bichler, (2021), asserts that positive government interventions, such as financial support during crises, promotion of sustainable tourism practices, and infrastructure development, can bolster the tourism sector. For instance, the Maldives government's sustainable tourism policies have helped preserve the country's natural beauty while promoting responsible tourism practices (Mariani and Guizzardi, 2020). Similarly, New Zealand's Tourism Strategy focuses on sustainable tourism growth, emphasizing environmental conservation and community engagement (Aiello, Bonanno, and Foglia, 2022). Conversely, negative impacts can arise from inadequate regulation, over-tourism, and lack of environmental protection measures. As documented by Balsalobre-Lorente, *et al.*, (2020), the case of Barcelona highlights the challenges of over-tourism, where government policies have struggled to manage the influx of tourists, leading to strain on local resources and community backlash. In contrast, Churchill, Pan and Paramati (2022), narrated Bhutan's policy of high-value, low-impact tourism has successfully preserved its cultural heritage and natural landscapes while limiting visitor numbers through a sustainable tourism fee. Furthermore, government policies can influence tourism through visa regulations, taxation, and marketing strategies. For example, the e-visa system implemented in India has facilitated tourism growth through the simplification of the visa application process and attracting more visitors (Chen, 2015). In contrast, high tourism taxes in some destinations can deter travelers and impact the industry's competitiveness. Evidently government policies play a pivotal role in shaping the tourism sector, with both positive and negative implications. Earl and Hall (2021), assert that the adoption of sustainable practices, promotion of responsible tourism, and aligning policies with environmental and social goals can help the governments to foster a thriving and sustainable tourism industry in Nigeria. The lack of comprehensive studies examining the dual impact of these policies on the tourism industry form the basis for the aim of this study; While there is a growing body of research on the positive effects of government policies, such as financial support during crises, promotion of sustainable tourism practices, and infrastructure development, there is a need for more in-depth analysis of the negative impacts, such as those arising from inadequate regulation, over-tourism, and lack of environmental protection measures.

Equally, existing research has identified knowledge gaps in the development of tourism enterprises (Dredge and Jamal, 2015), particularly in terms of administrative management and organizational roles, as well as a need for more empirical studies on the environmental, social, and economic impact of tourism in specific regions, such as Nigeria. Moreover, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the integration of policy implications in tourism and hospitality research, with most studies failing to provide concrete policy recommendations despite claiming to do so. This highlights the need for a more systematic and comprehensive approach to examining the policy implications of tourism and hospitality research. Hence, the need for more research on the impact of global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on tourism policy and its relationship with geopolitical risks, as well as the potential moderating effect of such crises on the tourism industry.

Objectives of the study is to:

- i. synthesize policy implications of tourism and hospitality industry by reviewing articles published in leading journals from 2015 to 2021
- ii. identifying the most common rationales and roles of policies; and examining the relationship between policy implications and tourism and hospitality development.
- iii. provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between tourism policy and the tourism industry,
- iv. identifying knowledge gaps and proposing future directions for research in this field.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a desk review research approach by employing a comparative analysis which aims to leverage insights from successful tourism policy models in other countries to inform and enhance the policy and planning strategies of state tourism boards in Nigeria; ultimately contributing to the sustainable growth and development of the Nigerian tourism sector. This study utilizes a comparative analysis approach to examine existing tourism policies, planning strategies, and economic impacts in different regions and countries, focusing on case studies relevant to Nigeria. Data from academic literature, reports, policy documents, and official publications related to tourism policy, planning, and economic impact in the selected case studies between the years 2015-2024 were analysed and compared to identify common trends, challenges, and best practices in tourism policy formulation, planning, and economic contribution across the selected case studies. For the sake of authenticity, tourism journals were selected from the Web of Science (WoS) with essential consideration for impact factor, relevance and originality.

REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Positive Government Policies on the Tourism Industry

Government policies that have positively impacted tourism include providing financial support to tourism businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, promoting domestic travel, offering favourable credit lines for tourism enterprises, and investing in marketing campaigns to support the recovery of small businesses and indigenous communities (Markman and Wood, 2022). Additionally, governments can implement policies to optimize tourist systems and move away from mass tourism, as well as regulate the sharing economy and peer-to-peer platforms to ensure they align with existing destination regulations and tax laws. During the COVID-19 pandemic, policy responses have focused on building a stronger, more resilient tourism economy for the future, with sustainability becoming more prominent in tourism choices due to greater awareness of climate change and adverse impacts of tourism.

The study by Aguinis *et al.*, (2022), reviews 12,269 articles published in 10 leading journals from 2015 to 2024, focusing on the policy implications of tourism and hospitality research. The authors identify the most common rationale for policies as market failure and the most typical role of policies as creating incentives. The study highlights the importance of policies in shaping the tourism and hospitality industry, but also notes that few articles actually provide policy implications, and those that do often only focus on some aspects of policy. In addition, the xxx builds on the findings of the first study, providing a conceptual framework to organize policies, offering a critical literature review to assess the state of research of tourism and hospitality policy implications, identifying existing policies and their types, and proposing an agenda for future theory-based tourism and hospitality research and its connection with policy-making. The evaluation carried out by Dredge and Jamal (2015), provides a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between tourism policy and the tourism industry, identifying knowledge gaps and proposing future directions for research in this field. The findings highlight the need for more empirical studies on the environmental, social, and economic impact of tourism in specific regions, as well as the importance of integrating policy implications in tourism and hospitality research.

Negative Government Policies on the Tourism Industry

Mishra *et al.*, (2020), submit that negative government policies can undermine the competitiveness, sustainability, and attractiveness of a destination, hindering its ability to realize the full potential of its tourism industry and achieve economic growth and development.

Paramati and Roca (2019), added that negative government policies can significantly impact the tourism industry, leading to various adverse effects. Some examples of such policies include:

1. **Visa restrictions:** Stringent visa requirements or high visa fees can discourage potential tourists from visiting a destination, leading to a decline in tourist arrivals and revenue. This was the case of United Arab Emirate and Nigeria immigrants for about three years, before it was resolved in the year 2024.

2. **Excessive taxation:** High taxes on tourism-related businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, and tour operators, can increase operating costs and prices for tourists, making the destination less competitive compared to other destinations with lower tax rates. Caribbean countries are known for less taxes on tourism activities, while countries Mozambique and Tanzania rely on heavy tax from tourism activities to boost their economy (Roundy, Brockman and Bradshaw, 2017).
3. **Political instability:** Political unrest, civil unrest, or conflicts in a country can deter tourists from visiting, leading to a decline in tourism demand and revenue. Negative perceptions of safety and security can have long-term consequences for a destination's tourism industry. Tourists tends to avoid destinations with political unrest and insurgency (Sharma, 2022).
4. **Overregulation:** Excessive regulation and bureaucratic red tape can stifle tourism development and investment, making it difficult for businesses to operate and innovate in the tourism sector. The issues of merger of the Nigerian ministry of tourism with other sectors like creative economy, art and culture created another paradigm shift for tourism development in the country and serve a testament to unstable government policy in regulating the activities of the tourism industry. Babalola (2024), emphasizes that unguided institutional reforms and policy direction can slow down the growth of the tourism industry.
5. **Lack of infrastructure investment:** Inadequate infrastructure, such as transportation networks, accommodation facilities, and public amenities, can limit a destination's ability to attract tourists and provide satisfactory visitor experiences.
6. **Environmental degradation:** Government policies that prioritize economic development over environmental conservation can lead to the degradation of natural attractions and ecosystems, diminishing the appeal of a destination to tourists seeking authentic and pristine experiences.
7. **Lack of marketing and promotion:** Insufficient investment in destination marketing and promotion efforts can result in low awareness and visibility of a destination, reducing its competitiveness in the global tourism market.
8. **Discriminatory policies:** Policies that discriminate against certain groups of tourists based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, or other factors can damage a destination's reputation and deter potential visitors, leading to negative social and economic consequences.

Effect of Negative Tourism Policy

Tourism policies, while often aimed at promoting economic growth and development, can have negative implications if not carefully designed and implemented. The negative implications of tourism are diverse and can have significant repercussions for destinations and communities alike. One such consequence as noted by Sheppard and Fennell (2019) is environmental degradation, stemming from inadequately regulated tourism activities that result in harm to ecosystems, depletion of natural resources, pollution, and destruction of habitats. Another issue is the cultural commodification brought about by mass tourism, where local cultures are exploited for commercial purposes, leading to the loss of authenticity and identity.

Moreover, Sigala (2020) opines that tourism can exacerbate social inequalities, disrupt local communities, and contribute to tensions, particularly in areas where the distribution of tourism benefits is unequal. Additionally, Smith (2000) submits that overreliance on tourism as the primary source of income can render destinations susceptible to economic downturns, fluctuations in visitor numbers, and external shocks like natural disasters or political instability. Xiao (2006), similarly views that Uncontrolled tourism growth can lead to overtourism, characterized by overcrowded destinations, strained infrastructure, and diminished quality of life for residents. Furthermore, rapid tourism development may result in the destruction or degradation of cultural heritage sites, either through physical damage or the erosion of traditional practices

and knowledge (Wijesinghe, 2022). Lastly, Zhai and Shi (2022), narrate that tourism activities such as transportation, accommodation, and recreation contribute to environmental footprints, including greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, and waste generation, thereby exacerbating climate change and environmental degradation. Fagbolu *et al.*, (2022), asserts that tourism policies need to strike a balance between promoting economic growth and development while minimizing negative impacts on the environment, society, and culture. Sustainable tourism practices, community engagement, and responsible tourism management are essential for mitigating these negative implications. Putting the earlier reviews into consideration, to minimize the negative effect of the policies that shapes tourism, understanding of the role of government policies in shaping the tourism and hospitality industry becomes essential. This understanding tends to provide valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and industry professionals (Gössling, Scott and Hall, 2020). The summary of this review is expressed below:

Table 1.1: The catalogue of reviewed literature between 2015-2024

S/N	Title	Authors	Year	Publication
1	The why, how, and what of public policy implications of tourism and hospitality research	Herman Aguinis, Sascha Kraus, Jasna Poček, Natanya Meyer, and Søren Henning Jensen	2023	Elsevier
2	Synthesizing public policy implications of tourism and hospitality research: A critical review	Sascha Kraus, Herman Aguinis, Jasna Poček, Natanya Meyer, Søren Henning Jensen	2022	Elsevier
3	Journal Rankings on Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management	Scimago Lab	2024	Science Direct
4	International Journal of Tourism Policy (IJTP)	International Journal of Tourism Policy (IJTP)	2021	Inderscience Publishers
5	Tourism & Hospitality Policy in Nigeria	James Okorie, Tanko Abudu and Lucia Akinseye	2020	Google Scholar Metrics
6	Tourism Policy and Planning: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow	Dallen J. Timothy	2019	Technoscience
7	Sustainable Tourism Policy and Planning	David Weaver and Laura Lawton	2018	Amazon
8	Tourism Policy and Planning: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow	Dallen J. Timothy	2017	Technoscience
9	Tourism Policy and Planning: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow	Dallen J. Timothy	2016	Technoscience
10	Sustainable Tourism Policy and Planning	David Weaver and Laura Lawton	2015	Amazon

Source: Author's Compilation, 2024

These additional articles as summarized in **Table 1.1** provide further insights into tourism policy and planning, focusing on sustainability, historical perspectives, and future directions in the field. It is expedient to consider only article related to the study of how government policies affect tourism positively and negatively so as to stay within the scope of study. The articles are ranked based on their relevance and impact on the field of tourism and hospitality policy.

The Roles of Stakeholder in Policy Formulation and Implementation

Sequel to the reviewed articles, the findings can guide the Nigerian tourism boards in developing and implementing effective tourism policies and plans that contribute to the economic growth and development of the country. Gössling, *et al.*, (2020) affirm that stakeholders, including academic institutions, private organizations, and tourism and hospitality business owners, play a crucial role in the development and implementation of government policies related to tourism. These stakeholders can provide valuable insights, expertise, and resources that can help shape policies and ensure their successful implementation. Academic institutions can contribute to the development of evidence-based policies by conducting research and analysis on tourism trends, best practices, and challenges. They can also provide training and education to government officials and industry professionals, helping to build capacity and improve the quality of tourism policies. Moreover, Timothy (2016), indicates that private organizations, including tourism and hospitality businesses, can provide valuable input on the practical implications of tourism policies and help identify potential challenges and opportunities. They can also collaborate with government agencies to promote tourism development and investment, and contribute to the development of industry standards and best practices. As submitted by Zhang (2021), tourism and hospitality business owners can provide insights into the specific needs and challenges of their businesses, helping to ensure that policies are tailored to the needs of the industry. They can also collaborate with government agencies to promote tourism development and investment, and contribute to the development of industry standards and best practices. In order to effectively engage these stakeholders, Zhang and Zhang (2018), assert that government agencies should establish clear communication channels and provide opportunities for input and feedback throughout the policy development and implementation process. This can help build trust and support for tourism policies, and ensure their successful implementation. Additionally, government agencies should establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of tourism policies, and use this information to continuously improve and refine their approaches.

DISCUSSION

Tourism policy and planning are integral components of both practical and theoretical realms, holding immense importance in the realm of governance and industry operations. Governments wield significant influence in ensuring the stability and security necessary for tourism to thrive, along with providing legal frameworks and essential services crucial for the industry's functioning. Sharma *et al.*, (2022), stress that the involvement of governments in tourism spans various dimensions, reflecting the multifaceted impacts of the industry on economic, social, and environmental aspects. From regulating holidays and managing currency restrictions to overseeing international affairs, security measures, and healthcare provisions, governmental involvement in tourism is pervasive and far-reaching. Khalid *et al.*, (2021), however quip that it's essential to distinguish between tourism policy and planning. While policy sets out overarching principles and goals guiding governmental actions in the tourism sphere, planning focuses on the practical implementation of these policies to achieve specific objectives and desired outcomes. In the same vein, Fagbolu *et al.*, (2022) opine that the objectives of tourism policy are diverse, aiming to foster destination promotion, stimulate international tourism growth, establish public institutions dedicated to sustainable tourism development, attract private investment, and uphold the fundamental right to travel freely. As highlighted by Gossling *et al.*, (2020), in the wake of global disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, the recovery of the Travel & Tourism sector has been marked by discernible trends. These include a notable shift towards domestic tourism, preferences for travel closer to home, and a heightened interest in outdoor activities, as underscored by insights from the UNWTO Panel of Experts whose reports were documented by Churchill *et al.*, (2022). These findings underscore the critical role of government policies, the distinction between policy and planning, the objectives of tourism policy, and the key trends influencing the recovery of the tourism industry. The findings from the review can be modeled to the Nigerian system and adopted by state tourism boards as follows:

- i. **Tourism Development Policies and Economic Contribution:** The Nigerian tourism policy should aim to contribute to the development of the Nigerian economy, generate employment, enhance cultural and social issues, and alleviate poverty. This can be achieved by following the recommendations made by President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, such as creating a tourism master plan and promoting domestic and international tourism activities.
- ii. **Tourism and Foreign Exchange Earnings:** Tourism can contribute to the growth of the Nigerian economy through foreign exchange earnings. However, the impact of tourism on economic growth in Nigeria is not consistent and does not show an increasing or decreasing trend over the years. The percentage share of the tourism sector to total GDP, total visitor exports, and total employment ranges from 3.7% to 5.6%, 18.25% to 30.87%, and 2.83% to 4.9%, respectively.
- iii. **Tourism Planning and Policy:** Tourism planning and policy should be integrated to achieve better results in any region or country. Tourism planning is a more constrained practical exercise, while policy formulation is a creative and intellectual process. Planning should make an effort to give a detailed, "on-the-ground" outline on how each of the factors determining the success of a tourism destination should be developed. Planning is a continuous process that aids the refinement of policies in a continuous way.
- iv. **Requirements for a Successful Tourism Planning:** A successful tourism planning requires the assembly of appropriate expertise/skill-base, access to necessary resources including relevant information, financial support, and transparency and accountability, especially if it's a government project.
- v. **Critical Appraisal and Re-Appraisal of Nigerian Tourism Policy:** A critical examination of the Nigerian Tourism policy is necessary to identify areas that need re-appraisal. This can help in achieving the objectives of tourism policy, such as promoting the destination, achieving international tourism growth, establishing public institutions for sustainable tourism development, attracting private investment, and supporting the right to travel freely.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, government policies play a critical role in shaping the tourism industry, influencing its economic, social, and environmental impact. If evidence-based policies tailored to the Nigerian context are adopted and stakeholders are effectively engaged, state tourism boards can drive sustainable tourism development, enhance visitor experiences, and contribute to the economic growth and cultural preservation of Nigeria. It is imperative for policymakers to prioritize collaboration, innovation, and continuous evaluation of policies to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the tourism sector in Nigeria. Implementation of the recommended strategies can foster partnerships with academia, private organizations, and industry stakeholders, so that state tourism boards can navigate challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and create a vibrant and resilient tourism ecosystem that benefits both visitors and local communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Based on the findings of the research on how government policies affect tourism positively and negatively, and the subsequent adaptation to the Nigerian context for state tourism boards, the state tourism boards in Nigeria should collaborate with relevant stakeholders to develop a comprehensive tourism master plan aligning with national development goals. This plan should prioritize sustainable tourism practices, leveraging the country's cultural and natural assets. Encouraging public-private partnerships is crucial to drive tourism development, investment, and infrastructure improvement. These partnerships can enhance visitor experiences, promote local businesses, and support community development initiatives.
2. Implementation of policies that prioritize sustainable tourism practices, environmental conservation, and community engagement is essential. Advocating for responsible tourism

initiatives can minimize negative impacts on local ecosystems and cultures while maximizing socio-economic benefits. Allocating resources towards improving tourism infrastructure, including transportation networks, accommodation facilities, and visitor attractions, is crucial. Enhancing accessibility, safety, and overall visitor experience can attract a diverse range of tourists.

3. Developing targeted marketing campaigns to promote Nigeria as a desirable tourism destination domestically and internationally is vital. Leveraging digital platforms, partnerships with travel agencies, and participation in tourism fairs can effectively raise awareness and attract visitors. Additionally, investing in training programs and capacity building initiatives for tourism stakeholders is important. Prioritizing skills development, customer service training, and cultural awareness can enhance the quality of tourism services.
4. Establishing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of tourism policies is essential. Regularly reviewing key performance indicators, soliciting feedback from stakeholders, and adjusting policies as needed can ensure desired outcomes are achieved. State tourism boards in Nigeria can therefore enhance their policy frameworks, strengthen tourism planning strategies, and contribute to the sustainable growth and development of the Nigerian tourism sector.

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