

INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY INTO DESTINATION MARKETING STRATEGY TOWARDS DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS: EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIA

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Abstract

An increase in the number of international tourists looking out for sustainable tourism destinations has made many destination marketing organisations and business managers in the tourism ecosystem to think towards integrating environmental sustainability in their marketing strategies in order to attract more tourists. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess the importance of integrating environmental sustainability into destination marketing strategy towards destination competitiveness, and also measure the relationship between environmental sustainability and Nigeria tourism performance as measured with international tourist arrivals and international tourism receipts. The study adopted mixed method of quantitative and qualitative. For qualitative, literatures were reviewed and observations made on the state of sustainability practices in Nigeria. Quantitatively, secondary data were collected from the database of World Economic Forum on environmental sustainability index and World Bank on international tourist arrivals and tourism receipts from 2006 – 2019. The findings show that marketing has evolved over the years to focusing on not just customer satisfaction but social and environmental sustainability. Besides, the quantitative analysis revealed weak relationship between environmental sustainability and international tourist arrivals and tourism receipts. The study recommends environmental

sustainability issues must be integrated into the marketing strategies of the destination marketing organisation and other stakeholders in the tourism sector in Nigeria in order to attract more tourists from developed and sustainability-conscious nations, which would lead to more tourists and revenue to the Nigeria.

Keywords: Environmental Sustainability; Sustainability Marketing Strategy; Destination Competitiveness; Tourist Arrivals; Tourism Receipts.

Introduction

Travel and tourism make up the largest service industry in the world and it continues to grow (World Bank, 2016) This industry stimulates Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in host countries and contributes substantially to government tax revenues. The sector worth US\$7.6 trillion, and accounts for more than 10% of global GDP, and represents 7% of all international trade and 30% of the world's export in services (UNWTO, 2017). Tourism receipts provide an important source of foreign exchange for countries around the world, enabling economic growth and investment in a multitude other sectors (WTTC, 2017). Other contributions of travel and tourism to the host country include: increase in international trade, boosts intentional investment, drives infrastructure development,

supports low-income economies, creates jobs efficiently, promotes inclusive growth, strengthens rural communities, revitalizes urban areas, improves access to income via travel technology, benefits women, bolsters artisans, facilitates conservation, raises climate change awareness, propels the blue economy, protects cultural sites, sustains intangible culture, spreads philanthropy, cultivates intercultural understanding and aids post-conflict recovery (World Bank, 2016).

According to World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), International Trade Centre (ITC) and Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) (2017), tourism is a key factor for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and be a powerful vehicle to promote and reach the milestones of the ambitious agenda, given that it is one of the main job and wealth creator for many countries. In fact, tourism explicitly features as a target in SDGs 8, 12 and 14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production, and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources respectively. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 2017, reported that tourism can be an engine for inclusive growth and sustainable economic development. Tourism has contributed immensely to Africa's growth, employment and trade. During 1995 – 2014, international tourist arrivals to Africa grew by an average of 6% per year and tourism export revenues, 9% per year. The average total contribution of tourism to gross domestic product (GDP) increased from \$69 billion in 1995 – 1998 to \$166 billion in 2011 – 2014, that is from 6.8% of GDP in Africa to 8.5% of GDP. Furthermore, tourism generated more than 21 million jobs on average in 2011 – 2014, which translates into 7.1% of all jobs in Africa (UNCTAD, 2017).

Meanwhile, the preservation of natural and cultural resources is one of the major challenges the tourism industry must overcome. According to World Economic Forum report of 2019, results show that the number of UNESCO cultural and natural sites, as well as intangible cultural heritage listings, keeps growing, indicating greater commitment to preserving some of the key attractions driving people to visit destinations. Encouragingly, Environmental Sustainability scores have been boosted by the increase in environmental treaty ratifications and improved perceptions that Travel and Tourism is

being developed in a sustainable manner, all of which bodes well for natural resources and nature-based tourism. While this is promising, the enforcement of treaties and protected lands might not be enough to preserve natural resources, given that air pollution, deforestation and species endangerment have continued to rise over the last two years. Since the last edition of the report, the global average score for perceptions of the stringency and enforcement of environmental regulations improved by just 0.4%. Sadly, these perceptions declined the most in Sub-Saharan Africa, a region that already struggles to better utilize its natural assets. As a result, it is vital that Travel & Tourism stakeholders in this region recognize their role in environmental protection, or they run the risk of losing out on future nature tourism (World Economic Forum, 2019).

Nigeria, one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa is benefiting from the growth in the tourism industry. The total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was US \$6,971.9 million 1.9% of GDP in 2019, and is forecast to rise by 4.0% per annum to US\$29.7bn, 4.5% of GDP in 2027. On employment, travel and tourism contributed 1,254,400 jobs to total employment, and it is expected to rise by 3.6% per annum to 2,598,000 jobs in 2027. On visitor exports, US \$2,549.1 million was generated in 2019 (WEF, 2019). Based on these contributions of tourism to host countries, it is thus, critical for countries to promote policies that foster the continued growth of tourism including sustainability (UNWTO, 2016). According to World Economic Forum (WEF) reports, environmental sustainability index for Nigeria has moved from 3.6 in 2006 to 4.3 in 2019. The index fluctuated over the fourteen year period (WEF, 2007-2019). This fluctuating trend shows lack of serious commitment by the stakeholders in Nigeria towards the integration of environmental sustainability in policy formulations and implementations in the tourism industry. Besides, according to Wall Street Journal (2010), Nigeria ranked 9th in world for countries that pollute the ocean the most.

The concept of environmental sustainability has evolved overtime but many nations, organisations, firms are slow in adopting this concept in their strategy (Kumar, Rahman, Kazmi & Goyal, 2012). The importance of the natural environment for providing an attractive location for tourism cannot be overstated, so policies and factors enhancing environmental sustainability are

important competitive advantage in ensuring a country's future attractiveness as a destination (WEF, 2019). Nigeria have struggled over the years and need to work more on indexes that make up the environmental sustainability indicator. Environmental sustainability consists of policy indicators such as the stringency and enforcement of the government's environmental regulations and variables assessing the status of water, forest resources and marine life, proxied by fish stock status.

In tourism industry today, there are many recognized business leaders that have integrated sustainability into their core business. However, many developing countries have not integrated sustainability into the production of tourism related services. According to Font and Carey (2005), there are many surveys carried out mostly at the national level on the willingness to pay for more sustainable tourism products and the results indicated that there is a growing sensibility on sustainability issues, but product selection and purchasing is mostly not yet related to sustainability factors. The results show that many business leaders that have integrated sustainability in the mainstream of their businesses are not experiencing any real reward for their responsibility towards the host environment and communities. Contrary to this report, recent studies believe that travelers prefer companies that embed green or eco-friendly practices into their operations (WTTC, 2015), and the percentage of consumers who are willing to pay more for sustainable brands that showed commitment to social and environmental values went up from 55% to 66% between 2014 and 2015. About 73% of the younger generations are more likely to pay more for sustainability (The Neilson Company, 2015).

It is based on the observations of the relationship between environmental sustainability and tourism development and how businesses are integrating it into their marketing strategies, and, also the paucity of empirical studies on environmental sustainability and marketing strategy in tourism industry that this study seeks to examine the in relationship existing between integrating environmental sustainability into marketing strategies and tourism performance in Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategy is an integral part of a corporate strategy that helps an organisation or destination to achieve a competitive advantage (Ansary, 2006). The concept has been defined by various authors in different ways. According to Walker et al. (1992), "Marketing strategy is the effective allocation and coordination of marketing resources to accomplish the organization's objectives within a specific product market. As such, marketing strategy decisions involve specifying the target market segment(s) to be pursued and the product line to be offered. Further, firms seek competitive advantage and synergy, planning a well-integrated program of marketing elements (the 4P's) tailored to the needs and wants of customers in the target segments".

Varadarajan (2010) gave definition of marketing strategy in terms of product offering, according to him, "Marketing strategy refers to an organization's integrated pattern of decisions that specify its crucial choices concerning products, markets, marketing activities and marketing resources in the creation, communication and/or delivery of products that offer value to customers in exchanges with the organization and thereby enables the organization to achieve specific objectives." Ansary (2006) in his study on marketing strategy revealed that the concept revolves around 3Cs i.e., customer, company and competitors. He further includes the segmentation, targeting, differentiation, positioning along with branding, which unites all elements with marketing mix for formulation and implementation of marketing strategy. Branding was included because it was something which was left conceptually from marketing strategy. It is observed that all the definitions of marketing strategy linked with the segmentation, targeting, and positioning, branding and marketing mix of the company which are meant to achieve competitive advantage for the organisations.

Sustainability and Sustainability Marketing Strategy

Sustainability, according to Veiderman "is a vision of the future that provides us with a road map and helps us to focus our attention on a set of values and ethical and moral principles by which to guide our actions" (cited in Munier, 2005). This definition reveals that sustainability is a long

term vision that deals with development of strategy based on ethical and moral principles. Meanwhile, most of the time, the meaning of sustainability is understood as environmental sustainability, but it is not limited only to environmental issues, but also include the social and economic issues (Obermiller et al., 2008). Sustainability in the field of marketing is studied through different perspectives. Some authors took environmental or green issues and other took social issues. But sustainability has got three dimensions that is, environmental, social and economic. The previous studies evaluated and analyzed environmental marketing strategies (Polonsky, 1995; Aragon-Correa, 1998; Buysse & Verbeke, 2003; Camino 2007; Fraj- Andrés, 2008). But very few studies exists which developed the link between environmental sustainability and marketing strategy in the tourism industry in Nigeria.

Belz and Peattie (2010) in their book "Sustainability Marketing: A Global Perspective", see sustainability marketing as the "building and maintaining sustainable relationships with customers, the social environment and the natural environment". From the definition, it shows the transformation of marketing focus from customer based to include the social and natural environment. Meanwhile, as the sustainability is making its way in marketing practices, there is need to consider sustainability to develop marketing strategy, which means that the company has to adopt sustainability in strategic marketing practices and marketing mix especially in the tourism industry. Sustainability marketing strategy not only resulting in added value to customer but also building long term relationships with customers, which are not only beneficial for business but also for society and ecology.

Environmental Sustainability and Destination Competitiveness

Tourism is growing most rapidly in developing countries: between 2010 and 2030, arrivals in emerging destinations are expected to increase at twice the rate (4.4% a year) of those advanced economies (2.2% a year) (UNWTO, 2015). The rapid growth of tourism and arrivals have increased competitiveness among various destinations. This has led the destinations to develop and implement different strategies and programmes in order to attract visitors to their destinations. Ritchie & Crouch, (2003) in Agina, et.al., (2017), opine that destination

competitiveness is the ability of one country to create additional values and thus increase the national wealth by managing assets and processes, attractiveness, aggressiveness and proximity and by integrating these relationships within an economic and social model that takes into accounts a destination's natural capital and its preservation for future generation. One of the major strategies by these destinations is the integration of sustainability into the business and programmes.

There are various studies and reports on the knowledge, awareness, importance and impact of sustainability on business performance with contradictory results. Batra (2006) believes that a very small section of people involved in tourism are familiar with the concept of sustainability and its importance, while the majority are not. In the same vein, Middleton (1998) opines that "there is no clear evidence in the developed world that more than a small minority of visitors understands the concepts of sustainability and environmental good practice and draw on them when choosing products, although travelers from countries such as Germany, Holland and Scandinavia appear to be further ahead in this respect. There is even less evidence that the great majority of visitors are willing to pay premium prices for the products of tourism businesses operating to high level environmental standards.

Gossling and Hall (2006) and other researchers predicted that global environmental changes are expected to have major effect on a whole range of tourism destinations. These predictions, according to Dolnicar and Leisch (2008), have captured the attention of destination managers and planners who now see a need to incorporate environmental issues in their tourism planning. While some destination managers try to incorporate environmental issues as a reactionary measure to cope with climate change, others actually attempt to achieve higher levels of environmental sustainability at the destination. Gossling (2002) as cited in Dolnicar and Leisch (2008) believes that "tourists are increasingly driven by the motive of seeing unsullied natural areas and beautiful natural environments, in return, increase environmental consciousness".

Middleton (1998) equally believes that there is a convincing evidence that customers turn away from what they consider to be overcrowded, polluted destinations which have allowed their


environmental quality to become eroded through over development. Recent studies and reports according to Crest (2016) document the sustained interest among consumers in types of tourism and tourism products that help to protect the environment and bring tangible benefits to local communities. Dhawan (2013) found out from his studies that “Canadian travelers are looking to extend their green lifestyle while traveling, not wanting to abandon organic food or caring about the environment when around the globe”. Other studies that reported how and what tourists expect in terms of sustainable environment include (ABTA, 2015; TripAdvisor, 2015; WWF, Birdlife International, Friends of the Earth Europe & European Environmental Bureau, 2015; UNWTO, 2015).

Crest (2016) in Okocha et al. (2018), in response to growing demand by tourists for environmentally and socially responsible products and services, sustainability is becoming much more mainstream within the tourism industry, with increasing numbers of businesses creating environmental departments, adopting environmental and social “good practices”, seeking certification, mitigating and adapting to

climate change realities, and looking at ways to ‘green’ their supply chain. A growing number of businesses are not just advocating for a more sustainable and efficient use of natural resources as central for their development, but equally showing that through dialogue between stakeholders, nature and businesses (WWF et al, 2015).

Meanwhile, Tourtellot (2016) in Crest (2016) opines that “as destination rating systems continue to develop, awareness is growing among local leaders that insuring environmental and cultural sustainability is not only a responsible policy but also a long-term economic strategy. Protecting and celebrating natural, cultural, scenic, and historic assets means safeguarding a destination’s unique selling point. Its identity – a sense of place that no competitor can match”. Such of the rating system includes The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) by the World Economic Forum in conjunction with the United Nations World Tourism Organization and also World Banks rating especially on International Tourist Arrivals to a particular destination.

Table 1: Environmental Sustainability Sub-Indexes for Nigeria 2019.

 Environmental sustainability	4.3 ↑	74	96
Stringency of environmental regulations	2.7 ↓	134	131
Enforcement of environmental regulations	2.6 =	136	131
Sustainability of travel and tourism industry development	2.5 =	137	134
Particulate matter (2.5) concentration Micrograms per cubic meter Lower is Better ←	16.1 ↑	103	70
Environmental treaty ratification 0–29 (best)	23 ↑	55	67
Baseline water stress 5–0 (best) Lower is Better ←	0.4 =	33	31
Threatened species % total species Lower is Better ←	5.0 ↓	50	54
Forest cover change % change Lower is Better ←	0.1	64	55
Wastewater treatment %	0.2 =	116	106
Fish stock status (% of catch) Lower is Better ←	13.4	23	

Source: WEF (2019). Travel & Tourism competitiveness Index Report

According to the Wall Street report as documented by Statista.com (2018), on countries polluting the oceans, Nigeria contributed 0.9 million metric tons of plastic waste to the oceans. Only Egypt contributed more in Africa. This is

evident on our beaches and rivers, as lack of environmental literacy and commitment to environmental sustainability has led improper waste management.

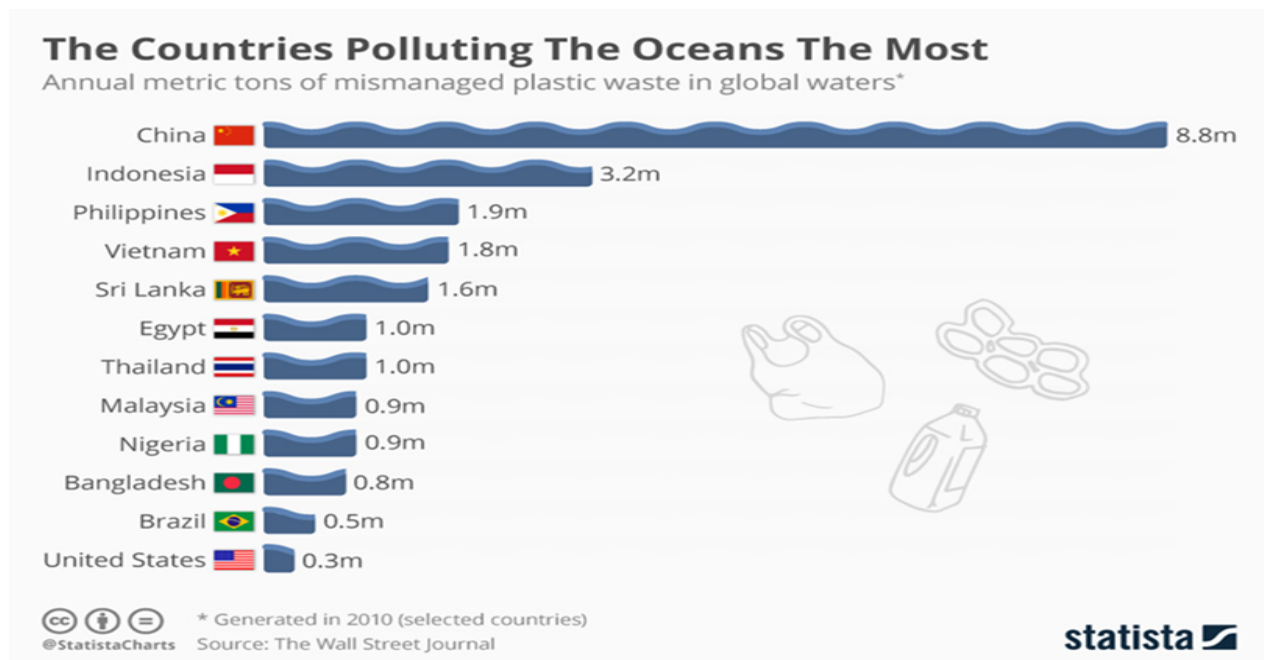


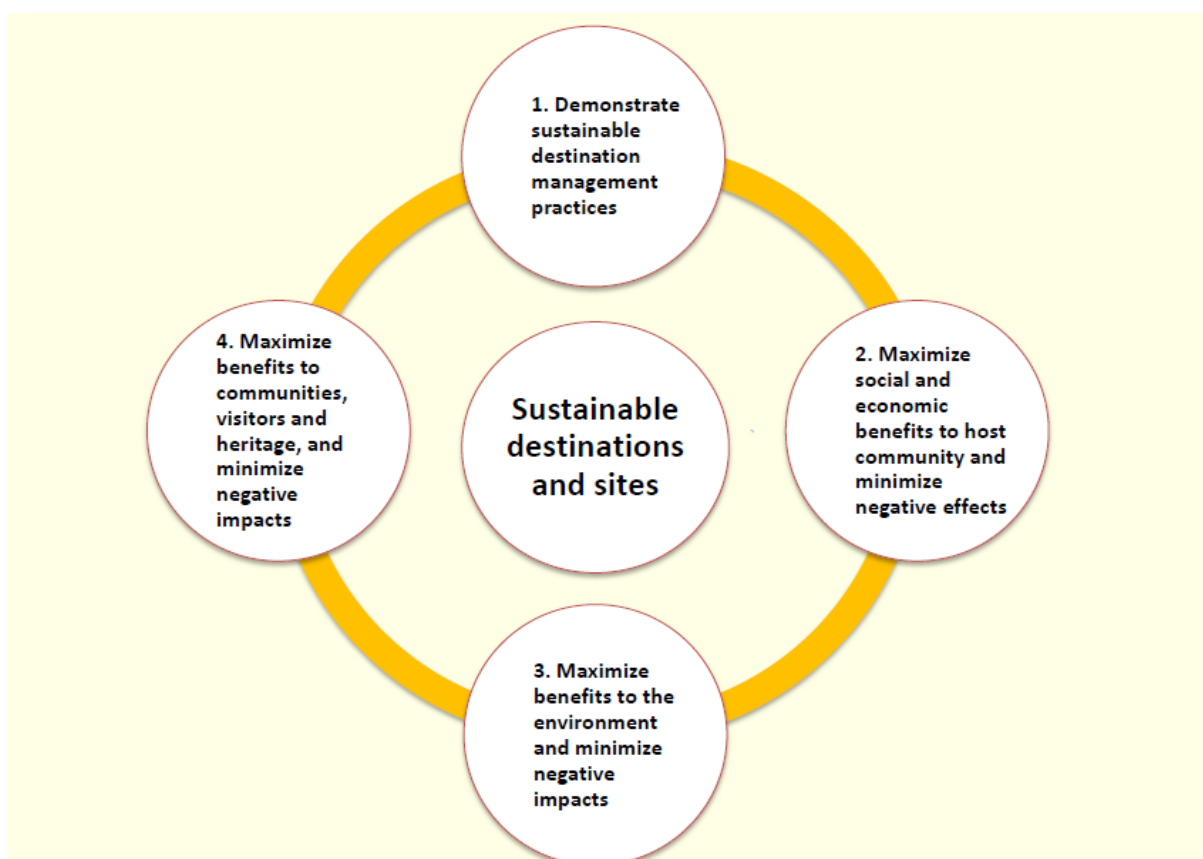
Figure 1: The countries polluting the oceans the most: annual metric tons of mismanaged plastic waste in global waters.

Concept of Sustainable Tourism

The World Tourism Organisation defines sustainability as a “positive approach intended to reduce the tension and friction created by the complex interactions between the tourism industry, visitors, the environment and the communities which are host to holiday makers”. According to the United Nations, Sustainable tourism is tourism “that leads to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems”. The UNWTO has defined sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”.

UNWTO elaborated the need for the adoption of sustainable tourism to include:

- ❖ Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- ❖ Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- ❖ Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.



Source: Global Sustainable Tourism Council, in Rieder (2012). Strategic Tourism Planning for Sustainable Destinations and Sites. 6th UNWTO Executive Training Program, Bhutan 25th - 28th June

Table 2: Key Indicators of Sustainable Tourist Destinations and Sites

Effective Sustainable management	Optimizing socio-economic benefits for local communities	Enhancing Cultural heritage/mitigating negative impacts	Minimizing and mitigating negative environmental impacts
1. Sustainable Management plan is present	1. Local communities included in planning process	1. Visitors follow guidelines and codes of behaviour	1. Strong conservation of resources ethic exists
2. Compliance with international and national standards	2. Local residents given priority in Employment and training	2. Limited trafficking in artifacts, wildlife, etc.	2. Strong compliance with pollution control measures
3. Periodic update training of management personnel	3. Purchase of local goods and Services are encouraged	3. Tourist enterprises contribute to the protection of natural and cultural heritage	3. Strong compliance with measures to protect biodiversity, ecosystem and landscapes
4. Visitor satisfaction measurement used to take corrective action	4. Local entrepreneurs have a place in the destination/site supply chain	4. Local architectural vernacular incorporated into building designs	
5. Promotional materials are	5. Code of conduct for activities in		

accurate and don't oversell	indigenous and local communities in place		
6. Design and construction complies with land use and respects heritage landscapes	6. Provisions for protecting vulnerable groups in place		
7. Information and interpretation facilities are provided	7. Codes for equity in employment of women and minorities in place, fair wages, legal protection and basic services are not compromised		

Source: Rieder (2012). Strategic Tourism Planning for Sustainable Destinations and Sites. 6th UNWTO Executive Training Program, Bhutan 25th - 28th June.

Stakeholder Theory

This study is anchored around the Stakeholder Theory. The theory originated as a theory of organizational management and it is based on the premise that organizations have an array of different stakeholder groups. Freeman (1984) is widely acknowledged to have established the conceptual and critical foundations of the theory with further contributions by Clarkson (1995).

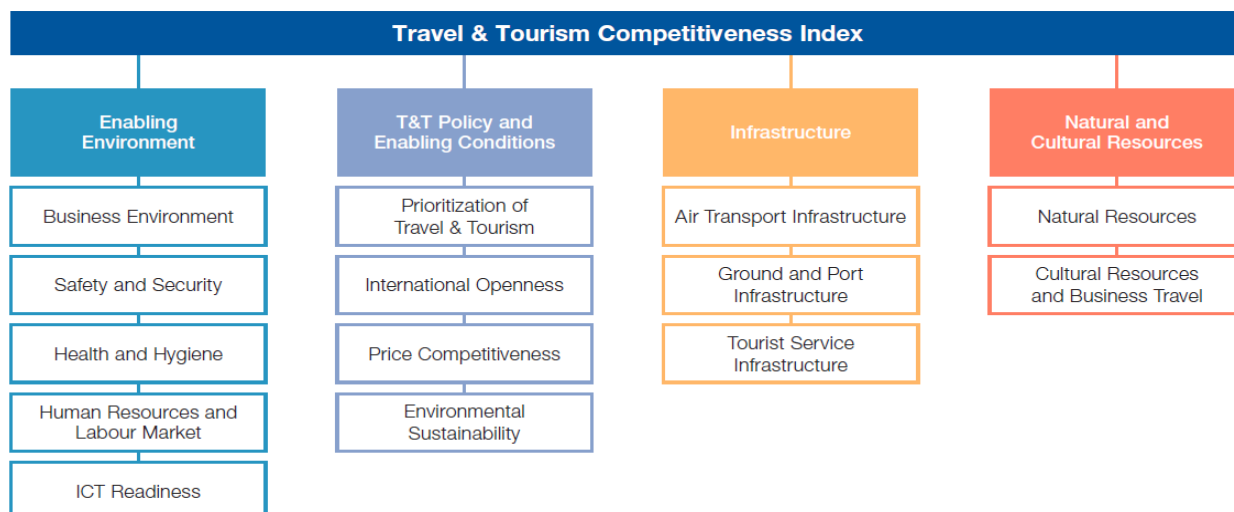
Freeman (1984) defines a stakeholder as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization’s objectives”. Accordingly, Jones and Wicks (1999) as recorded by Fyall, Garrod and Wang (2012) argue that stakeholder theory is based on four distinguishing features: The theory focuses on managerial decision making; The organization has relationship with constituent stakeholder groups, which both affect and is affected by its decision making; These relationships at least partly determine outcomes for both the organization and its stakeholders; and That the interest of all the stakeholder groups have intrinsic value, with no set of interest dominating the others.

This theory stressed the contribution that other organizations within the tourism destination can make to the individual component’s overall success. It emphasizes the importance of the support, complementarity, and knowledge of other components of the destination, which may in turn serve as a catalyst for broader collaboration within the destinations (Fyall, et al;

2012). For individual success in tourism, cooperation among different stakeholders is necessary. Buhalis, Francis and Estevao (2010) believe that the marketing strategies and other tourism programmes adopted by any destination should consider the desires and expectations of all stakeholders, such as the resident population, tourists, tour operators, investors, intermediaries and other interested groups. The goal is to find suitable marketing solutions that benefit both the whole destination and also its actors (Katharina, 2011). Integrating sustainability in the marketing strategy of a destination requires the cooperation of the stakeholders in building and maintaining sustainable relationships with tourists, the social environment and the natural environment.

Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) Model

The TTCI model is deliberately designed by the World Economic Forum in conjunction with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation to reflect and measure the diversity of factors that influence a country’s ability to compete globally in travel and tourism. Each of the 14 pillars that make up the index such as the Environmental Sustainability, if properly addressed with appropriate policy-making and sufficient investment, has the potential to drive competitiveness and returns in tourism arrivals and receipts WEF (2019). Under the Travel & Tourism policy and enabling conditions, we have the Environmental Sustainability as a major factor that drives competitiveness in destination marketing.



Source: World Economic Forum (2019).

Methodology

This study adopted a longitudinal survey design. The secondary source was used to gather relevant data and information used in this study. The secondary data were collected from the databases of World Economic Forum (WEF) for environmental sustainability of Nigeria from 2006 - 2019. The sub index of environmental sustainability include: Stringency of environmental regulations, Enforcement of environmental regulations, Sustainability of travel and tourism industry development, Particulate matters concentration, Environmental treaty ratification, Baseline water stress, Threatened species, Forest cover change, Wastewater treatment, and Costal shelf fishing pressure. The index was measured using a 7-point scale from 1 – 7: 1 = Poor; 7 = Excellent. Meanwhile, data on

Nigeria tourism performance as measured by the international tourist arrivals and international tourism receipts were collected from the database of the World Bank over the same period. The collected data were analyzed with the aid of statistical package SPSS version 20. The relationships between environmental sustainability and Nigeria tourism performance were tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlations.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Results

Table 3 shows the Environmental Sustainability Index, International Tourist Arrivals and Tourism Receipts for Nigeria from 2006 - 2019. The data shows a fluctuating trend in the environmental sustainability index and it reflects inadequate commitment towards promoting a sustainable tourism development in Nigeria.

Table 3: Environmental Sustainability Index, International Tourist Arrivals and Tourism Receipts for Nigeria from 2006 – 2019.

Years	Environmental Sustainability Index (1 - 7)	International Tourist Arrivals	International Tourism Receipts \$
2019	4.3	1,889,000	2,549,100,000
2018	4.3	1,276, 000	410,766,300
2017	3.9	1,255,000	403,900,000
2016	3.9	1,889,000	2,611,000,000
2015	3.9	1,255,000	470,000,000
2014	3.9	854,000	601,000,000
2013	4.6	600,000	616,000,000
2012	4.6	486,000	639,000,000
2011	4.7	715,000	688,000,000
2010	4.7	1,555,000	736,000,000
2009	4.6	1,141,000	761,000,000
2008	4.6	1,131,000	959,000,000

2007	3.7	1,212,000	337,000,000
2006	3.7	1,111,000	209,000,000

Sources: Authors' compilation from World Economic Forum and World Bank various Issues

Relationship between Environmental Sustainability and International Tourist Arrivals

Table 4 is the Pearson Correlation Coefficient matrix of the relationship between environmental sustainability and tourism performance in Nigeria. The table displays the correlation coefficient, significant value and the number of years studied. The correlation coefficient shows a weak and negative relationship (-0.166) with a p value of 0.570 which is higher than 0.05. This implies that environmental sustainability rating of Nigeria has a negative relationship with number of international tourists visiting the country.

Relationship between Environmental Sustainability and International Tourism Receipts

Table 4 also shows the Pearson Correlation Coefficient matrix of the relationship between environmental sustainability and international tourism receipts. It displays the correlation coefficient, significant value and the number of years studied. The correlation coefficient shows a weak relationship (0.314) with a p value of 0.275 which is higher than 0.05. This implies that environmental sustainability rating of Nigeria has a weak relationship with international tourism receipts

Table 4: Correlations results between environmental sustainability and tourism performance

		ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	INTERNATIONAL TOURISM RECEIPTS	INTERNATIONAL TOURIST ARRIVALS
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	Pearson Correlation	1	.314	-.166
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.275	.570
	N	14	14	14
INTERNATIONAL TOURISM RECEIPTS	Pearson Correlation	.314	1	.528
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.275		.052
	N	14	14	14
INTERNATIONAL TOURIST ARRIVALS	Pearson Correlation	-.166	.528	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.570	.052	
	N	14	14	14

Source: SPSS 20.

Conclusions and Implications of the Study

Nigeria is abundantly blessed with tourism resources ranging from cultural and natural resources and many historic sites but her inability or lack of interest in integrating environmental sustainability into her destination marketing strategy and tourism development programmes has negatively affected the country's rating over the years and has resulted in low number of international tourist arrivals especially from sustainability conscious tourists. The literature reviewed made us to understand that most tourists from developed countries prefer patronizing

sustainable tourism products and visiting countries with high ratings in environmental sustainability. Meanwhile, there are calls and equally a growing concern by many groups and agencies in promoting environmental sustainability and effects of climate change on the environment. Policies and programmes promoting environmental sustainability in tourism industry would takes care of the social, economic and the wellbeing of the communities hosting tourists' sites and resources.

Furthermore, the findings from this particular study have theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study contributes to the body of knowledge in environmental sustainability and destination marketing strategy. Practically, these results exposed the importance of integrating environmental sustainability into destination marketing strategy for destination competitiveness and tourism development. Understanding this, enables the management of NTDC, State Tourism Boards, and other stakeholders in the tourism industry to plan their marketing programmes by considering the sustainability conscious tourists and focusing on balancing the economic aspect of tourism and the environment.

Therefore, for tourism development in Nigeria to improve on her environmental sustainability rating and attract more sustainable conscious tourists, the following are recommended:

- Government at all levels should formulate and integrate environmental sustainability into their destination marketing strategy and promote such to the sustainability conscious tourists.
- The stakeholders in tourism industry should work closely in integrating environmental sustainability in their business strategy not only to improve the economic benefit of their business but also to improve the wellbeing of host communities.
- The stakeholders should work closely with the destination marketing organisation both at the national and regional levels in developing standards and sustainability certification programme to be followed by the individual business in the tourism industry.
- There is an urgent need for intensive environmental literacy courses and programmes from basic education stage to tertiary levels in order to promote proper waste disposal and management.

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