



ECOTOURISM AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AMIDST INSECURITY AND GLOBAL PANDEMIC

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Introduction

Wildlife generally refers to any living thing that is not tamed and this includes non-cultivated plants and non-domesticated animals. Conservation on the other hand may be defined as the wise use of resources without compromising the future (Okeyoyin, 2016).

Therefore, Wildlife Management can be referred to as an art and or science of making land produce valuable populations of wildlife, for harvest or other uses sustainably from generation to generation. Wildlife Management consist of series of decisions—such as deciding on whether to carry out early controlled burning of dried grasses to stimulate the growth of succulent, fresh grasses for herbivores or late burning, whether to make use of scarce resources in constructing water points for animals to keep them from wandering away from a protected area or to buy modern equipment for monitoring, surveillances and antipoaching patrols in order to enhance ecological integrity of a protected area. These decisions must be made (in any protected area) at regular intervals. Therefore, Wildlife Management involves the manipulation of wildlife and the environment to enhance their population, growth and wellbeing. Wildlife management is borne out of wildlife conservation.

Why Do We Need To Conserve Wildlife

The biosphere supports a variety of life forms that are interrelated, interconnected, interdependent and intertwined (i.e food web). The varieties of lives on earth are so diverse that makes the world to become not only a beautiful and exciting place, but also a balanced system that requires intentional management strategy. Because of the complex interactions in the food web, when we cause the extinction of a species, we break a link in the web and this could ultimately affect the entire world's ecosystems negatively. Therefore, it is important for humans to ensure sustainable coexistence with other species on earth for perpetuity (Strahler and Strahler, 2005).

Some important areas where wildlife has significantly impacted human lives include:

- Health and Medicine
- Food and agriculture
- Agro-allied uses
- Pharmaceutical uses
- Education and Research
- Environmental value
- Aesthetic/ recreational value

Wildlife Management in Nigeria:

Nigeria has witnessed a rapid increase in the number and size of protected areas in the 20th century. The first forest reserve created in 1899 marks the beginning of designating protected areas in the country. In 1900, protected areas in Nigeria represent 0.01% of the country's total land mass, equivalent to 97,125 hectares. Five decades later, a substantial achievement was recorded as the figure increased to 8% in 1950 representing 7,332,031 hectares, and after that, it increased slowly to 11% in 1980 [Marguba, 2003]. The protected areas include forest reserves, biosphere reserve, game reserves, game/wildlife sanctuary, strict nature reserves, and national parks. They are established for the purpose of conservation of valuable environmental/-ecological resources, to meet tourism and recreational needs and to support research and education through proper management [Marguba, 2003]. In Nigeria, National Parks and Game Reserves constitute the greater percentage of the protected area system. [GEF, 2002] estimates the total area covered by Nigeria's protected areas to be over three million hectares, and about 2.3 million hectares fall into category Ia and II of the IUCN category.

There are 1,000 protected area records stored in the WDPA for Nigeria, 988 are national-level protected areas with 12 designated under international and regional agreements or conventions (UNEP-WCMC, 2015, UNEP-WCMC and IUCN, 2021)). These include national designations (988) of 7 National Parks, 35 game reserves, 933 forest reserves, 5 strict nature reserve, 2 wildlife sanctuary, 1 community forest and international designations (12) of 4 UNESCO-MAB Biosphere and 11 Ramsar site, wetland of international importance, all constituting 13.93% (127,332km²) of 914,306km² total land area of Nigeria.

It is important to mention here that in 2021, President Muhammadu Buhari approved the upgrading of 10 Game Reserves to National Parks across the country of which 2 are Marine National Parks for the protection of the country's marine wildlife.

Summary of protected areas in Nigeria:

S/N	Protected areas	Number
National designations		
1	National parks	7
2	Game reserves	35
3	Forest reserves	933
4	Strict nature reserves	5
5	Wildlife sanctuary	2
6	Community forest	1
International designations		
7	UNESCO-MAB biosphere reserve	4
8	Ramsar site, wetland of international importance	11
	Total	1,003
	Land area covered	127,332km ²
	% of total land area covered	13.93%

Source: Adapted from UNEP-WCMC and IUCN, 2021.

What is Tourism?

The World Tourism Organization defines tourism more generally, in terms which go "beyond the common perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activity only", as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure and not less than 24 hours, business and other purposes" (UNWTO, 2009). Tourism can be domestic (within the traveller's own country) or international, and international tourism has both incoming and outgoing implications on a country's balance of payments.

The tourism industry generates substantial economic benefits to both host countries and tourists' home countries. It is, especially, an important industry to developing countries. The main benefits of tourism to a country are:

- Foreign exchange earnings,
- Tax revenues,
- Business opportunities for budding entrepreneurs, and
- Employment for workers in the industry.

For these reasons, the tourism industry provides tremendous opportunity for relatively small businesses to thrive and is a leading generator of jobs. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) estimates that tourism represents 8 percent of jobs world-wide.

Tourism is widely regarded as one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Since the 1980s, tourism has been one of the leading growth sectors in the global economy according to United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) statistics, from 1950 to 2010; international tourist arrivals grew from 25 million to 940 million. The sector has seen significant growth in revenue and employment as well as the development of new and fledgling markets. It contributes significantly to national GDPs and is a top employer in the economies of many nations. Tourism is labor intensive service which means it employs a lot of people in developing world where jobs are still limited. It is also a security sensitive activity which means that any hints of threat and danger to tourists can damage it.

There are numerous specialty forms of tourism that have emerged over the years, each with its own adjective. Many of these terms have come into common use by the tourism industry and academics (Lew and Alan A. 2008) others are emerging concepts that may or may not gain popular usage. Examples of the common tourism are: educational tourism, agritourism, birth tourism, culinary tourism, cultural tourism, dark tourism (also called "black tourism" or "grief tourism"), extreme tourism, geotourism, heritage tourism, medical tourism, film tourism, nautical tourism, pop-culture tourism, religious tourism, sex tourism, slum tourism, sports tourism, virtual tourism, war tourism, wellness tourism, and ecotourism which is one of the main focus of this presentation.

For the purpose of this presentation, there is the need to define the following key words; ecotourism, security, insecurity and pandemic.

Ecotourism also known as ecological tourism, is responsible travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strives to be low-impact and (often) small-scale. It helps educate the traveller; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities, and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights.

Pandemic are large-scale outbreak of infectious disease that increase morbidity and mortality over a wide geographic area and cause significant economic, social and environmental disruption (Madhav et al, 2017).

Experts in emerging infectious diseases have been warning for decades that habitat fragmentation and degradation, and live animal markets increase the risk of diseases spilling over from wildlife to humans. The emergence of some new diseases of our time i.e. HIV, Ebola, SARS, COVID-19 among others can be at least attributed in part to increased human impact on wildlife and natural systems.

The Covid-19 case is over 108.2 million and over 2.3 million people dead globally (WHO, 2021). In the past, several significant disease and pandemic such as the Spanish flu, SARS, Hong Kong flu, Ebola recorded to cause extensive disruption of

ecotourism and wildlife management across the globe ((Madhav et al, 2017). Traveling and integration on the global scale, urbanization, land-use changes, and greater biodiversity exploitation led to the recent increase in pandemics (Wu et al. 2017). **Security** is protection from, or resilience against, potential harm (or other unwanted coercive change) caused by others, by restraining the freedom of others to act. Beneficiaries (technically referents) of security may be of persons and social groups, objects and institutions, ecosystems or any other entity or phenomenon vulnerable to unwanted change.

The range of security contexts is illustrated by the following examples Computer security, corporate security, ecological security, food security, home security, human security and national security. While **Insecurity** on the other hand, is a potential for violation of security, which exists when there is an entity, circumstance, capability, action, or event that could cause harm.

What are the major causes of insecurity in the country?

Nigeria in recent times has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity such as Boko Haram activities, banditry, kidnapping and Herders – Farmers clashes. This has made national security to be a major issue for the government. However, the recent surge of insecurity in the country has been broadly linked to staggering poverty. Youth unemployment currently stands at 32.5%. The other major causes of security threats include:

- **Pervasive Material Inequalities and Unfairness** – Greater awareness of disparities in life is a major root cause of insecurity in Nigeria. This is a rooted general perception of inequality and unfairness which has resulted in a grievance by a large number of people. This perception stems from the perception of marginalization by a section of the people, government development policies, and political offices and this has become a primary source of disaffection and resentment. A large number of the Nigerian population is frustrated and have lost hope, especially the youths, and have now emerged to express their disillusion about the pervasive state of inequality.
- **Ethno-Religious Conflicts** – Ethnoreligious conflicts are major source of insecurity in Nigeria. These have arisen from distrust among various ethnic groups and among the major religions in the country. The ethnoreligious conflict was defined as a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion, and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation. Frequent and persistent ethnic conflicts and religious clashes between the two dominant religions (Islam and Christianity), present the country with a major security challenge. In all parts of Nigeria, there exist ethnoreligious conflicts and these have emerged as a result of new and particularistic forms of political consciousness and identity often structured around ethnoreligious identities.
- **Conflict of Perceptions between the Public and government** – Over the years, there has been a standing mismatch between public and government perceptions. A situation that often results in the reactions of the public to the excesses of the military regimes which governed Nigeria and has continued after the end of military regimes and created a sensitivity by those in government at public intrusion in matters of state.
- **Perceived Weak Security System** – It is perceived that the security arm of government is inadequately equipped both in weaponry and training to combat the daunting challenges posed by insecurity.
- **Loss of Socio-cultural and communal value system** -The traditional value system of the Nigerian society like most African societies is characterized by such endearing features as collectivism, loyalty to authority and community, truthfulness, honesty, hard work, tolerance, love for others, mutual harmony and co-existence, and identification of an individual with another (Other distinctive features of Nigerian traditional society are abhorrence for theft and high value for life. Stealing was considered extremely disgraceful and lives were also highly valued). All of these values which made society secured and safe have all gradually been thrown away and lost. New values have taken over their place over the years, with the so-called ‘modernity and civilization’. All our endearing values and morals have been traded off for western values.
- **Porous Borders** – One major immediate factor which has enhanced insecurity in Nigeria is the porous frontiers of the country, where individual movements are largely untracked. The porosity of Nigeria’s borders has serious security implications for the country. Given the porous borders as well as the weak and security system, weapons come easily into Nigeria from other countries. Small Arms and Light Weapons proliferation and the availability of these weapons have enabled militant groups and criminal groups to have easy access to arms. Nigeria is estimated to host over 70 percent of about 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa. Also, the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for an unwarranted influx of migrants from neighbouring countries such as the Republic of Niger, Chad, and the Republic of Benin. These migrants which are mostly young men are some of the perpetrators of crime in the country.
- **Rural/Urban Drift**– The migration of jobless youths from rural areas to urban centres is also one of the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the countries in the world with very high rural/urban drift. Most urban areas in Nigeria have grown beyond their environmental carrying capacities and existing infrastructure and this has resulted in increased poor quality of the living conditions in urban areas in Nigeria. Out of frustration, these youths are drawn into crime.
- **Unemployment/Poverty** -As a result of the high level of unemployment and poverty among Nigerians, especially the youths, they are adversely attracted to violent crime.
- **Terrorism** – At the most proximate and least disputable level, terrorism is the most fundamental source of insecurity in Nigeria today, and its primary bases and sources of support have generally been located in religious

fanaticism and intolerance. As “the premeditated use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction or death, especially against unarmed targets, property or infrastructure in a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts” which has cost 13.4 percent of the world gross domestic product. Nigeria has lost large numbers of lives in the Northern region since 2009 to the insurgency of this infamous sect, Boko Haram which has been ravaging the northern region of the country.

- **Environmental Degradation and Loss of Soil Fertility:** The insecurity situation in Nigeria is concentrated in the Niger-Delta and the Northeastern areas. While residents in Niger-Delta have lost their farmlands and water meant for drinking and fishing to widespread pollution as a result of oil explorations and exploitations, those in the northern states have lost their farmlands to rapidly encroaching desert rendering hundreds and thousands of individuals jobless in these areas.

What are the Major Impacts of insecurity on Ecotourism & Wildlife Management?

- Habitat Loss:** Apart from population growth, fast industrialization, urbanization and modernization, insecurity is having a great deal of destruction on natural habitat of plants and animals.
- Pressure on Wildlife Resources:** the inhabitation of some parts of the forest reserves in the country has led to connivance with poachers and loggers to kill and poach wild animals and this is resulting in reduction and even extinction of many wild species.



Confiscated logs



Poachers arrested by Park Rangers



Poachers arrested with their Kills



Tree House burnt in Okomu National Park

- c. **Negative Image on Tourist Destinations:** Foreign countries in response to negative image created by insecurity, issue travel advisories to their citizens against traveling to countries with the slighted security activities. On 26 June 2015, 38 people, mostly British tourists, were killed by a gunman at a tourist resort in Port El Kantaoui, just outside the city of Sousse in Tunisia. Not to mention the human tragedy, the immediate economic consequences were devastating for an economy that gets almost 15% of its GDP from tourism. Several tour operators and air carriers adjusted or cancelled tourist bookings in the months that followed the attack. Many potential visitors shifted their holiday trips to safer destinations such as Spain or Italy.
- d. **Attack on Park Officials:** The National Parks in the North East, North West and North Central have had a fair share of bandits' and terrorist attacks in the recent past. It is important to note that the Service has been grappling with banditry in these parks viz; Chad Basin, Kamuku, Kainji Lake and Gashaka Gumti. Many lives and Park assets have been lost to this heinous act. Records available in the Service indicate that between 2012 and 2013, Chad Basin National Park lost a total number of 5 Park Rangers to Boko Haram. Similarly, Kamuku National Park lost 2 Park Rangers in 2012 while Gashaka Gumti National Park recorded the loss of 6 Park Rangers from 2018 to 2019. However, the Park recently hit by this security threat is the Kainji Lake National Park which between 2020 and 2021 has lost 3 Park Rangers.

Some parts of these Parks have become inaccessible especially the Chingurmi-Duguma Sector of Chad Basin National Park in Bama local government area of Borno State as well as Kamuku National Park. However, with the collaborative

efforts with the Nigeria military and other sister paramilitary agencies sanity has begun to return to these areas of the Parks.

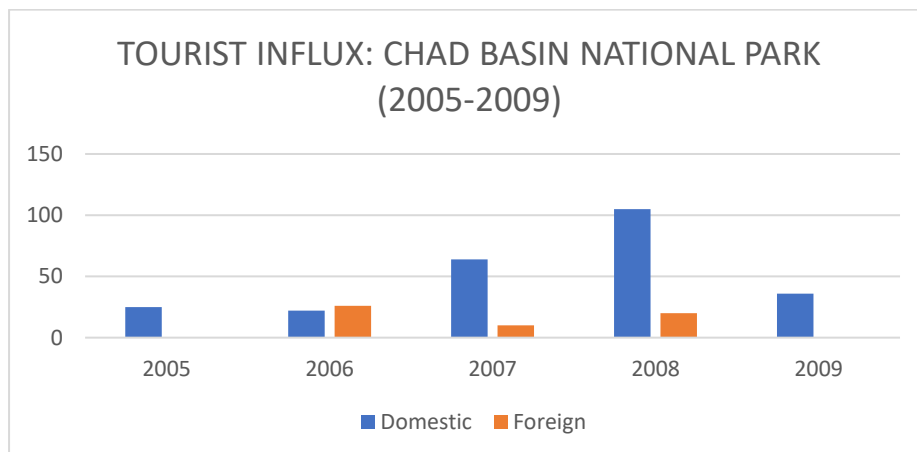


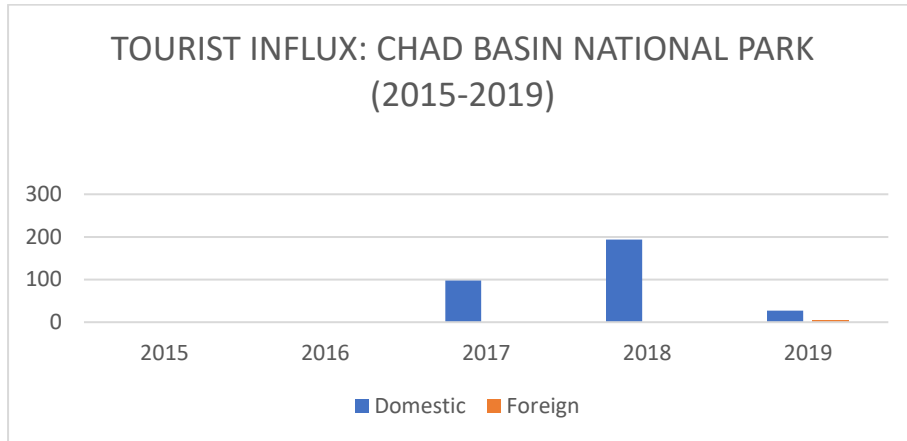
Park Rangers killed Suspected Bandits in KLNP



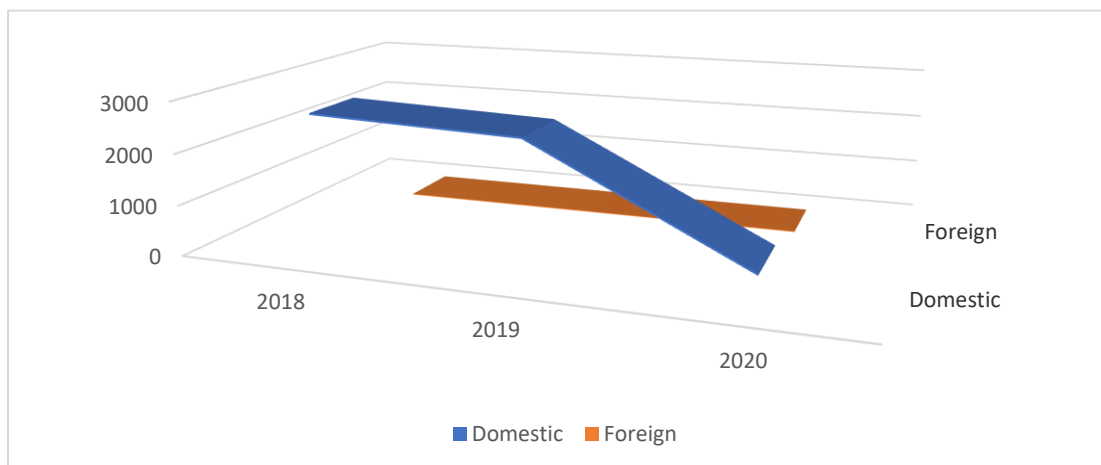
Burnt Patrol Vehicle by Bandits in KLNP, March, 2021 Razed Ranger Camp by Bandits in KLNP

e. **Low Tourist Influx:** The effects of insecurity might cause political instability, which leads to the decline or disappearance of tourist arrivals in some tourist destinations. The available literature and statistics confirm that terrorist attacks alter tourism demand patterns, indicating an increasing demand to cancel travel or holiday plans. Safety and security are highly prized assets. Tourists and visitors naturally avoid destinations with widespread reports of the presence of terrorist activities. Below is the statistics of tourist arrivals to two (2) of the Nigeria’s National Parks; Chad Basin and Kainji Lake before and during terrorism in the country.

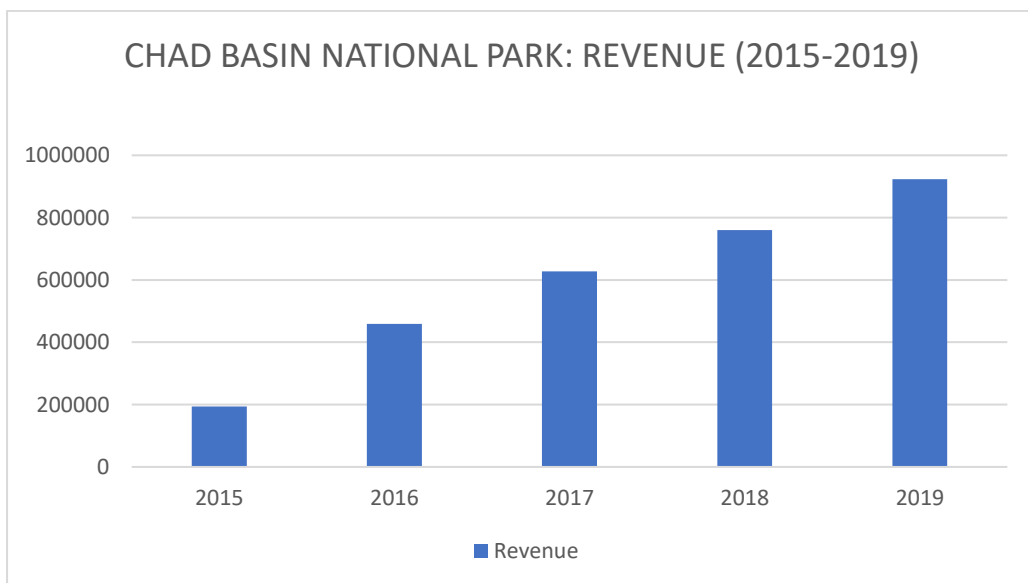
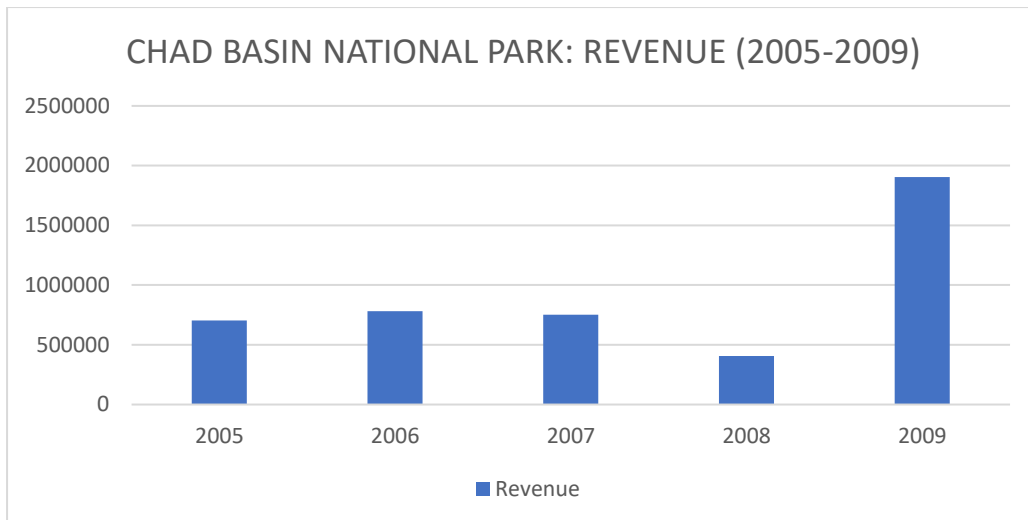




TOURIST INFLUX: KAINJI LAKE NATIONAL PARK (2018-2020)



- f. **Reduction in Foreign Earnings:** Insecurity reduces tourist demands and revenue expected to be generated. Tourism, both domestic and International, gives impetus to national income (Mill, 1990). Tourists have to pay for different types of goods and services in the host country. The flow of money generated by tourist spending multiplies as it passes through various segments of the economy. A tourist makes an initial expenditure into the society which is received as income by local tour operators, shopkeepers, hotels, taxi drivers. So, tourism constitutes a demand for consumer goods and services and therefore when tourist inflow is hampered by acts of terrorism the negative effect is reflected in national travel receipts/GDP of the host country. Below is a case study of internally generated revenue pattern of Chad Basin National Park:



- g. Creates Unemployment:** Tourism offers great employment opportunities to our teeming population in the areas of tour operation, sales of souvenirs and provisions, transportation, hotel accommodation, entertainment and local art and craft etc. The advent of terrorism and the consequent absence of tourists in the country therefore evaporate these employment opportunities created in the tourism industry. And of course, loss of jobs leads to loss of income which translates to poverty and insecurity.
- h. Infrastructural decay:** Tourism business necessitates the provision of infrastructures, utilities and amenities which are not only used by the visitors/tourists but become valuable to the local population as well. The economic importance of tourism in national economy can be appreciated with reference to its contribution in infrastructural development (Mathleson and wall, 1982). Unfortunately, tourism facilities and utilities are often targeted and destroyed by terrorists. Apart from this, the disruption of tourist flows to these destinations over time results in the decay of the infrastructure due to lack of tourist revenues to finance their maintenance.

Effects of Global Pandemics on Ecotourism & Wildlife Management:

The Covid-19 pandemic affected virtually all sectors and the biodiversity conservation sector at local, regional and global levels (Corlett et al. 2020). Its effect on biodiversity conservation are many and either negative or positive in form but the negative impact outweighed the positive one (Muhumuza and Balkwill, 2013; Roe et al, 2015; Corlett et al, 2020). In the same vein as the previous disease outbreaks, Covid-19 led to the inability to manage the protected areas and carryout conservation programs because of the total lockdown (Corlett et al, 2020). The positive impacts include;

- Reduced atmospheric Pollution
- Reduced Human Pressure on Wildlife

The Negative impacts of the pandemic include:

- Loss of Skilled Personnel and Funds
- Ineffective and Lukewarm Staff
- Weakened Performance in the Protected Area
- Reduced Revenue and Staff Strength
- Human/Resource Conflict
- Increase in local exploitation
- Lack of Research, Assessment, and Monitoring on Biodiversity

Global Pandemics remain a threat to Ecotourism & Wildlife Management through tourism revenue loss in Pas. The financial loss affects the budget, population monitoring/assessment programs, and the job loss to negative human behavior that drives human-wildlife conflicts and natural resources destruction. Pollution and Poaching activities may increase or decrease depending on accessibility to locals and vehicular restriction to long distant poachers.

Challenges of Ecotourism & Wildlife Management in Nigeria:

However, despite the number of PAs in the country, their management status remains questionable. It has been observed theoretically that the PAs are protected by law at different levels of governance but in practice the situation is different as most of them are only protected by names and can be best described as “paper reserves”. This situation is attributable to a number of challenges confronting the management of the PAs such as;

- Inadequate and untimely release of allocated funds.
- Inadequate manpower.
- Inadequate infrastructural facilities (poor road network, communication, medical facilities, etc.).
- Poaching (logging, grazing, mining, hunting, fishing, etc.).
- High rate of rural and urban poverty: about 70% of Nigerians live below poverty level.
- Population explosion
- Urban expansion and infrastructural development.
- Uncoordinated land use policy.
- Inadequate data on status of biodiversity.
- Unsustainable agricultural production on marginal lands and other unsustainable farming practice.

- Lack of transboundary Protected Areas configuration in some reserves.

- Use of Protected Areas as hideouts for organized crimes (banditry, kidnapping, rustling, etc).

- Inadequate Synergy among the Security Agencies
- Existence of human enclave.

- Climate change and natural disasters.

- Corruption

- Government long neglect of the sector due to early crude oil discovery.

- Fuelwood exploitation

Way Forward

- I. The Federal Government afforestation programme (green bond project) be sustained to mitigate the effect of climate change, habitat degradation and enhance forest cover.
- II. Effective anti-poaching patrols of the parks and other forest/game reserves in the country.
- III. Enhanced border security along Nigeria’s international boundary lines. Federal Government should collaborate with state governments to address the challenge of border porosity.
- IV. There should be concerted efforts to recruit, train and post personnel of the security agencies to boost surveillance and stem the free flow of arms and questionable persons into the country.
- V. Aggressive implementation of the newly approved 2020 National Forestry Policy which guarantees sustainable management of the forest ecosystems, social economic growth and environmental sustainability and provision of goods and services for domestic and export purposes.
- VI. Aggressive public enlightenment programmes at all levels of government on the importance of conservation via print and electronic media, billboards, flyers, jingles, etc.
- VII. Introduction of wildlife conservation in the school’s curriculum and both elementary and post – elementary levels.
- VIII. Establishment of conservation clubs in both primary and secondary schools (catch them young).

- IX. Establishment of forest monitoring team to carryout coordinated patrols against illegal loggers like it happens in Customs, Police, etc.
- X. Establishment of mobile courts to try offenders for quick justice delivery (both illegal loggers and erring forest officials).
- XI. Creation of more National Parks (as recently done by the Federal Government), as well as Forest and Game Reserves, wildlife parks and zoological gardens, etc.
- XII. Resuscitation and development of the abandoned forest and game reserves in the country.
- XIII. Empowerment of the forest officers i.e. provision of the needed logistics to carryout their job efficiently and effectively.
- XIV. Review other obsolete forest and wildlife laws at all levels of governments in the country to reflect the current situation in the sector.
- XV. The ongoing military response to insecurity should be sustained through strategic coordination with the Nigeria Police and other security agencies.
- XVI. The Federal Government should prioritize law enforcement solutions in tackling rising insecurity in the country. Community policing is critical to intelligence gathering in identifying and tracking the cells of criminal groups in the states and aiding community response to insecurity.
- XVII. Federal Government should replicate the multilateral joint task force with other countries in the West African sub-region to share information and enforce security just like it did in the Lake Chad Basin.
- XVIII. The current commitment of the Federal Government to strategic investments in human and infrastructural development can work to solve the protracted underlying challenges. This should be sustained.
- XIX. The three tiers of government should collaborate with established religious and traditional institutions to build community resilience against insecurity. In this wise religious and traditional leader should be apolitical and endeavour to teach adherents that the God they claim to worship and serve is neither blood-thirsty nor a confusionist that sets humanity against itself in his name.
- XX. Citizens should be encouraged to tour Nigeria, visiting natural and cultural places and peoples to modify their egocentric temperaments and foster national unity and peace.
- XXI. National parks provide aesthetic attractions which have the potentials of turning Nigeria into a major ecotourism destination with attendant foreign exchange earnings, thereby raising the revenue profile of the country and facilitating the much-desired economic diversification. There is therefore need for conservation and tourism education at all levels to re-orientate Nigerians on virtue and to have pride in the nation.
- XXII. Provision of fuel-efficient cooking stoves to local communities to reduce their impacts on the forests.

By way of my conclusion, Nigeria is blessed with abundant wildlife resources but the various unwholesome human activities enumerated in this paper have negatively affected their full growth and utilization. It is thus my strong belief that if the way forward recommended in this paper are diligently considered and implemented, without any doubt in my mind, the country will witness a positive growth and steady improvement of the country's forest cover which is presently about 6% against the 25% targeted to be met by 2030.

Dear invited guests, participants, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank you all for the opportunity given to me to present this paper. Thank you for listening and God bless.

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