RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN NIGERIA: THE ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

REV. FR. CHRISTIAN O. ELE (Ph.D)
General Studies Division,
Enugu State University of Science and Technology,
Agbani, Enugu State.
Email: boomdrchris@gmail.com
Phone: +2348063667566

Abstract
Religious tourism is one of the most ancient forms of tourism. The primordial movements of man took him to places where he could find food, shelter, clothing and his God or god in the then known holy sites. As a phenomenon which has survived till today, religious tourism excites interests in various areas of scholarship. This is informed by the fact that tours for religious reasons is a human activity which influences other aspects of anthropological realities. So, it is not an exclusivity of faith–driven concerns only; it also includes the economy, for instance. This work therefore strives to examine the economic perspective of religious tourism using Nigeria as a local context. Today, religious tourism is a great economic force in Nigeria as it affects the incomes and expenditures of Nigerians in more senses than one. This paper seeks to know the economic characteristics of religious tourism and its positive or negative impacts on the economy of Nigeria. It advocates for an enhancement of the faith–based tourism status of Nigeria with the view to improving the economic and general wellbeing of all Nigerians. The findings of this work influenced the recommendations proffered in it in order to facilitate and sustain this essential sector which has received less emphasis over the years in the country. The methodology employed in the study is descriptive–observational which means that religious tourists and the stakeholders in the sector were observed and studied over time.

Keywords: Religion, Tourism, Religious Tourism, Nigeria and Economic Perspective.

Introduction
Man, understood in generic term, is described by Aristotle as *homo rationalis* (a rational man). He is endowed by nature to move. Movement is one of the characteristics of his biological type. The nature’s first vehicle of movement given to him is the two feet on which he stands as *homo erectus* (a standing man) and achieves some wanderings necessitated by needs to conquer distance and space. At this primordial level of the unfolding of his anthropological realities, man could only leave his immediate environment
by foot to other places in order to find food, shelter, avert danger and dress up. Hence man is *homo turisticus*, a man that travels and makes tour. He could make tours by foot, the most ancient and basic means of travel and transportation. With his brain and brawn, head and hand, he could fabricate tools as *homo faber* in the human activity called work.

Human work enables him change the indefinite and seemingly meaningless natural given into definite and meaningful structures and infrastructures of civilization; a rational shift from naturalness. Naturally, man is a social fact, he is *ens socialis* (a social being) who must live with others. In the course of his being-with-others, there is a social interaction. This social interaction has consistencies that arise therefrom; these consistencies constitute his way of life, that is, his culture. Hence, he is *ens culturalis* (a cultural being). The very significant part of what he does consistently, that is, his culture is his quest for meaning and Ultimate Reality. This search and its attendant activities belong to the dominion of religion; man is *homo religiousus*. And most interestingly, the African whose cosmology has a porous demarcation between the sacred and the secular, the being whose personality, perceptions and possibilities are correctly and safely understood within the bounds of religion. In this light, the African is *homo religious Africanus*, while religion is seen as a critical component of his culture. This explains why religious tourism is taxonomized by a number of scholars under cultural tourism.

Religion has God, the Supreme Being, the divine, god or gods at the noumenon domain of its bi-polar component. Here, one gets the divine inspirations and gains spiritual strength from God, the first cause of all things. Sometimes, the experience of this encounter at this level of consciousness is inexplicable but satisfactory though. However, within the region of the second pole occupied by human beings, one finds a range of phenomena such as economic facts. At this level of activity, the religious man in search of God must travel to the shrine or holy site, he must eat while on this religious tour, he must clothe himself, take shelter and enjoy guaranteed safety and security, among others. These necessary ventures connected to religious tours are not intrinsically faith-based activities but rather economic. Therefore, one could see an intersection and interaction between religion and economics. At the wake of the economic dimensions of man, Karl Marx describes him as *homo economicus* (economic man). So there is a correlation between religion and the economy, a positive relationship between religious tourism and economic realities.

In biblical tradition, Jesus Christ had to feed the religious tourists, a great multitude who gathered around his person and programs on several occasions (Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 8:1-8). In the Johannine gospel, (John 6:9) a little child with five loaves and two fish did some supplies, whether as a hawker or a generous and benevolent pilgrim, his action speaks volume about the economic affairs associated with faith-based travels and venues. Host communities and countries of destinations do not hinge all of their reasons for accepting the crowds on pilgrimage nor protecting the holy sites on religious reasons only. There are myriads of reasons from the viewpoints of the economy.

The host communities and nations expect some positive and robust economic impacts on their lives and environment from the material facts associated with religious tourism. They expect that the expenditures of the pilgrims would be translated into their incomes. Ordinarly, a lot of businesses grow around pilgrimage centers and these activities have tremendous consequences on the economy.

Once Jesus Christ was on religious tour in a village where he cured the demoniac. The consequence of this healing was a huge loss of the economy of the local inhabitants through the herds of swine that charged the cliff and got drowned in the sea, the community
asked Jesus, our Lord and Master to leave for the neighbourhood (Matthew 8:27-30, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:27-38). The host community’s antagonism with Christ was economic – induced. We know that this attitude to Christ by the community has a spiritual significance in spiritual Theology and biblical scholarship. Jesus Christ placed the human person above material possession in that miracle. He placed peace above the pigs. 

So, without prejudice to the inestimable value of the healing and liberation of the demoniac, a member of their community, the economic reason played out very vividly in the episode. The host community did not desire any further possibility of the loss of her economic resources to some more exorcisms. In the bible, the magi who came to see Jesus embarked on religious tour from the East (Matthew 2: 1-11). Jesus went up to Jerusalem on several occasions on pilgrimage (Luke 2: 41, 43). The family of Elkanah was in Shiloh on religious tour (1 Samuel 1:3).

Today more than ever, religious tourism plays a vital role in the world economy. In fact, many nations such as Israel, Rome, Lourdes, Saudi Arabia to mention but four have religious tourism as major players and critical enhancers of their economy. Religious tourism has the force that can stir the economy and increase its progress. In like manner and magnitude, it can resuscitate a dying one.

Nigeria, the local context of our study has a lot of economic woes and worries. It is constantly under economic recession, economic depression, inflation, austerity and poverty even with her vast human capital and enormous natural resources.

This paper strives to examine the economic perspective of religious tourism in Nigeria. It seeks to know the impact of religious tourism on the Nigerian economy. Its findings reveal that religious tourism has the core value of religious faith but as a human activity, it has economic characteristics and implications. This paper argues that religious tourism has the huge capabilities to prompt opportunities and securities that are rooted in purely economic concerns whose effects are positive economic advancements and integral human development. It therefore advocates for an urgent attention by the Nigerian government at all levels – Federal, state and local to put much premium on this sector of her national life in order to tap its huge and uncommon gains, diversify her economy and by its token better the welfare and living standards of her citizens.

**Conceptual Clarifications**

In this section, some keywords found in the topic were described, explained or defined for better appreciation of their meanings in the work.

**Religion**

According to Ele (2015: 4-5), Religion defies one single, universally accepted definition. Religion means different things to different people and has therefore been explained in various ways. The difficulty in the explanation of the term “religion” arises from the different understanding of its origins and nature (theogenic, anthropogenic, sociogenic, psychogenic, Marxist etc), the various perspectives of its definition (phenomenological, valutative, sociological, interpretative, naturalistic, descriptive or stipulative etc), the variegated vehicles of the communication of its experience (the analogy of seven blind men describing an elephant) among others.

Again, Religion viewed from within (an adherent’s experiences) and from outside (a non-member’s/observer’s finding) cannot be exactly the same. These collective but
Divergent ideas of religion make the definition of religion interesting but difficult. Be that as it may, scholars have been able to reach some objectivity like through “a family resemblance theory” (Etim F, 2001: 8), in their quest to conceptualize religion. According to J. Wach, “all religions, despite their wide variations are characterized by three universal expressions: the theoretical, a system of belief; the practical, a system of worship; and the sociological, a system of social relationships. Until all these are found, one may have religious tendencies, religious elements, but not a full religion”. The above criteria delist Marxism, for instance, as religion. This shows yet another hurdle in the definition of religion – the inclusive and exclusive categories. The inclusive sees religion as a pervasive force in the society and includes all the “isms” like communism, Marxism, fascism, humanism, secularism, nationalism, and equates them with Christianity, Judaism and Islam. However, the exclusive makes the term “religion” a strict reserve for the activities intentionally oriented towards the divine, supernatural and the “wholly other” (Harold Fallding, 1974:3). According to Omogbe, J (2006:3): etymologically, the concept “religion” is got from three Latin words; namely: “ligare” (meaning to bind), “relegare” (meaning to unite, to link together), and “religio” (which means relationship). The analysis of the above etymology shows that religion is essentially a relationship between two persons: God or gods and man.

In the words of Ejizu (2012:1) religion is “man’s experience of the holy and ultimate reality, as well as the expression of that awareness in concrete life.” Religion, according to Herbert Spencer, “is the recognition that all things are manifestations of a power which transcends our knowledge”. Put more succinctly, religion is “humanity’s response to the divine”. (Hick, 1994, 2). The response of man to the existence of a being beyond him takes many forms hence the search for God and devotion to his cause through religious tourism.

**Religious Tourism**

The dawn of history saw man as one who travels for the satisfaction of motivations, creation of opportunities and advancement of securities in order to bridge the gaps found to exist in his anthropological self and also to address the lacks which dominate his natural environment. The dynamism of human activities gave him the gains of science and technology which made him to climb down from the back of the domestic animals and beasts of burden which he rode and wiped the dust of his feet that collected and accumulated from his foot path travels. In the words of Lonely Planet cited by Norman Alex (2004:1):

> Long before anyone had even thought of round-the-world airfares, the first travelers-pilgrims were leaving the confines of their villages to walk their way to god. From red-eyed kids to Kho Pha Ngan to dread-headed saddhus (sic) on the Great Trunk Road, there’s still no shortage of travelers looking for the path of enlightenment. Whether the question is ‘how do I score a good spot in heaven? Or ‘why don’t my parents understand me? The answers are out there on the road (cited by Norman, Alex, 2004 P.1).
Moderate tours by air, sea, rail and land have great touches of improvements from concerned governments, philanthropists and the private sector. Tourism is a daily activity which excites the interests of various disciplines such as geography, anthropology, sociology, theology, religion, environmental studies, political science, economics, graphics and hospitality, among others. The intellectual consequence is the various and variegated definitions, explanations or clarifications from scholars coming from these multiple backgrounds. Tourism has been defined by the scholars and organizations thus: Gunn (2002:9), Mathieson and Wall (2010), and Obasola (2014:527) say it is “the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal place of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations and the facilities created to cater to their needs”. Obasola went further to see tourism as “the sum of the phenomena and relationship arising from the interaction of tourist, business suppliers, host government and communities in the process of attracting and hosting these visitors”.

“The tourism has a connotation of leisure travel and tends to be synonymous with holidays (vacations). This is also reflected in dictionaries, which commonly refer to tourism as travel for pleasure… business usage, the language of those who earn their living from serving tourists; earn their living from serving tourists; most of them see tourism in terms of the products, they sell and the markets they serve” (Medlik, 2003, p. vii in Concept of Tourism and Hospitality, p. 1).

The World Tourism Organisation (1991) defined Tourism in Theobald (1998:13) as “the activities of persons travelling to and staying outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited”. The Tourism Society in Britain through her working party (1976) cited by Holloway (1987:2-3) clarifies the concept of tourism thus: “Tourism is the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work, and activities during their stay at these destinations; it includes movement for all purposes, as well as day visits or excursions”. In the same vein, the International Conference on Leisure, Recreation and Tourism organized by the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (AIEST) and the Tourism Society Cardiff (1981) understood Tourism as a concept that “may be defined in terms of particular activities selected by choice and undertaken outside the home environment. Tourism may or may not involve overnight stays away from home (Holloway, 1987:3).

The classifications of tourism are based on either geography or objective. The geography-type is subdivided into domestic, inbound or regional and outbound or international tourism. While the tourism based on objective, intention or purpose include cultural tourism, nature tourism, sport tourism, business/economic tourism, educational tourism, health/medical tourism, leisure relaxation and recreational tourism, ecological tourism, religious tourism and so on (Ashiegbu and Achunike (2014: 1-2).

“Religious tourism can best be described as a unique type of tourism whereby people travel either individually or in groups to visit different places for purposes such as missionary work or pilgrimage among other religious activities”. (Tourismembassy (2013:1). Religious tourism is also called faith-based travel, pilgrimage, Faith-tourism or
spiritual tourism. It comprises many facets which include: Pilgrimages, Marian shrine visits, Missionary travel, Leisure (fellowship) vocations, Faith-based cruising, crusades, conventions and rallies, retreats, monastery visits and guest-stays, Faith-based camp and Religious tourist attractions (Wikipedia, 1-2). Jongmeewasin, S. (P.1) wrote on the concept of Religious Tourism, thus:

Religious Tourism, so-called “Faith Tourism” is a form of tourism whereby people of faith travel individually or in groups for reasons related to religion or spirituality in their quest for meaning. It could be under pilgrimage, missionary or leisure purposes. The pilgrimage has a mediation function between the natural and the cultural world and between the natural and the supernatural world. It is a vacation, but a transformational journey during which significant change takes place; new insights are given, deeper understanding is attained, new and old places in the heart are visited, blessings are received, healing takes place, and on return from pilgrimage, life is seen with different eyes and nothing will ever be quite the same again. While pilgrimage has ultimate spiritual goal, the search for eternal truth and becoming one with God, it is a journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internationally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding. Sacred site that houses holy artifacts promotes ritual practice and attracts religious travelers or pilgrims, who often mark the time and extend the space of the journey by returning with mementos.

Christian tourists include missionaries who travel for the sake of Church planting (plantatio Ecclesiae), taking the church to places where she has not yet taking roots (missio ad gentes), pastoral work, humanitarian services and charities. Recent developments in evangelization through the Pope’s travels to nations, international religious events like World Youth Day, the camps, crusades, conferences and retreats, adoration ministries and apparition centres constitute a large part of religious tourism.

Religious Tourism in Nigeria.

Nigeria, which is the local context of the work, has three dominant religions; namely: Christianity, African Traditional Religion and Islam. Nigeria as a country did not adopt any religion as a state religion. Hence, she is understood as a secular nation as entrenched in her constitution. There is freedom of religious affiliation on the platform of religious pluralism protected under her laws. Without prejudice to the secularity of the nation, Nigeria is under both constructive and destructive influences of religions. Human progress attained through religions speaks for the former, while evidences of the latter arise from unhealthy interactions between the aforesaid religions that breed developmental deficits, (Ele, Christian 2015:3-4).
However, these challenges notwithstanding especially of the Islamization agenda and Boko Haram terrorists attacks on churches, Christians, Christian missionary spaces and ideals, tourism still enjoys its golden age in the country. One could easily identify two distinct dimensions of religious tourism in Nigeria, one is religious tourism in the domestic or local front within the country while the other is internationally oriented where Nigerians leave the country on religious tours to foreign countries. The other aspect of this international tourism is that Nigeria plays host too to foreign pilgrims who come into the country for the fulfillment of their religious obligations or to find solace in the miracles of the many Catholic, protestant and Pentecostal adorations, apparitions and crusade programs. The facts of great member too who come into the country for the sake of her various religious activities such as Eyo festival in Lagos state, the Mmanwu, Omabe and Odo masquerades in Enugu State attest to tourism in African Traditional Religion. Others who visit shrines or groves believed to be inhabited by spirits are also common. According to Okonkwo and Nzeh (2009: 289-290):

"Groves and shrines are believed to be the dwelling places of these spirits. In South Eastern Nigeria, certain forests and water spirits are designated as sacred. Selected species of trees such as Oji/Iroko (Chlorophila excelsa), Ofó (Deterium Senegatense), kola nut (Cola acuminata), Ogirisi (New boudia laevis), Abasi (Baphia nitida) etc; are perceived sacred as well as shrines and temples. In Nigeria, there are numerous examples of local shrines that have been points of attractions for adherents and admirers. The two prominent centres worthy of mention are the Omo-Ukwu temple in Ohaofia and Oshun shrines in Oshogbo. Other holy places Nigerians visit are the annual Tahoshians tour to Omok in Rivers State and Ududonka shrines at Agulu in Anambra State."

Some other shrines that have tourism attractions in Nigeria for the practitioners of African traditional Religion include Adoro Ero (Alor), Ube Uhunowerre and Api, Opi, all in Nsukka cultural zone of Enugu State. These shrines have tourists who travel to them for various religious reasons such as reconciliation, oath-taking, covenant making and sacrifices.

The numerous festivals in our traditional societies have given huge boosts to tourism in Nigeria. These include the Osun Osogbo festival. The Osun river goddess is believed to hold power to wealth and fertility, which many have found potent, hence the euphoria it has enjoys among faithful. The Osun Oshogbo festival is regarded as one of the prime cultural fiesta that most expatriates look forward to. The Argurgu Fishing festival is indubitably one of Nigeria’s greatest cultural festivals, attracting over one million participants and has existed since 1934. In the Niger-Delta, the Udju Iwhurie Festival, popularly known as Agbasu Juju Festival is a colourful display of heritage celebrated by the Agbarha people of Warri, in Delta State. The festival has roots in Iwhurie, the god of war, reputed for war prowess. It has been celebrated since time immemorial, with a display of matchetes and regalia. The razzmatazz and display of valour by the locals make Agbasu
Juju festival a festival to watch. The Iriji Festival, celebrated by the Igbo people of Nigeria to certify the new yam for consumption has become a cultural heritage which enjoys international reputation that even foreigners participate and corporate organizations struggle to endorse, in a bid to identify with the pride of Ndi Igbo. (Umejei Emeka, 2009: 3-4).

Nigerian Muslims engage in religious tourism too. The Haji which is one of the five pillars of Islam is understood by muslims as a religious obligation. This pilgrimage is expected to be made by all Muslims at least once in a life time. Every Muslim tries to afford this important faith travel.

This annual Islamic gathering of adherents in Mecca to stone the devil and pray for their respective countries’ needs is a proof of the influence which religion has on tourism. While on pilgrimage, Nigerian Muslims are attracted by sites such as Ziyarah found in Medina, Saudi Arabia. This place is associated with Prophet Muhammad, his companions and other figures who are venerated in Islamic history like the Shia Imams or Sufi (saints). The Alquds mountains in Jerusalem, which hosts Al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock; the city of Medina (the second holiest place in Islam), Al Masjid al Nabawi (the mosque of the prophet), the district of Eyup in Instanbul (the forth holiest place) are all sites of religious tourism for Muslim pilgrims (Okonkwo and Nzeh, 2009: 291).

Christianity in Nigeria has multiple and vast festivals, programs and activities that have the values of tourism attractions both domestically and internationally more than both the African Traditional Religion and Islam. The reasons are found in the many Catholic adoration ministries by Monsignor Professor Emmanuel Edeh in Elele River State, Revd. Fr. Ejike Mbaka in Emene, Enugu State, Rev. Frs. Paul Obayi (Okunerere), Basil Gbuzue, Mario David Dibie, Paschal Tochukwu Ezedieguwu, Anthony Mario Ozele, Emmanuel Nnaemka Aguiobi, Denis Attah (Agu Nwa Jesus), Patrick Henry Edet, Emmanuel Obimma (Ebube Muonso), among others. These have regular huge crowds who throng their Eucharistic adoration grounds on daily basis. These places play hosts to both the local tourists and foreign faith travelers as well.

In Catholic circles, there are various feasts and activities like crusades, seminars, conferences, retreats, Cathedricatum, pastoral visits of Bishops that engage tourists with core religious purposes. The visits of Pope St. John Paul II to Nigeria on two occasions have contributed to the growth of tourism in Nigeria in many ways. At the instance of the Papal visits, millions of people engaged in religious tours both within and from outside the country to see and listen to the Holy Father. Again, a good number of new infrastructures that have links with tourism were built while the old, dilapidating ones were rehabilitated; hospitality and other industries were stimulated. We have tourists sites like the Awhum monastery in Enugu State and Aokpe Marian Apparition ground in Benue State, etc.

In the protestant and Pentecostal denominations, there is a remarkable growth in evangelical activities and visits by international tourists and expatriate pastors and evangelists like Reinhard Bonnke and Daniel Kolenda.

The Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN) has contributed hugely to the tourism status of Nigeria by the many who attend her programs from different parts of the world. The Regular Synods of the Anglican Communion and All Anglican Clergy Conference contribute to Faith-based travel. The Living Faith Chapel (Winners Chapel) has an annual festival called Shiloh, The Redeemed Church of God (RCCG) has a monthly Holy Ghost Service and annual Holy Ghost Congress, House on the Rock has a yearly festival known
as The Experience. The Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC) has a festival called Retreat every year. These Christian feasts, seminars and retreats attract foreigners, Nigerians both at home and in diaspora, and thus contribute to the phenomenal increase in the religious tourism profile of Nigeria. (Umuejei Emeka, 2009: 2).

The discourse above is a tip of the iceberg of the activities of religious tourism in Nigeria with the limitations of the actual figures that engage in domestic and international faith travels. Another gross deficit is the inability to know the revenues generated in the course of these activities. The statistics are lacking as proper records are not kept. However, the economic implications of these events are felt on daily basis through the incomes generated and expenditures incurred as their necessary economic consequences.

The Economic Perspective

The primary impression which religious tourism gives is the idea of faith. By nature and nomenclature it seems to assume a faith-based travel exclusively. As a pilgrimage tied to religious truth, practices and observances, it is basically understood in this light as a search for the Supreme Being and a response to the ultimate reality. This perception therefore constitutes the core contents of its assumptions, foundations and motivations but only in one straightforward sense. This is because every tour made, even for the sake of the divine and religion, is a human activity which has other values unrestricted to religion and faith. It has, for instance, economic characteristics whose proper and concerted enhancements lead to uncommon integral human development.

Today religious tourism more than ever in the history of humanity represents a vital and viable sector of the world economy. It is a major player in the economy of many nations whose foreign exchange earnings, economic growth and empowerments come from faith – based travels.

The experience we have in Nigeria is that once a place becomes a destination for religious tourism, it automatically attracts some public utility infrastructure and services from religions organizations, good-spirited individuals and sometimes by the government. Such areas acquire a new environmental outlook and commercial activities begin to grow around them. Markets for shopping, banks for financial transactions, hospitality industries, hotels, hostels, restaurants, and even security outfits such as police posts are put in place as necessary consequences of these centres. These have economic implications for the tourists, host religion and communities. Every naira and kobo spent by the tourist translates automatically into incomes for the business men and woman found along the chains of economic activities which religious tourism stirs, stimulates and sustains.

The improvement of transportation facilities are one of the primary economic effects of religious tourism. The access roads to the tourism destinations are built almost immediately and this infrastructure impacts positively on the rural and remote villages that host them. Transportation activities increase due to the huge human traffic and agricultural products are evacuated from the hinter land to the urban areas. With the stable number of persons around the healing ministries, adoration or apparition grounds, electricity, bore holes, education and health care facilities, communication network, housing estates and filling stations are put in place as well.

Another economic dimension of religious tourism is job creation. Employment which it offers have results in vast proportions. Some workers are directly connected with the systems and structures of the religious sites. The religious clergy and personnel who are gainfully employed to serve in those areas, the lay faithful attendants, the rivers and
cooks the guides and guards, the sweepers and cleaners, the masons, carpenters and engineers who build the roads, bridges and houses the grotto and the podium, etc. Other workers are indirectly connected to it. These include the producers of religious articles like the stickers music cassettes, video films, religious books, scapulars, chaplet, holy water cun, clothes scarfs and handkerchiefs, soaps, perfumes and creams, candles, mustard seeds, bottled and sachet water, yoghurt, mineral drinks, artificial flowers and incense and so on. So apart from direct employment generated within the area of tourism sites, religious tourism give birth to industries that serve the needs of pilgrims.

The economic value of religious tourism is also seen in the increase in the sale of food items and animals like cows, rams, fowls, pigs and goats during the festivals as gifts of thanksgiving or victims of sacrifice. Traders in the local markets and shopping malls make direct gains from the expenditures of the tourists and adherents of the different religions as they buy from them at the instance of their religious ceremonies, rituals and observances.

On the socio economic impact of pilgrimage tourism vijayanand, (2012) wrote: 

Tourism a labour intensive service industry can create direct as well as indirect income from tourist expenditure by providing tourist goods and services. For example, expenditure in hotels, investment in infrastructure development, taxis, car, parking, catering services, purchase of goods and services like water, electricity, gas, food and beverages etc. all result in income generation. The flow of money generated by tourism multiplies many times as it passes through various sections of economy. This is known as multiplier effect of tourism earnings. Tourist spending are spread in different sectors and create jobs and revenues on sectors indirectly related to the tourism industry; contribution to local wealth, economic development and regeneration.

Religious tourism has contributed to stability, unity and peace. Nigeria has over 250 ethnic nationalities who gather together as one family of humanity under the programs of religious tourism. This unity and peaceful co-existence serves as antidote against ethnicism and promotes sustainable national development which peaceful milieu engenders.

The economic perspective of faith travel is not only positive, it has negative sides too. They include:

1. The environment that hosts religious tourism sites suffer terribly from the problem of waste management. In more places than one wastes generated by tourism pose environmental and health problems as both organic and inorganic human wastes, refuse and disposables are not properly handled.

2. There is much pressure on transport infrastructure whether aviation, water ways, rails or land. Sometimes this situation leads to frequent road accidents, loss of lives and property. Even vehicles that are not road worthy are applied for the services of tourists in order to cope with the huge demand of transport services.
3. Very close to the environment question is the air, land and sound pollutions associated with crusades and evangelical programs of huge proportions. Nigeria has no regulations against volumes of sound or noise that could disturb the quietude of cities and of the neighborhood.

4. Material gains and profit motives have been noticed to exist in the bid to function religious tourism. Prices of goods and services sky rocket in order to take advantage of tourists who must fulfill their religious obligations. This could facilitate the loss of the holy and spiritual objectives of religious tourism to commercialization, profanity and materialism. Jesus drove out those who were buying and selling in the temple contradicting the spiritual essence of pilgrimage (Matthew 21:12, John 2:15).

5. Security challenges pose a lot of threats to religious tourism in Nigeria. The Boko Haram sect, an Islamic terrorist organization that bombs Christians and their religious spaces increase the pressure on security apparatus in the places of religious tourism attraction. These negative dimensions notwithstanding religious tourism in Nigeria has contributed immensely to economic development of the country. In order to facilitate and actualize the full potentials of faith based travels in Nigeria, the following recommendations are proffered in the next sub-section

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper, we recommend these points:

(i) There is need for policy frame of reference by government to sustain the growth of religious tourism in Nigeria. The government should be seen as an active player and partner in this sector. This will increase her revenue base to meet her developmental agenda for the citizens. Government’s participation includes the provision of security and infrastructure as enabling platforms for this sector to thrive optimally. Nigerian government at all levels should make interventions that would stimulate religious tourism by keeping the statistics of the population engaged in it and properties committed to its cause. These deficits and inadequacies should be addressed so as to move the sector forward.

(ii) Nigeria has many religious tourists’ attraction sites which are yet to be developed or harnessed. Nigeria has many of these sacred mountains, caves, rivers, lakes, and groves which should be given the face-lift for modern relevance.

(iii) There should be a synergy and collaboration between the various industries that function this sector. This will bring about increase in entrepreneurship opportunities which the industry offers to Nigeria citizens.

(iv) The moral virtues and positive cultural values of the Nigerian people should be enthroned to permeate the society. This is to curb immoral vices that my arise without them such as robbing or kidnapping of tourists.

(v) Adherents of various religions are encouraged to increase their faith and good works through the spiritual life and experiences which these tours
can offer. When they become better Nigerians, then the country could be safe from every one.

(vi) Nigerian should be given orientation to help them see attraction sites with religious significances as places that should be respected, cherished and visited for sacred motives and not places to be violated, destroyed and visited for unholy purposes.

Conclusion

Religious tourism is a faith-based phenomenon which generates activities that are not strictly speaking religious. An instance is that it has impacts on the economy which is a concern in the secular arena. Economic principles and religious ideals have been noticed in this study as mutual forces that have shaped the economy of Nigeria in many uncommon fronts. Pilgrimage centers, for examples are factors that developed their hosts communities and put same in the golden map of economic progress. The interaction between religious tourism and economics in the development of Nigeria shows that the development of the human person and of the nations is not an exclusivity of the secular arena. Religion can be a major player too in this direction. It is necessary therefore that Religious bodies, the government at all levels and the private sector help to sustain this sector for greater improvements of the Nigerian economy and genuine religiosity of her citizens.

REFERENCES


http://www.lonelyplanet.com/theme/religion/rel-index.htm


