



Assessing the implications of killer herdsmen in the north and unknown gunmen in the south for the tourism industry in Nigeria

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Abstract

More than ever, the contemporary Nigerian social landscape is characterised by civil aggression and violent attacks by many (known and unknown) violent groups. The activities of these groups have created insecurity crises of unparalleled intensity in the country. This paper examined the implication of insecurity (or these violent attacks) for the tourism industry in Nigeria. The study used a desk research approach to generate secondary data following a time series design. It descriptively analysed the information using line graphs, bar charts and simple percentages, using the theory of 'failed state' as a framework for the interpretation and discussion. The study found a relationship between recurrent insecurity and prevailing challenges facing the tourism industry in Nigeria. Since 'all crime is local', it is recommended that the conventional approaches to solving the insecurity problems in Nigeria should be complemented with the help of members of local communities and mass media using state-of-the-art technology to expose criminals and ensure constant checks on local migrants, international emigrants and business people that deal in small arms and light weapons.

Keywords: *(In)security, killer herdsmen, unknown gunmen, bandits, tourism, tourist arrival, tourism development*

Introduction

Despite the huge benefits of the tourism sector in Nigeria, contemporary security challenges have continued to weaken the sector (Alade, 2021). It is clear that a lasting solution to the ailing tourism development in the country remains unachieved, especially given the exacerbating security challenges in the country. The killer herdsmen in the north and unknown gunmen in the southern part continue to unleash mayhem on the innocent citizens unabated. The contemporary Nigerian social landscape is characterised by unprecedented civil aggression and violent attacks by (known and unknown) violent groups. Clearly, it is no longer the dreaded Boko Haram insurgency alone that is tormenting northern Nigeria, as they are presently bedevilled by the emboldened and more pervasive killer herdsmen (Onyishi & Oji, 2019), who have now crept into the southern part of the country. Dupe Olusola (2021), the Transcorp Hotels Plc Managing Director, also acknowledged the prevailing security challenges but believed that the organisation, through its newly unveiled security arrangement, intends to broaden the country's hospitality industry in no time (Olusola as cited in Alade, 2021). How Transcorp Hotels intends to achieve this proposition under the prevailing security circumstances in Nigeria remains unknown.

In recent times, unknown gunmen have also enveloped the southern part of the country. They are gradually transforming it into

northern Nigeria, where killer herdsmen and Boko Haram have continued to unleash regular attacks on rural communities for many years (Musawa, 2021). According to Musawa, in February 2021, 36 people were killed in two simultaneous attacks by killer herdsmen in two villages in Kaduna and Katsina states. The attacks claimed at least 18 lives each in the two affected villages, including several houses burnt down in the process (Musawa, 2021). These are states with existing tourist sites such as the Kamuku National Park, the Matsiriga Waterfall, Kajuru Castle, the Kagoro Hill, the Ancient Nok Settlement, the Kaduna National Museum and Monuments, Kofar Gamji Park, Little Italy, the Barcode Lounge to state but a few, all in Kaduna state. Other tourist attractions in Katsina State include the ancient Katsina City Gate, National Museum Katsina, Ajibia Holiday Resort or Chama Recreational Park, Gobarau Minaret, Kusugu Well, etc.

These tourist attractions bring millions of tourists annually and generate millions of dollars for the country and investors (Huaxia, 2021). But the present insecurity in the region has undoubtedly adversely affected such activities and the huge income therefrom. For instance, on the 5th of June 2021, eleven people were killed, with their houses burnt down, in Igangan in Oyo State (TRTWorld, 2021). Similarly, in Modakeke community in Osun state, south-western Nigeria, five rural farmers were killed by

unknown gunmen, an incident that was confirmed by the federal security agents in Osogbo who claimed they were doing all they could to maintain law and order in the state (Huaxia, 2021). While the motives of the killer herdsmen in the north seem to be land grabbing through displacement and replacement of inhabitants in the region, as confirmed by Benjamin Mzondu (a lawmaker representing Makurdi and Guma Federal Constituency), (Salem, 2021), the same cannot be claimed about the activities of unknown gunmen in the south. In one of his press releases, Mr Mzondu lamented that out of the 21 council wards in his federal constituency, ten council wards had been displaced while their ancestral lands had also been taken over by the killer herdsmen (Salem, 2021). In contrast to Benjamin's claim above, the desires or motives of the unknown gunmen in the south appear to be politically motivated since they usually claim to be Biafran foot soldiers (Nwaonwu, 2023)

Unlike their northern counterparts that concentrate on rural communities, unknown gunmen in the south seem more interested in government infrastructure and federal security agencies. For instance, in an attack on Obosi Divisional Police Station in Idemili North Local Government of Anambra State in May 2021, these gunmen destroyed the station and claimed the lives of two police officers (Huaxi, 2021). Huaxi also pointed out that in the same month about thirteen police officers were reportedly killed in a separate

attack in Rivers and Akwa Ibom States by unknown gunmen. This excludes two soldiers that were killed in Nasko, a community in Magama Local Government Area of Niger State (Eze, 2021). These three states also have multiple tourist sites. For example, there are Port Harcourt Zoo, River State Museum, Port-Harcourt Pleasure Park, Bonny Island, Port-Harcourt Tourist Beach etc. in River State. In Akwa Ibom, there are Ibeno Beach, the Amalgamation House in Ikot Abasi, the Oron Museum and the Bridge of No Return etc. In Anambra State, there are Ogbunike Cave, the Ogba Ukwu Cave and Waterfall, Ikenga Virgin Forst, Nanka Natural Spring, and Agulu Lake, among others. During the attacks in these states, the police stations were set ablaze (Okutu, 2021; Musawa, 2021). These recurrent attacks discourage tourism activities.

This precarious security situation in Nigeria has led some regions to seek self-help, leading to the formation of *Amotekun* in the west, Eastern Security Network (ESN) and Ebubeagu in the east, and Community Volunteer Guards (CVG) in the Middle Belt. These developments led Dr Samuel Eremie to contend that the federal government should intervene in the insecurity issue in the country to enable the tourism industry to fully harness the potential inherent in the sector (see Okah, 2021). Dr Eremie, at the presentation of his travelogue titled *Adventures in Development Tourism* published in 2021, stated that Nigeria has a lot to learn

from other countries such as India, Kenya, and many other countries that have developed their economies through tourism and agriculture. He insisted that the potential for tourism in a country such as Nigeria is enormous. However, he remarked that these opportunities are being threatened by contemporary security situations. Just like the security circumstances in the northern part of the country, the southern part has become helplessly immersed in the shackles of unknown gunmen. The killer herdsmen and unknown gunmen have continued to terrorise the southern region, killing some and kidnapping many for ransom (Sowole, 2020). This study examines the impact of the prevailing insecurity situation on tourism development in Nigeria, focusing on the periods between 2010 and 2021.

Methodology

This study applied the time series research design to examine Nigeria's insecurity dimension and its implication for the tourism industry. In time series analysis, the stability and changes in the behaviour of a phenomenon are studied across time (Box & Tiao, 1965). Repeated measurements of the dependent variable characterise time series analysis over time with an introduction of the independent variable at a particular point (Box and Jenkins, 1976). Trends or patterns of behaviour are observed before and after the introduction of the independent variable. Our first step was to identify the variables, the research unit that changes with the change

of situation. In this *time series* design, "the quasi-independent variable is the prevailing insecurity in Nigeria (the X variable), which is the variable being studied to highlight its influence on the dependent variable 'denoted as the Y variable' using samples statistically representative of broader populations within the scope, which is 2010 to 2021.

This method provides data about the study area that would have been difficult to gather due to insecurity. Therefore, it is chosen because most of our target zones are not secured for a self-report technique that would have been preferable. Data collected from different sources – official documents, journals, newspapers – are combined during presentation and analysis. Therefore, the secondary source of data was employed to accomplish the objectives of the study, including data generated earlier by a person, group or organisation, such as governmental institutions. We did this by exploring information on tourist behaviour, including expenditures and juxtaposing them with the insecurity trends in Nigeria. Some of the data we used are collected from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), World Bank, World Tourists Organization, Statista publications and the Press Reports within the period under study. Using this source of data collection with content analysis can assist in elucidating and comprehending better the complex reality of a given situation, as argued by Behard (1995). Therefore, the mixed approach of quantitative and

qualitative methods of data analysis– quantitative data and content analysis–was employed. Consequently, it used line graphs, bar charts and percentages to elucidate our points.

Theoretical Framework

The study employed William Zartman's theory of the 'failed state' as its analytical framework. The theory contends that the state is, first and foremost, a service provider and should do everything it can to ensure the comfort and security of its citizens. The state is deemed collapsed when its essential functions are no longer performed within its territory (Zartman, 1995). In other words, a state has collapsed when it can no longer provide the services for which it exists. A failed state has shattered social and political structures and is characterised by social, political and economic failure (Anyanwu, 2005, as cited in Abiodun et al., 2018). In addition, another leading proponent of the theory of failed state characterised state failure as the inability of such states to provide positive political goods to their inhabitants (Rotberg, 2003). Both Zartman and Rotberg distinguish between various services that states may provide, ranging from security to the rule of law, the protection of property, the right to political participation, and the provision of infrastructure and social services such as health and education. This study is conscious of the fact that the title of any formal organisation to statehood rests on its

performance of other functions apart from security, as highlighted above. But these services constitute a hierarchy, with security as its foundation, since other factors cannot thrive without security, as Rotberg (2003) has argued.

Consequently, the theory of the failed state posits that state failures serve as the breeding ground for violence as the emergence of many extremist groups is indisputable under such an environment, just as is evident in Nigeria today. For instance, the 24th and 26th December 2020 attacks on six villages in Bornu and Adamawa State saw 12 people abducted and 20 killed (Bureau of Counterterrorism, 2020), making it difficult for potential local and international tourists to consider these states peaceful tourist destinations. That incident no doubt tarnished the reputation that these tourism and holiday spots had worked so hard to maintain and reduced tourist activities in that part of the country. Additionally, Mr Tomi Akingbogun, vice president of the Federation of Tourism Association of Nigeria (FTAN), blamed the country's ineffective security management for the decline in international tourist arrivals, adding that the country's escalating security problems made visiting its tourist destinations difficult for both local and foreign visitors (Akingbogun cited in GEM, 2023). This is because both local and international tourists care about their safety. The basic tenets of the theory indicate that the collapse of the security

system, which is a symptom of a failing state, will hurt Nigeria's reputation as a tourism destination since there would be no inflow of tourists from outside the country if there is limited movement of tourists within the country.

Because fear is a natural human response to an unsecured environment, Nigeria's prevailing insecurity situation engenders worries in people's minds, including potential tourists, which significantly influence their routine travel behaviour. The tourism industry is a delicate and sensitive sector that reacts quickly to safety and security concerns and will not flourish in a failed state (Baje, 2022). The prevailing insecurity situation caused by the state failure no doubt accounts for the deliberate attacks and sabotage of government facilities by these unknown gunmen, significantly impacting tourism and socioeconomic development. These violent groups also kidnap tourists, international and local oil employees, and other people in exchange for gastronomic advantages (Banda and Kelechi, 2017). The list of internal challenges is extensive and growing, and no region of the country is unaffected.

Boko Haram, Killer Herdsmen and Unknown Gunmen in Nigeria

Boko Haram

In 2002, a sect of a hardline Islamic youth organisation indigenous to Maiduguri, later known as Boko Haram, pronounced the city

and local Islamic establishments as corrupt and unredeemable. The sectarian Islamic youngsters, led by Muhammad Yusuf, gradually gained notoriety as the "Sunni Community for Propagation of Prophet's Teaching and Jihad" (Campbell, 2014). Instead of pursuing worldwide jihad, like al-Qaeda and its affiliates, the sect focuses exclusively on Nigeria and its neighbouring countries. The group's initial goals were to impose Shariah Law in the northern part of Nigeria and eradicate corruption and injustice, which it attributed to Western influences in the region. However, after the Nigerian security agency eliminated its leader in 2009, the goals changed as they turned violent against anybody and anything that did not share their religious orientation (Walker, 2012; Centre for Preventive Action [CPA], 2022). This was followed by their bombing of Louis Edet House, the police headquarters in Abuja (Walker, 2012). This increase in violence also included attacks on media offices and setting school classrooms on fire.

The group came into the international limelight when, on 26 August 2011, one of their members slammed an explosive-loaded car into the United Nations facilities in Abuja, Nigeria's capital (Onuoha, 2014). According to Onuoha (2014), the attack claimed twenty-one lives and injured dozens more in the compound. In addition, twelve public schools in Maiduguri were burned down overnight in March 2012, displacing as

many as 10,000 students from their studies (Walker, 2012). The incident undoubtedly made Boko Haram a household name and a global news topic, solidifying its status as a violent organisation with the technical ability to manufacture bombs.

Since then, Boko Haram has carried out practically weekly attacks in northeastern Nigeria by detonating bombs in churches and other public spaces. Several people have also been killed in devastating bomb and gun attacks on the offices of *This Day* newspaper in Abuja and Kaduna, the Catholic chapel at Bayero University in Kano, and a cattle market in Yobe (Walker, 2012). Their strategic bombings on 2011 Christmas Day in three northern states – Niger, Plateau, and Yobe – killed forty-five people (Walker, 2012). Since 2011, the group has carried out terror operations against political and religious organisations, local law enforcement, and the military, as well as indiscriminately attacking civilians in populated cities and rural areas. The coordinated attacks on innocent citizens also brought international attention to the persistent threats posed by Boko Haram and the government's failure to contain the group, especially the abduction of 176 girls from their school in Chibok in April 2014 (CPA, 2022). But after Boko Haram-related violence peaked in 2014 and 2015, the number of deaths attributable to the organisation sharply decreased afterwards. They were driven out of various regions in

northeastern Nigeria by the Nigerian military, with help from the government of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.

Nevertheless, the group continued to carry out fatal suicide assaults, kidnap civilians (primarily women and children), and maintain control over several villages and isolated pockets of territories. For instance, CPA (2022) reported that a Boko Haram offshoot known as Islamic State of West Africa kidnapped more than 100 students in February 2018 and is said to have appointed Abu Abdullah ibn Umar al-Barnawi as its new commander in 2019. Given that the terror attacks have largely been restricted to the Muslim north (mainly in Borno State), they have caused millions of people to flee the region.

Killer Herdsmen

As the Boko Haram menace seems to be subsiding, the activities of the killer herdsmen came into national recognition in 2014. As mentioned earlier, such frequent security challenges constitute the characteristics of a failing state (Zartman, 1995). Herdsmen and farmers clashes are not new in Nigeria. It has existed for a long time and is usually settled through dialogue between the indigenous farmers and the nomadic herders (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). However, these customary conflicts between herders and local farmers took a new dimension in 2015 as some herders

began rearing their cattle with AK-47 guns rather than using traditional rearing sticks (Nwezeh, 2021). It is now quite difficult to distinguish genuine herders from violent attackers, even though some have remained loyal to their old traditional way of life (animal husbandry). Recently, many herders have been on a killing rampage in rural communities. For example, on 25 April 2016, these killer herdsmen invaded the Nimbo Community in Uzo Uwani L.G.A. of Enugu State, killing scores of people (Igata 2016; Mamahet al., 2016).

The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) cited in Toromade (2018) noted that between January and September 2018, over 1,700 people (including children) were murdered in several attacks by killer herdsmen, with a higher percentage occurring in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. It is further asserted that Benue State alone lost more than 1,354 rural residents to herdsmen attacks between January 2013 and December 2017 (Onyishi & Oji, 2019).

Although the GTI (2018) report observed that the herders' deadly activities decreased in 2017, with killings falling by 60% and attacks falling by 51%, the group's rampage did not diminish; instead, they altered their method of operation. Between 2019 and 2022, the murderous herdsmen scaled back their murderous rampage and gradually shifted to abduction for ransom. Some observers claim that what is happening in

Nigeria is terrorism that has been cloaked as banditry due to the use of weapons and kidnapping as a link between the two (Kabir 2021). The inability of Nigeria's State institutions to address security issues like the killer herdsmen attack on rural farmers or cattle rustling resulted in kidnapping for ransom, making the criminal enterprise very lucrative and, at the same time, luring private citizens and some public servants like military personnel, government officials, and local community leaders into abetting the scheme (Opara, 2019; Keshi, 2023).

According to these researchers, some security personnel support criminal operations and provide logistical assistance with firearms to profit from the ransoms paid to the killer herdsmen. As a result, mistrust between the general public and the security apparatus has resulted in the breakdown of intelligence collecting that could have aided in general problem-solving.

It is argued that Nigeria experienced 2,371 kidnappings in the first half of 2021, with ransom demands totalling roughly US\$23.84 million, about ten billion Naira or thereabouts (Onuoha & Okolie, 2022). It is believed that the range of targets is as broad as the actors who profit from and enable the rise in the criminalities that these criminal gangs are increasingly targeting. Their victims include foreigners, tourists, businesses, and schoolchildren. Others are women, politicians, government officials, diplomats, and traditional leaders.

Additionally, between April 2014 and June 2021, it is estimated that approximately 1,548 pupils were abducted in eleven consecutive cases of mass abduction (Kabir, 2021). One of the most concerning recent trends in Nigeria's pattern of security landscape is the wilful predation on kids carried out by armed herdsmen who abduct large numbers of children for ideological or financial reasons. However, the attacks and kidnapping of schoolchildren by the Boko Haram and the killer herdsmen are non-existent in the country's southern region. But the south is bedevilled by other deadly attackers known as 'unknown gunmen'.

Unknown Gunmen

Unknown gunmen gained prominence in the south in 2020. After the End-SARS protests, they became a security concern in the area, reaching a concerning peak in mid-2021 before declining towards the year's end and then picking up again in 2022 (Oko, 2022). The difference is that unlike killer herdsmen, who target rural private citizens and Boko Haram who combine both private citizens and public structures as their primary targets, unknown gunmen attacks tend to concentrate more on government structures and employees. For instance, on 5 December 2022, unidentified gunmen opened fire on police officers on duty in Abakaliki, killing three and injuring dozens (Eze, 2023). Previously, between December 2020 and March 2021, over 67 security agents – including jail wardens, members of the

Nigerian Navy, and Nigeria Police – were killed by unknown gunmen, while 25 police stations were set on fire (Vanguard News, 2021). The Nigeria Army and the NSCDC (Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps) were also impacted by the attacks on security personnel as soldiers on duty at their checkpoint in Ebonyi state were attacked and killed by unidentified gunmen in April 2021 (Eze, 2021).

The government's response to the unrest in the south, particularly in the southeast, is slightly different since the security forces previously perceived as powerless against the murderous herders suddenly became energetic and are pursuing unknown gunmen with whatever means necessary. These attitudes support Governor Otom's (former governor of Benue State) allegation that the federal government protects the murderous killer herdsmen from security personnel and justice (Duru, 2023). Although it may or may not be accurate, the behaviour of security personnel in the southeast may also reflect the fact that the attacks are no longer restricted to the region's rural community. Either way, a security issue in the southeast demands special responses as they gradually shift towards politicians, government structures, and the security people.

The effect of the actions of the unknown gunmen is being suffered not only by the tourist activities but also by the inhabitants of the southeast region. Instead of fighting

the killers, the military seems to have turned on innocent citizens in frustration. For instance, over one hundred people were unconstitutionally killed by the military (an institution that was supposed to protect them) (Onyejiuwa et al., 2021). Nigeria seems to be fighting a war in her backyard against her citizens, who mostly do not even understand why they are under attack by the military and other security organisations. The worst is the Nekede/Naze Junction incident along Owerri/Aba Road, which was a reaction to the death of their colleague at the hands of unknown gunmen. On Friday, May 28 2021, the Nigerian Air Force opened fire on passers-by and commuters, killing many innocent people on the spot and injuring numerous. In addition to that gruesome incident was the killing of Oguchi Unachukwu, a German-based businessman and indigene of the state, before his wife and children on 31st May 2021 by the Nigeria Air Force as he was heading to Sam Mbakwe Cargo Airport on his way to Lagos enroute to Germany where he lived until his death. The spate of terror that has engulfed Nigerian citizens due to the protracted acts of violence in their ancestral communities is unprecedented and may spiral into an uncontrollable situation if the government does not take appropriate measures. Interstate travel, particularly by road, has become a nightmare, with celebrations if destinations are reached without abduction incident. Every tourist aspires to travel to relatively safe places. If they perceive any

potential risk of injury, kidnapping or death in any tourism destination, they will likely avoid such a destination. It is to the impact of this possible development on the tourism industry in Nigeria that we shall now turn.

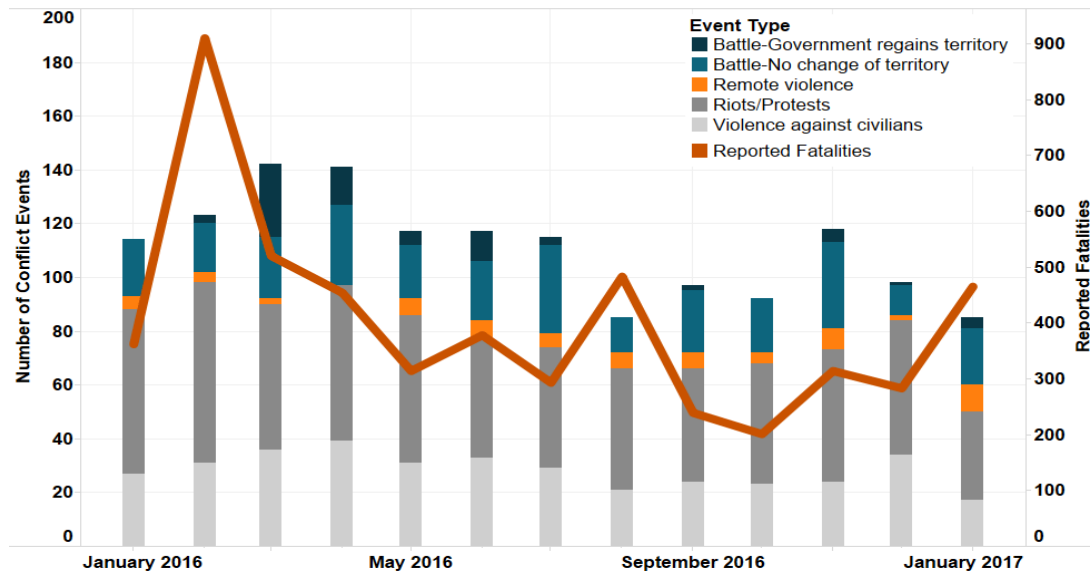
Domestic Insecurity and Tourism Development in Nigeria

Having presented the insecurity situation in Nigeria, we tried to understand the relationship between the security situation and tourism development in the country. The data collected revealed that tourist's behaviour in 2017, a period of relative peace in the country following the momentary defeat of Boko Haram by the Nigerian military in an operation that spanned between January 2016 and February 2017, indicates a positive relationship between the insecurity situation in Nigeria and tourism development. Starting from February 2016, the reported fatalities from these terrorist groups began to plunge downwards, the same with violence against civilians: from 182 deaths in 31 attacks in March to about 82 fatalities from 19 attacks in January 2017. The downward trend preceded a large peak of over 900 reported fatalities in February, about 550 more than the month before (see Figure 1). Out of the overall number of deaths reported in February 2017, 358 were attributed to confrontations between the government forces and the Boko Haram sect, 60 to a suicide bombing by the terrorist group that hit an IDP camp in Borno, and 300 to an all-day planned attack by killer

herdsmen on various Agatu localities in Benue State. These three factors can be seen as a microcosm of Nigeria's violence scene within the time studied. However, their considerable impact in the following year provides crucial insights into the effect of

insecurity on tourism development in Nigeria, given that the resultant waning of terrorist attacks on innocent people in 2017 encouraged tourist inflow in the country with their related benefits.

Figure 1: Number of Conflict & Protest Events and Reported Fatalities in Nigeria, from January 2016 - January 2017.



Source: ACLED 2018

The country recorded 5.2 million tourist arrivals in 2016, which was an increase from the previous years before the military counter-terrorist measure was put in place by the federal government. This record went even higher to 8.3 million tourist arrivals in 2017 due to the government's victory over the insurgency that ushered in a wave of relative peace in the country within the period (see Figure 2). From February to April 2016, the Nigeria Military dramatically

gained the upper hand in the fight against Boko Haram, as the military forces recovered a considerable number of territories previously controlled by the militant organisation in March and April 2016 after killing or seizing a huge number of Boko Haram fighters in February that year (Vanguard, 2016). These patterns persist throughout the year, as reflected in all the variables presented in Figure 1, although at lesser levels. They culminated in

the significant tactical and symbolic success of driving Boko Haram out of the Sambisa Forest, their main stronghold, in the middle of December 2016. It created a friendly environment in the country for tourism in 2017, resulting in increased tourist activities, as recorded in Figure 2 below. Unfortunately, the military triumph was not sustained as shown in the graph because, as a failed/failing state, the government is too weak and easily overwhelmed by non-state actors to the point that it has little or no reasonable control over much of its territory (Abiodun, 2018). As the government regained the lost territories from Boko Haram insurgents, all the variables presented in

Figure 1 continued downwards, indicating that a relationship exists between the two variables. Although other factors such as geography - e.g., distance, temperature and beaches- or the historical setting - e.g. colonial background- as well as the cultural heritage -e.g. form of religion, language and ethnicity- also may play a significant role in a tourist destination (Papatheodorou, 2001). However, the issue of security, which formed the foundation of this essay, cannot be ignored, as we have seen in Figures 1 and 2: the more the attacks and death rolls decreased, tourist arrivals increased following the security situation



It must be noted, however, that different countries have different sources and gathering techniques for tourist arrivals. Still, this paper used tourist arrivals to refer to the number of international tourists who travel to a country other than their usual residence but outside of their traditional environment

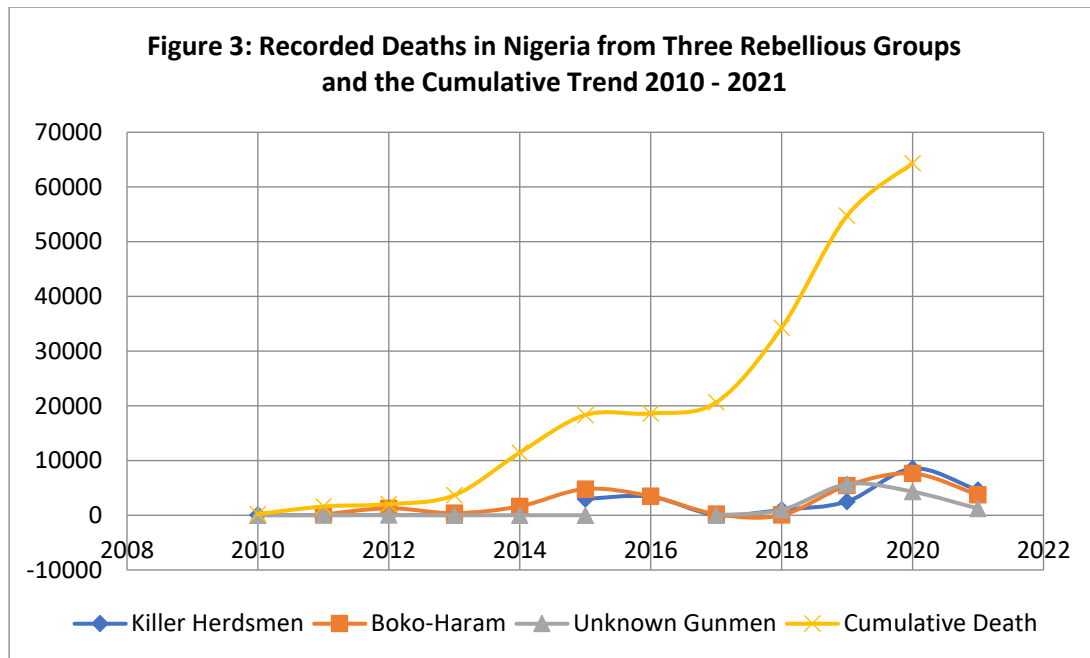
for a period not exceeding 12 months and whose primary motivation for visiting is different from an activity compensated from within the destination. However, the number of visitors, comprising tourists, same-day visits, cruise passengers, and crew members, can be displayed without data on the number

of tourists (World Bank, 2019). International tourist arrivals in Nigeria increased nearly continuously between 2008 and 2011. The number of visitors increased by more than 130% within this period. Only the years that followed, 2012 and 2013, saw significant declines due to growing insecurity caused by Boko Haram, and the killer herdsmen who were beginning their rampage at the time (see Figure 3). Starting from January 2019, the decline worsened (see Figure 2) due to increased attacks on rural farmers by the herdsmen and those carried out by Boko Haram (see Figure 3). The attacks and Covid-19 pandemic travel restrictions further complicated tourist arrivals in the subsequent year, 2020. Since 2018 data on tourist arrival is not available, the largest and most unprecedented decline in tourist arrival in Nigeria occurred in 2018. Figure 2 shows the trend in visitor numbers expressed in millions of visitors. In 2021, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that 2,219,146 international passengers travelled through Nigerian airports, compared to 1,408,026 in 2020. The record represents a growth rate of 57.61% (Eze, 2023).

On the other hand, after President Buhari's sack of the security chiefs and naming of new Service Chiefs that the Senate confirmed in March 2021 to replace the sacked officials,

the insecurity situation seemed relatively abated. The action encouraged tourist arrivals in Nigeria at an unprecedented rate. Specifically, the number of tourist arrivals in 2021, according to NBS and as shown in Figure 2, began an upward trend and stood at 1,109,621, which was 62.3% higher than the previous year if compared with 690,765 that was recorded by the bureau in 2020.

The insecurity and tourist behaviour issues cannot be over-emphasised, as they have a symmetrical relation in disclosure (see Figures 1 & 2). As the attacks and deaths increased, it also discouraged tourism in Nigeria since the trends in tourist spending also tended to decrease following the security trajectory (see Figure 4). It means prospective tourists hope to spend or travel to relatively safe and peaceful places. Should they perceive any potential risk of injury or death threat in such a tourist site, they will reconsider visiting, irrespective of how important or popular such destination may be. Tourists will react the same way if they perceive any chance of getting involved in a stressful or unfriendly situation while visiting. In such a situation, the tourist will undoubtedly avoid the destination, as reflected in the data in Figures 1 and 2.



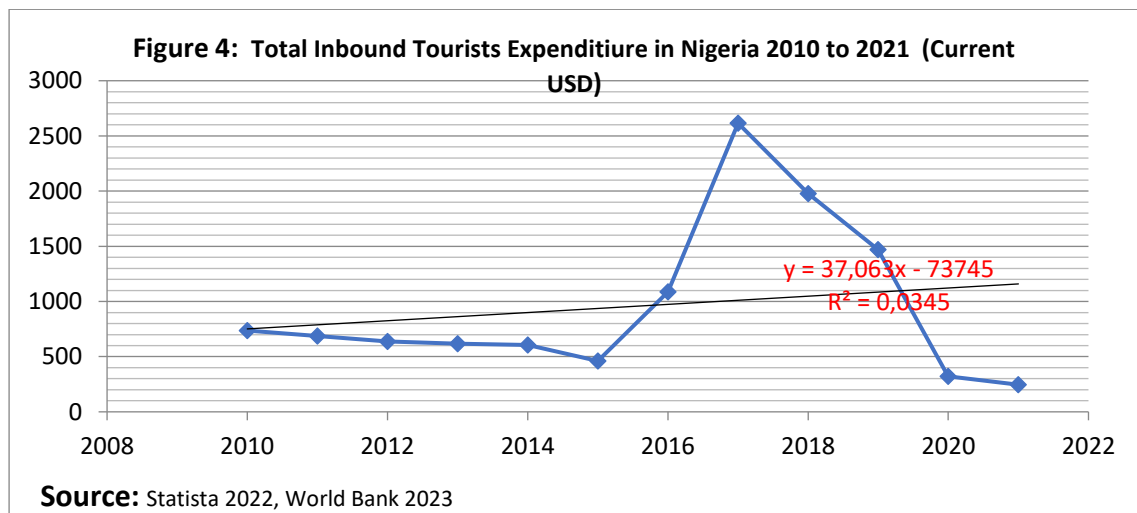
Source: The Number of Deaths is Calculated Based on the Numbers Reported by the Press Within the Period Under Study

It follows, however, that as the insecurity situation in Nigeria negatively affects tourist activities, it negatively affects the country's income and resources, given that the international receipts tend to drop as the violent attack increases (see Figures 3 & 4). Note that we could not find data for the 2018 tourist arrival, as shown in Figure 2. However, the international tourism receipts used here are those payments made by visitors coming into the country from other countries, including payments to the national transportation system for international transport services. These proceeds also comprise any other forestallment for any merchandise, supplies or services received in the host country. They can also subsume

proceeds from same-day guests except in exceptional circumstances when they are assumed significant enough to give a reason for different classifications (World Bank, 2021; NBS, 2022). Nigeria's tourist receipts have historically been relatively steady, albeit very low, until 2010 when the insecurity issue began. As the attacks on terrorists increased, the receipts tended to decline accordingly (see Figures 3 and 4). It continued downwards from USD 792, 000, 00 in 2010 to 401, 000,000.00 in 2015. It took an upward trend in 2016 after the regime change and the military counter-terrorist measure that President Muhammadu Buhari ordered. The military alleged that hundreds of Boko Haram militants were killed

and more than 1,880 people were rescued during this counter-terrorist operation, dealing a significant blow to the Boko Haram insurgency, which was the primary agent of terror at that time (Gaffey, 2016). As a result of these military victories in 2016, Nigeria's recorded conflict-related deaths decreased significantly in 2017, reaching their lowest levels since February 2013 in the final few months of 2017. President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria was motivated to declare

victory against the terrorist group (Kanayo, 2016). This security development no doubt encouraged tourist activities in the country as both records of arrival and expenditure (Nigeria tourists' receipts) increased drastically within that period. Records show that tourist arrivals reached an all-time high of 8,354,000 and the receipts an all-time high of \$2,615,000,000.00, which was about a 140.35% increase from the 2016 record (see Figures 2 and 4).



The inbound international tourism expenditure, or Nigeria tourist receipts, as referred here, includes payments made to national carriers for international transportation and expenses incurred by outbound tourists from other countries. Additional payments made in advance for goods or services obtained in the country of destination are included in these receipts (World Bank, 2023). However, they do not

include invoices for passenger transit products for several nations. The increased intensity of the killer herdsmen in the Middle Belt region and the unknown gunmen in the south between 2018 and 2022 caused both variables to plunge downwards again, with the 2021 tourist receipts dropping to \$160,500,000,00, which was about 50.01% of the previous year, given that 2020 recorded \$321,000,000.00 receipt.

This 2020 record is also a decline of 78% from 2019, which stood at \$1,471,000,000.00. The data, therefore, indicate that with 2019 recording a 25% decline from 2018 at \$1,977,000,000.00, it is only 2017 that recorded an increase of

140.35% at \$2,615,000,000.00, since 2018 also had a 24.4% decline from 2017 (see Figure 4). It can only be explained by the measure of security guaranteed in 2017 due to the previous year's military activities.



Other insecurity dynamics that are represented by the post-2017 spike in violence might be a result of recurrent conflicts between mostly killer herdsmen and local farmers in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, as well as violent attacks in southern Nigeria by unidentified gunmen popularly referred to as unknown gunmen (see Figure 3). The main perpetrators of this violence in contemporary times are the killer herdsmen, who participated in about four times as many violent incidents and caused four times as many fatalities from 2015 to 2021 than other armed groups combined (Sahara Report,

2021). It is also reported that about 137,000 Benue State inhabitants and over 100 security agents have been killed by ravaging killer herdsmen in the state (Sahara Report, 2021). Even though several skirmishes involved the killer herdsmen, a significant number of people died due to violence against local farmers during these violent incidents. The impact of all these is not only restricted to a decrease in total tourist arrivals in Nigeria or Nigeria's tourist revenue, which is used here as Nigeria's inbound tourist expenditure as presented in Figures 2 and 4; it also extends to Nigeria's

revenue growth rate within the period under study. Nigeria's tourism revenue growth rate has been on a negative trend since 2010 due to the security situation in the country with -6.953% (CEIC, 2023). This trend began to improve in 2013 and 2014 with -3.448% and -1.786%, respectively but with the beginning of violent attacks by the killer herdsmen on rural farmers in 2015 coupled with pockets of attack by other criminal gangs in southern Nigeria, the growth rate slumped further to -23.802% in 2015 (see Figure 5).

Nevertheless, the intense counter-terrorist activities by the Nigerian military in the 2016 and 2017 exercises also reflected the trends of Nigeria's tourism growth rate, given that the country recorded the highest growth rate within the period with 136.009% and 140.349% respectively. This achievement started ebbing as security deteriorated, spiking the cumulative deaths in 2018. This situation continued downwards till 2020 with an all-time low of -78.178%, a decrease of 25.504% YoY in the previous year (see Figure 5). However, the revenue growth rate began to recover in 2021 with a 3.99% growth rate following President Buhari's sack of the security chiefs and the restructuring of the security architecture. In sum, it has been demonstrated that the insecurity situation in Nigeria negatively affects tourism development in the country.

Conclusion

From the analysis of the data gathered for this study, it is evident that there is a positive relationship between the recurrent insecurity challenges in Nigeria and the crises of tourism development. A significant decline in government revenue has resulted from the activities of Boko Haram, killer herdsmen, and unknown gunmen. This includes Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Per Capita Income, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), unemployment, and poverty rate. These indicators are established as suffering a direct impact of the insecurity situation in the country. However, as we have seen in this study, the effect impacts all aspects of the national economy, especially the tourism sector. From the empirical data gathered, it is evident that among the factors influencing tourist destinations is the security situation in the country of destination. The study indicated that the 2017 financial year experienced the highest tourist expenditure and, thus, the highest tourist revenue in Nigeria as a result of the intense military counter-terrorist action the previous year, which encouraged increased tourist arrivals. But what appeared to be the beginning of a success story in the industry was cut short by the continued escalation of attacks by the killer herdsmen and unknown gunmen with minimal or no response by the security agents. The findings also revealed that between the fourth quarter of 2017 and the

subsequent years, everything almost stood still, and the spending began to nosedive, reaching a 24.4% decline in 2018, approximately 1,977,000,000.00 US Dollars.

The findings also support the assumption that there is a positive relationship between the recurrent insecurity challenges in Nigeria and the debacle in tourism development in the country between 20110 and 2021. It is supported by the fact that all the variables studied began to reverse when the failing security chiefs were fired in 2021 and replaced by more vibrant ones. By extension, the development also resulted in a loss of government revenue and a decline in the growth of tourist revenue. This includes human capital and damage to Nigeria's international image, as posited by Enor, Magor and Expo (2019). In addition, they argued that tourism contribution to GDP in Nigeria stood at 5.12 billion Naira in 2016, but this figure has continued to dwindle. Tourism is a volatile venture and an industry that is highly responsive to crises (Idris et al., 2014; Fada and Matthew, 2015). In other words, the first issue of universal concern in any society that intends to develop its tourism industry is striving to control insecurity in the local environment.

Based on that, this study strongly recommends that the state of insecurity in

Nigeria should be declared a national emergency. Since the prevailing situation has proven that existing security structures are incapacitated and cannot handle contemporary security challenges, new approaches should be adopted. Such new approaches must be decentralised in substance and structure following the regional or ethnic lines, though with a strong allegiance to a recognised constituent authority to put them in check. In other words, the study is not only recommending regional or state police structures like Ebubeagu, Amotekun and their likes, but it also submits that precinct, local government or even ward-level police is necessary at this point to control Nigeria's hydra-headed(in)security problems. This is because only the locals can recognise an alien in their vicinity. They naturally know themselves and can easily identify the bad ones among them. Again, the precautionary agenda should concentrate on epicentres of insecurity problems in the country, with particular attention on drug abuse, gun control and other social vices. Also, the conventional approaches towards managing insecurity should be complemented with the help of mass media and state-of-the-art technological tools to ensure a constant check on the international community and those migrants and travellers that delight in small arms peddling.

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