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Contents:

- 1 **Analysis of Tourism in the Slovak Republic in the Period after Accession to the European Monetary Union** 1157
Jana FIL'ARSKÁ, Ivana KRAVČÁKOVÁ VOZÁROVÁ, Rastislav KOTULIČ
- 2 **The Effect of International Tourism on the Development of Global Social-Economic Processes** 1166
Igor Lvovich CHERKASOV, Maria Igorevna SEREDINA, Olga Ivanovna MISHUROV, Tatiana Alekseevna ADASHOVA, Olga Yevgenievna LEBEDEVA
- 3 **Distinction of Jordan as a Destination for Religious Tourism** 1171
Omar A.A. JAWABREH
- 4 **Educational Tourism: Adoption of Art Management Technologies in the Activity of Universities** 1183
Elena F. KOMANDYSHKO, Elena A. SEMENOVA
- 5 **The Influence of Creativity, Price Determination to Publicity and Their Impact to the Purchasing Power of Customers** 1189
Adjeng Mariana FEBRIANTI
- 6 **Methodological Approaches to the Assessment of Historical and Cultural Resources in Tourist Destinations** 1198
Aleksandr Alekseevich FEDULIN, Lyudmila Vladimirovna ZGONNIK, Olga Yevgenievna LEBEDEVA, Liliya Leonidovna DUKHOVNAYA, Sergey Viktorovich ILKEVICH
- 7 **Advantages and Disadvantages of the Participation of SMEs in Tourism Clusters** 1205
Katarina HAVIERNIKOVÁ, Anna LEMAŃSKA-MAJDZIK, Ladislav MURA
- 8 **Valorizing Heritage and Cultural Identity from Land of Barsa through Cultural Tourism** 1216
Sorina BOTIŞ
- 9 **The Relationships Between Financial Policy, Fiscal Policy, Visitor Exports and the Tourism Economy of Thailand** 1222
Sakkarin NONTHAPOT, Porowes SRICHAISO
- 10 **A Model for Mangrove Forest Management Based on Community Empowerment in Bantul Regency** 1232
Tiwuk Kusuma HASTUTI, Umi YULIATI
- 11 **Investigating the Reason why Tourists Revisit Thailand** 1238
Kanokwan CHANCHAROENCHAI, Wuthiya SARAITHONG

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- 12 **E-learning System Acceptance Factors for Training: A study of Employees Perception in Tourism Industry** 1250
Leila MORADI, Yazrina YAHYA, Ibrahim MOHAMED, Komeil RAISIAN
- 13 **Strengths Weakness Opportunities and Threats Analysis of Aquatic Tourism in Nigeria** 1259
Ademuyiwa Hafiz OLADELE, Oghenetejiri DIGUN-AWETO
- 14 **Booking Curves as a Instrument of Increasing of Independent Hotel Enterprise Efficiency. Case of Russia** 1268
Leonid A. POPOV, Anton V. ROMANYUK, Ekaterina A. BLINOVA, Roman R. GAREEV
- 15 **The Role of Folk Culture in the Promoting Tourism. A Case of Folklore of Otanaha Fort in Gorontalo Province** 1279
Moh. Karmin BARUADI, Sunarty ERAKU, Syahrizal Koem
- 16 **To Identify the Importance of a Mobile Application for Indonesia's Hidden Beauty** 1284
Jude Joseph Lamung MARTINEZ, Roozbeh Babolian HENDIJANI
- 17 **Comparative Analysis of International and Legal Documents on Tourism and Counteraction to the Threat of International Terrorism** 1290
Boris N. ALEYNIKOV, Railya R. SHAPIROVA, Marsel A. KADYROV, Andrey A. PONOMAREV
- 18 **Criteria and Provisions for Efficient Implementation of Macro-Projects of International Sport Event Tourism** 1307
Inha O. TEMNYK

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Strengths Weakness Opportunities and Threats Analysis of Aquatic Tourism in Nigeria

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Abstract:

Nigeria is a maritime country with diverse resources of fresh, brackish and marine waters. However, these endowments have not been developed into a vibrant aquatic tourism industry. This review paper appraised the state of aquatic tourism in Nigeria using SWOT analysis. The presence of abundant water resources, job creation, and revenue generation are strong points of Nigeria's aquatic tourism industry while extensive coastline, conservation of cultural heritage, availability of labor, and the large domestic market for tourism products are some of the prospects of aquatic tourism in the country. Conversely, some of the challenges facing the industry include social unrest and insecurity, water pollution, and corruption. Some of the low points of aquatic industry are poor infrastructural development, limited engagement of host communities, non-implementation of tourism master plan, and poverty level among Nigerians. Healthy involvement of all tourism stakeholders is necessary to ensure an all-round development of aquatic tourism in Nigeria.

Keywords: tourism; aquatic environments; strengths; weakness; opportunities; threats.

JEL Classification: Q25 ; Q26 ; L83; Z32

Introduction

Globally, tourism has become one of the fastest-growing industries (UNWTO, 2017). The tourism industries growth worldwide has made it a priority for many countries to factor it into their strategic and sustained economic development which has a ripple effect on economic, social and cultural aspects of the society (Wang and Pizam 2011). Although the level of tourism development varies with countries, tourism activities have gained prominence in all parts of the world. According to Honey and Krantz (2007), the magnitude of tourism growth and contribution to national economies and well-being of local communities is becoming increasingly important. Tourism accounts for at least 10% of world's total GDP, ranging from developing to developed countries, one in twelve jobs globally, and 35% of the world's export services (Honey and Krantz 2007).

In Africa, tourism has been identified as a powerful development track. It is one of the largest growing and most dynamic sectors, which has tremendous potential to boost inclusive economic growth across the African continent and reduce poverty (AfDB 2014 as cited by AfDB 2015).

As reported by AfDB (2015), wildlife tourism is the dominant leisure tourism product in many African countries while water-based tourism products can be developed further. In fact, Africa has water-based assets for

tourism in abundance, but their existence does not guarantee success. This achievement may partly be attributed to the distribution of water bodies within the African continent as well as the lack of political will by the government of African countries to develop the subsector. Although coastal areas provide the primary tourism resource in many countries, with the greatest concentration of tourism investment and facilities (Leijzer and Denman 2014), inland waters can also be developed to provide tourism services in addition to their use for potable water supply. Okonkwo (2014) noted that Nigeria's neighbors in the West African region have been able to harness their tourism potentials and the sector is the third highest contributor to the GDP after Minerals and Cocoa production. In 2014, Ghana's travel and tourism industry contributed 2.5%, Benin Republic (2.7%), Togo (3%), Cote d'Ivoire (2.2%), Guinea (1.9%), Sierra Leone (3.1%), Senegal (5%), Mali (4.1%), Burkina Faso (1.3%), Niger (1.6%), Chad (1.5%) and Cameroun (2.3%) (WTTC 2015). The statistics indicate that in West Africa, Nigeria is one of the countries that have not been able to translate its potentials into significant benefits.

Nigeria is a maritime country with diverse resources of fresh, brackish and marine waters. However, these endowments have not been developed into a vibrant aquatic tourism industry. The establishment and activities of a tourism board, departments, and ministries in Nigeria has not culminated to optimum utilization of various opportunities of water-based tourism (Dantata 2011). International price shocks, unfavorable quota arrangement, and recent downfall in crude oil prices in the world market, as well as the current state of recession in the Nigerian economy, calls for harnessing alternative sources of domestic and foreign exchange earnings (Suberu *et al.* 2015). In association with the nation's abundant aquatic resources, tourism and specifically, water-based tourism is an important sector, which Nigeria can begin to develop as an alternative income source (Uduma-Olugu and Onukwube 2012). Nigeria's water tourism sector is underdeveloped and presently at the infant stage of development, a stage where water bodies are either unutilized or underutilized for tourism purpose. Consequently, the benefits of tourism performance in improving economic situations such as creation of jobs have impacted local communities (Ndanusa *et al.* 2014) have not been enjoyed. SWOT analysis has been used in fields such as business management, natural resources and sustainable tourism (Reihanian 2012); hence, this review paper appraised the state of aquatic tourism in Nigeria using SWOT analysis.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of aquatic tourism industry in Nigeria

Strengths	Weaknesses
Abundant Water Resources	Non-implementation of tourism master plan
Job Creation	Exclusive focus on crude oil
Revenue Generation	Poor infrastructural development
2006 Tourism Master plan	Limited community engagement and benefits
	Sustainability of tourism values and facilities
	Inadequate awareness of tourism products
	Poverty level among Nigerians
Opportunities	Threats
Extensive coastline	Social unrest and insecurity
Conservation of cultural heritage	Inconsistent policy formulation and implementation
Significant income from crude oil sales	Water pollution
Large Domestic market	Fund embezzlement and corruption
Abundance of labour	Destruction of fragile environment and local cultural values

Strengths

Strength 1: Abundance of water resources:

Several water-based tourism products are available in Nigeria depending on the class of water body involved (Awaritefe 2004). Among the natural endowments that can be developed to international standard and utilized to put Nigeria in the tourism spotlight include: the Gurara Waterfalls, Erin-Ijesa waterfall, Ikogosi and Wikki Warm Springs, Olumirin Waterfalls, Ikom waterfalls, Ikeja water parks, Snake Island, Cross river boat and fishing regatta, Osun shrine, Argungu fishing festival, Okpoama beach, Calabar Beach, Lagos beaches such as Tarkwa Bay, Lekki Beach, Eleko Beach, Kuramo Beach, Alpha Beach, Akodo beach, Lighthouse beach, Oniru beach, La campaign resort, Coconut beach etc (Awaritefe 2004, Dantata 2011).

Strength 2: Job creation:

Water-based tourism is vital to Nigerian economy due to the massive inflow of economic benefits obtainable from tourism associated goods and services, and the employment opportunities. Examples of tourism-associated-service industries include transportation services: airlines, cruise ships, speed boats, taxicabs; hospitality services notably hotels, guest houses, and resorts; and entertainment centers – shopping malls, cinemas and music clubs. Adequate knowledge of features unique to each of the water-based tourism sites, identification of the existing facilities and their potential uses, development of untapped features within site as well as issues related to environmental compatibility and host community participation will offer a premise for sustainable tourism development. In addition to developing the specific tourism features, allied businesses and infrastructures that are related to tourism will provide a complete comfort package to the tourists and as well serve to appeal to visitors. With a population of about 185 million people, (World Bank 2017) Nigeria has the potential to generate tourism market both internally and externally.

Strength 3: Revenue generation:

Tourism is an important sustainable source of income generation which is sustainable and its ability to attract foreign exchange and investors is quite high. Despite the low level of development in the area of tourism, the World Travel and Tourism Commission (WTTC 2017) reported that “the direct contribution of Travel and Tourism to Nigeria’s GDP was NGN1,861.4bn (USD7.4bn); 1.7% of total (direct and indirect) contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP was NGN5,124.3bn (USD20.3bn), 4.7% of GDP in 2016, and is forecast to fall by 1.3% in 2017, while the total contribution of travel and tourism including jobs supported by the industry was 4.5% of total employment (1,793,000 jobs)”. This is expected to rise by 1.4% in 2017 to 1,818,500”. If tourism development is taken more seriously in the country, revenue generation, jobs created and the ripple effect to other industries will become greater in value and magnitude.

Strength 4: Master plan Development:

Dantata (2011) noted that Nigeria is still in its infant stages of development despite the huge amount of resources which can be channeled into tourism. Hence, Nigeria has taken steps to improve her tourism sector with the development of a blueprint master plan for tourism in 1990, development of a tourism policy, creation of government tourism agencies and development of a tourism master plan in 2006. Some of the recommendations of the 2006 master plan include strengthening the federal ministry of culture and tourism, sufficient budgetary allocation to tourism, recruitment of staff with appropriate training and industry experience in other tourism-related agencies. The report also recommended that private-sector participation should be coordinated and encouraged with removal of multiple taxes, provision of loans with less stringent conditions as well as provision of funding schemes targeted at SME’s in the tourism sector (UNWTO 2006)

Opportunities

Opportunity 1: Extensive coastline:

Nigeria has an estimated water mass of about 900km² which have great potential for water-based recreation (Elum 2016) and 700km of coastline with sandy beaches some of these beaches have been partially developed while others are yet to be developed (Dantata 2011). There numerous inland water bodies have enormous potential to grow into water-based tourism destinations (Ita 1993). A good example of such that has been harnessed is whispering palms, but there are many others that can be developed which can help provide employment bring development to surrounding communities

Opportunity 2: Conservation of cultural heritage:

Nigeria has many captivating festivals that attract both local and international visitors from all parts of the world. Examples of water-based festivals are the Argungu fishing festival and the Osun Oshogbo festival. Other examples of cultural festivities are the Calabar festival, the Eyo festival, and the New Yam festival. It is not surprising that the country has many cultural festivals, owing to the fact that there are over 350 ethnic groups in the country. Fada (2016) reported that over 700 festivals are celebrated across the country’s 774 local government areas of Nigeria.

Opportunity 3: Significant Income from Crude Oil:

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), an oil-producing country, has been able to diversify her economy from bringing mainly oil based to include tourism. This has turned the country into a world-class tourism destination, consequent to the diversion of crude oil earnings into building a sustainable tourism industry (Ayeni and Ebohon

2012, Dwyer and Spurr 2011). In the same vein, Nigeria is an oil-rich nation; however, the country has not diversified its predominantly oil-based economy to tourism despite her huge natural tourism potentials. Taking a clue from UAE, Nigeria has immense opportunity to invest proceeds of her crude oil sales in developing the country's tourism sector in general. It is safe to say that the "resource curse" is playing out in a country like Nigeria that has an abundance of resources but fails to utilize these resources to guide against economic and financial crises (Ubani *et al.* 2016).

Opportunity 4: Large domestic Market:

Manbula (2002) noted that Nigeria has a copious amount of natural resources and a large local market which has made the country emerged as the biggest economy in Africa, overtaking South Africa. With such a large amount of goods and services and businesses in the country, there is an opportunity for the tourism industry to boom also, taking advantage of the markets and also bringing in foreign exchange.

Opportunity 5: Abundance of labor:

According to Obaseki *et al.* (2017), Nigeria has the 7th largest population in the world, predominantly made of youth. Equipping the youths with skills in tourism will go a long way in helping boom the local tourism industry. There is a huge demand from Nigerians to visit tourist locations in the country, but there are a little human resource and trained manpower to facilitate such visit. The teeming population of Nigerian youths graduating from the country's higher institutions of learning offers huge opportunities in this regard since they can be deployed for his purpose. Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity reported that over 1.6 million individuals graduate from tertiary institutions annually, in addition to more than 3.8 million youths who have some form of education with certificates (Hassan 2013). Utilizing some percentages of this huge figure in the tourism sector will not only provide the needed manpower but also help to reduce the high unemployment rates (60-65%) among Nigerian youths (John *et al.* 2016).

Weaknesses

Weakness 1: Non-Implementation of the Tourism Master Plan:

Despite a well-documented master plan, designed in conjunction with UNWTO and other national tourism bodies, it is regrettable that the master plan has not been implemented. The implementation problems are listed in Table 2 based on the three tiers of government and the community level.

Table 2. Nigerian tourism development master plan implementation problems

Tier of government	Implementation problems
Federal Level	Lack of substantial budgetary provision to the tourism sector in the annual national appropriation bill Organizational bottlenecks at the peak of tourism body of the country: Federal Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation and the Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation The poor working relationship between the Federal Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation and the Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) in the formulation of strategic direction for the achievement of the national tourism objectives. Conflicts in the roles of Federal Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, NTDC and National Institute of Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR) in the implementation of national tourism policies as it concerns workforce development The fuzziness of the NTDC Law in the distribution of responsibilities between NTDC and State Tourism Organizations (STOs). A good example is seen in the licensing of hospitality facilities in Nigeria; the case of Lagos State and the Federal Government of Nigeria.
State Level	The failure of the State Governments to domesticate the content of the National Tourism Master Plan Inefficiency of most State Tourism Boards and attendant inability of the State Tourism Organizations (STOs) effectively develop tourism at the state level
Local Level	The failure of Local Government Council Areas (LGAs) to see tourism development as part of their legislated functions, thereby leading to the absence of tourism plans to guide tourism businesses at that level, despite the fact that the NDTC Law provides for it. The unwillingness of the local governments to drive the development of tourism in the rural areas.
Community Level	The failure to participate in tourism development as result of ignorance and lack of empowerment

Source: (Esu 2016)

Weakness 2: Exclusive focus on crude oil:

Oil is a natural resource that cannot be replenished once exhausted, unlike tourism which can be sustainable under proper management. Osaghae (1995) reported that crude oil is the major stay of the Nigerian economy. Oil prices have plunged in the last three years globally and have been recorded to be one of the most significant downtimes in the price of crude oil (Khan *et al.* 2017). This low price should make the country re-think its standpoint on being a country whose primary foreign exchange earnings come solely from crude oil (Elum *et al.* 2016). The effect of low oil prices cannot be overstressed, and the implications are obvious on the economy of Nigeria (Ben-lwo *et al.*). According to (Akinlo 2012) crude oil generates about 95% of export earnings and generates less than 50 % of the Nigeria's GDP. One of the consequences of this is the budget deficit, forcing the government to make cuts in its budget due to drop in oil prices (Essandoh-Yeddu, and Yalamova, R. 2015).

Weakness 3: Poor infrastructural development:

Nigeria as a developing nation is suffering from inadequate provision of infrastructures. Erratic electric power supply, bad roads and heavy traffic congestion due to few alternate routes, lack of potable water supply, inadequate medical facilities among other infrastructures have been a cog in the wheel of socio-economic development in Nigeria. All these problems have negatively impacted on the tourism sector; inadequate infrastructure has not aided private sector participation in the development of untapped tourism features. The hotel industry plays a vital role in the success of tourism; any tourism venture will be incomplete without having hospitality facilities which are regarded as essential ingredients of a tourism enterprise. However, the cost and standard of this vital tourism support service in Nigeria is still low and below international best practices respectively (Eja *et al.* 2011). Water-based tourism sites located in rural areas of Nigeria are more negatively affected by inadequate infrastructural development than the urban centers where some dividends of good governance have been enjoyed.

Weakness 4: Limited community engagement and benefit:

Lack of community participation in the design, planning, and development of tourism products has posed a major problem to conservation and continuous existence of tourism centers in many host communities in Nigeria. More often, host communities are schemed out of benefits accruable from tourism activities taking place in their communities (Slabbert and Saayman 2011). This usually results in conflict between the tourism managers and host communities. Importation of skilled and unskilled personnel from urban and other rural areas do cause hostility and sabotage of tourism and its developmental activities, especially when such personnel is available in the host community. Failure of host community members to secure jobs within the tourism establishment deprives the tourism establishment of cooperation and partnership necessary to achieve, conserve and develop the tourism products. Continuous encroachment, poaching (fishing) in restricted areas, damage of social amenities, robbery and kidnap of tourists especially foreigners (Nwagboso 2012) are some of the vices that may likely arise from limited engagement and participation of host community in the tourism management.

Weakness 5: Sustainability of tourism values and facilities:

For the already established tourism products, sustainability of their facilities and benefits has not been an easy task in Nigeria. The majority of tourist centers are either under-utilized or over-exploited. In cases of under-utilization, the returns made from few tourists' visits do fall below expectation and hence may not cover the maintenance cost while those facilities that are overused get damaged in short time due to overstretching of their capacities. Both cases make maintenance and sustenance of tourism values and facilities expensive and difficult to sustain, if not unsustainable (Liu 2003).

Weakness 6: Inadequate awareness of tourism products:

Proper display and advertisement of various water-based tourism products available in the country have also been challenging over the years. The inability of the nation's Tourism Board, Ministries, Departments and Agencies to adequately package and showcase the country's tourism endowments has created a lack of awareness among potential tourists who could have visited the country for tourism in addition to other purposes. Lack of information about the diversity and uniqueness of tourism products in Nigeria has kept potential tourists in the dark about the country's rich tourism sector (Osemeobo 1993)

Weakness 7: Poverty level among Nigerians:

Despite the millions of Dollars made from crude oil by the Nigerian government, the majority of Nigerians are still living below one dollar per day. Nigeria can be described as a nation richly blessed with resources but has a poor citizen majority. Before the present economic recession, Nigerians have been living with lowered standard

of living (Dauda 2017), the National Bureau of Statistics (2012) placed it at 69% in 2010. This has not encouraged their participation in tourism activities as tourists. Domestic patronage of tourism products by Nigerians is very little, and this cannot be separated from the poverty level ravaging the nation. The elite class often relies on overseas trips in search of tourism. This has subjected nation's tourism products to very low patronage which discourages private sector participation and development (Awaritefe 2004).

Threats

Threat 1: Social unrest and insecurity:

This has limited the movement of Nigerians towards many water-based tourism centers. Social unrest and instability have also reduced the influx of foreign tourist into the country for tourism purpose. Cases of Kidnapping in the southern part of Nigeria, as well as Boko Haram incidence in the North, have paralyzed the utilization of several tourism facilities. These have hindered the country's development of tourism in general and discouraged private sector investment. Tourism will fail to thrive in environments where security of lives and properties cannot be guaranteed. The conflict between tourism managers and host communities has been shown to impact negatively on tourism development. It has left some harrowing experiences on the mind of tourists who at some point were caught in crises which emanated from conflicting activities between tourism operators and host communities (Ajayi 2012).

Threat 2: Inconsistent policy formulation and implementation:

Since the 1960s when the nation's tourism has become identified for development, nonchalance and lack of will by various governments have resulted in poor tourism development. Inconsistent policy formulation and implementation have played a great role in the underdevelopment of Nigeria's tourism sector (Ankomah and Crompton 1990). Lack of interest in tourism development by several governments has diminished the tourism blueprint to a paper document, instead of a working document. The era of the long military regime with intermittent democratic governments has till date not been able to implement the nation's tourism plan adequately.

Threat 3: Water pollution:

Anthropogenic activities have affected our natural environment, even in areas that are supposed to be under protection (Digun-Aweto *et al.* 2015). Nigeria's water bodies are faced with pollution problems which range from deliberate waste deposition to accidental discharge of toxic substances. The extent of water contamination depends on the characteristics of the pollutants and the water body being polluted. Inland water bodies manifest more pronounced effects of indiscriminate waste deposition due to their small sizes, unlike the seas and oceans (Jenyo-Oni and Oladele 2016). Deposition of household wastes in inland waters, feeder streams, deposition of eroded materials in streams, lakes, and rivers have damaged the natural features of several inland water bodies. Nigeria's coastal environment has not been spared of pollution problems. The coastal areas have become commonly polluted with industrial effluents, oil spills, sewage pollution to a great magnitude (Honey and Krantz 2007). Offshore and onshore exploration of oil has had their effects on the integrity of the coastal environment (Honey and Krantz 2007). Water pollution has not only limited use of water bodies for domestic and industrial purposes but has also made them lost their appeal and suitability for tourism use and development.

Threat 4: Fund embezzlement and corruption among stakeholders:

Low budgetary allocations to the tourism sector, fund embezzlement, diversion of monies meant for tourism development to private pockets and other forms of corruption among tourism stakeholders are some of the problems facing tourism development in Nigeria (Dike 2005, Hope 2017). The above problems are more common among government-owned and managed tourism establishments. These problems have displayed the Nigeria's tourism products as nonviable, thereby discouraging massive private investment in tourism and several allied services. Hence, the exploitation of water-based tourism potentials abound in the country has been limited

Threat 5: Destruction of fragile environment and local cultural values:

As much beneficial as tourism can be, it can also impact adversely on the environment, sometimes causing irreversible damage. Uncontrolled levels of tourism activities may lead to environmental harm (Choi and Murray 2010). Continuous encroachment of tourists to areas of the fragile natural endowment may result in loss of habitat and biodiversity. Uncontrolled cultural dilution in host communities can bring about the loss of cultural values and norms. This will not only affect the socio-cultural standings of the host community but also give birth to the adoption of foreign cultures as well as erosion of host community's traditional values. Similarly, it can turn indigenous culture

to tourism commodities whereby religious traditions, local customs, and festivals are reduced to conform to tourist expectation. Commercialization of such values may result in cultural erosion (Getz 1997, Douglas *et al.* 2001). The effects of climate change on the environment have also been far-reaching in the areas of rising tides, increase in temperatures, flooding, and unstable seasons which have effects on tourism by directly and indirectly affecting the environmental and biodiversity-ecosystem balances (McGranahan 2007, Savo *et al.* 2016). High temperatures lead to migration of wildlife, causing seasonal rivers to dry up entirely, increases incidence of pests and in some cases droughts when combined with irregular rain patterns

Conclusion

This paper has been able to highlight the current status of aquatic tourism in Nigeria using SWOT analysis. The paper draws attention to the strong and weak points, prospects and challenges of Nigeria's aquatic tourism. The findings also reveal that despite the huge potentials that are pointers, the country seems to be suffering from "resource curse."

For tourism development to be actualized, the master plan needs to be followed in great detail while creating incentives for private sectors also need attention. The role of government in creating an enabling environment cannot be over emphasized, in addition to the engagement of host communities in tourism development and management. Healthy participation of all stakeholders will go a long way in ensuring an all-round development of aquatic tourism in Nigeria.

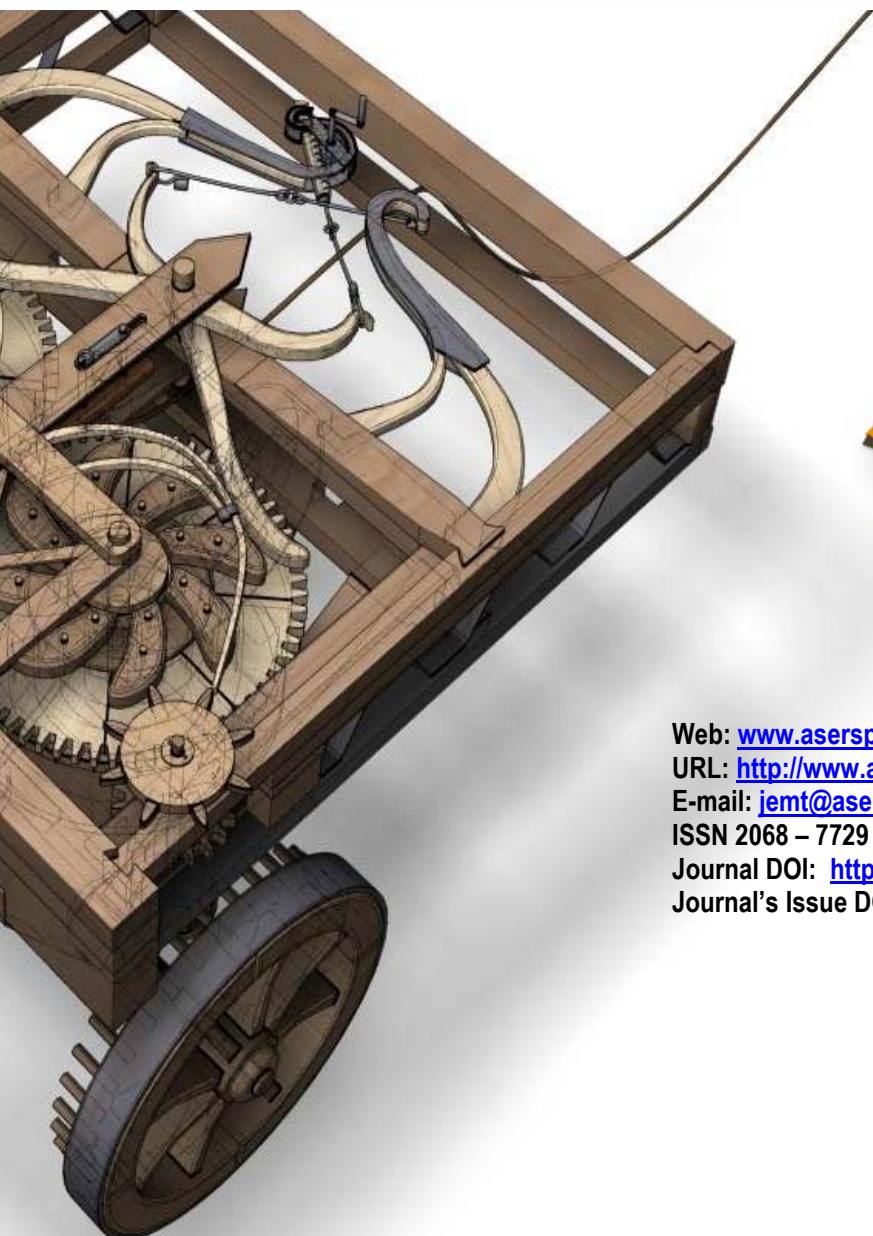
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