

THE USE OF SOFT SYSTEMS METHODOLOGY (SSM) IN EVALUATING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES.

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ABSTRACT: *The Nigerian tourism industry boasts of potentials capable of generating significant investments toward economic development. However, these potentials are undeveloped as several factors militate against them. This paper applied the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) in evaluating the Nigerian tourism industry and proffered solutions accordingly. The following factors were found to be militating against tourism in Nigeria: Low level of demand mainly caused by poor perception of tourism in Nigeria; Inadequate publicity and negative media reports; Inadequate measures to attract private investors; Poor infrastructure/Insufficient tourism facilities; Poor manpower; Problem of land acquisition; Poor management information systems; Apathy of many Nigerians toward tourism; Security risk and Economic instability. Based on these, the paper concludes that necessary frameworks for structural change and adequate regulation will more effectively support the tourism industry. Consequently, the paper recommends among other things that owners and actors in the tourism sector should use diplomatic ties, foreign media, and business forums to attract foreign and local investors into the industry. Government should collaborate with stakeholders to develop adequate infrastructure that supports the industry's growth. Prospective investors should be encouraged through incentives such as tax holidays, excise-duty-free grants, certificate of occupancies etc. Tourism related courses should not only be introduced in institutions of higher learning in the country but sponsored even abroad. International collaborations, joint military actions (JTF) and stakeholders' involvement should be utilized in providing adequate security. Management teams should embark on active campaigns to encourage in-country tourism; while developing strategies for adequate tourism information management system*

KEYWORDS: Tourism, Hospitality, Soft Systems Methodology and Stakeholders

INTRODUCTION

The origin of the soft systems methodology (SSM) can be traced to the research works of Gwilym Jenkins, Peter Checkland, Brian Wilson and others at the University of Lancaster in the 1960s (Checkland, 1981 & 1998; Wilson, 1984 & 1990). However, its development and popularization has been credited to Peter Checkland (Simonsen, 1994; Williams, 2005; Lester, 2008). Ever since, the technique has grown to be internationally recognised and applied. The SSM approach stems from the 'systems movement', which Checkland sees as an attempt to

give holistic approaches to problems, which the traditionally reductionist approach within natural science has failed to solve (Simonsen, 1994).

In order to explain how the systems concept can be used to solve problems, Checkland distinguished between 'hard' and 'soft' systems thinking. The former, he referred to as the 'optimization paradigm' while the later he called the 'learning paradigm'. According to Simonsen, hard systems thinking has the starting point in 'structured' problems and the assumption that the objectives of the systems concerned are well defined and consistent. While soft systems' thinking has the starting point in 'unstructured' problems within social activity systems in which there is felt to be an ill-defined problem situation. However, McGee (2003) maintained that even if a problem utilized hard systems, a soft systems methodology may still be used as an approach to solving it. The SSM technique is more creative in terms of problem solving as it addresses many factors including humans, cultural, ethics, politics etc (UKessays, n.d). It is called "soft" because it is about people and the way they relate to the environment. The systems are the way we use the theory and put it into practices with people, relationship, objects, and processes (Mackness, 2007 in UKessays, n.d).

The SSM as contained in the original works of Checkland (1981 & 1998) and Checkland and Scholes, (1990) has seven stages. Some of them address the "real" world; while others address a conceptual world. The seven stages are presented hereunder with minor modifications by the authors:

1. Entering the unstructured problem situation.
2. Analysing the problem situation.
3. Formulating root definitions of relevant systems.
4. Building Conceptual Models of Human Activity Systems.
5. Comparing the models with the real world.
6. Defining changes that are desirable and feasible.
7. Taking action to improve the real world situation.

The dynamics of the method come from the fact that stages (2) through (4) are always an iterative process. The stake-holders (defined as Client, Actors and Owner) engage in a debate guided by the analyst/facilitator. During this debate various root definitions (succinct statements of appropriate systems) and conceptual models are put forward, modified and developed until a desirable model is achieved by consensus. This model then forms the basis for real world changes (Gregory, 1992). The SSM model as developed by Checkland is presented in figure 1 below.

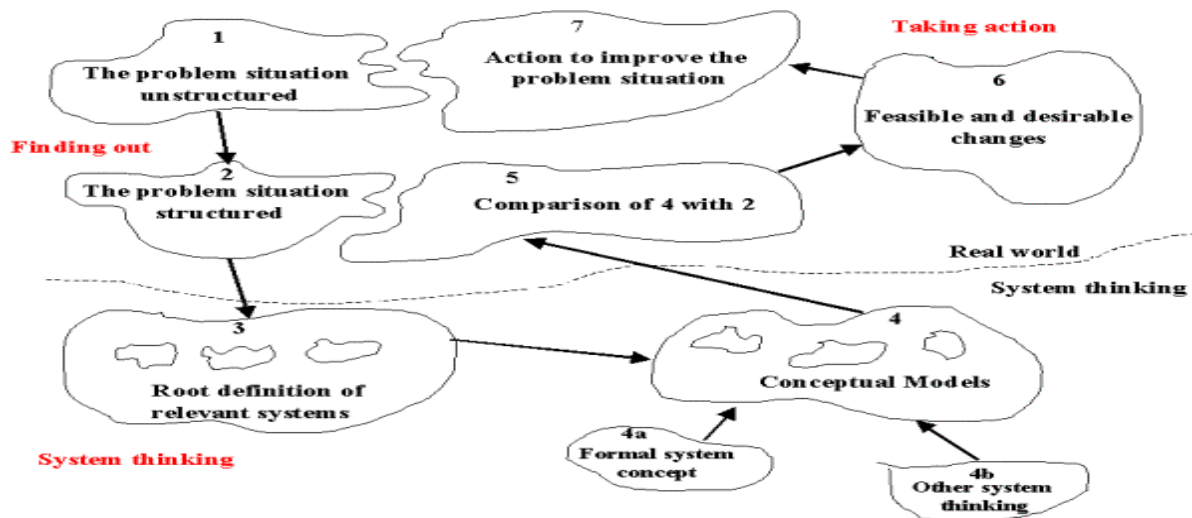


Figure 1: The Soft Systems Methodology Model

Source: Google's image. Available at www.portals.wi.wur.nl

Stage 1. This stage shows messy and unstructured problems that are not suitable for the hard systems methodology.

Stage 2. Deals with the development of rich pictures which express problem situations more clearly. This will in turn provide better feedback as the problem is expressed in the real world.

Stage 3. At this stage, root definitions from defined viewpoints are selected. Root definitions describe what a system is, and what it will do. It considers stakeholders of the system who may be affected in any way.

- Customers: Who are they, and how does the issue affect them?
- Actors: Who is involved in the situation? Who will be involved in implementing solutions? And what will impact their success?
- Transformation Process: What processes or systems are affected by the issue?
- Weltanschauung: What is the big picture, world view? And what are the wider impacts of the issue?
- Owner: Who owns the process or situation you are investigating? And what role will they play in the solution?
- Environmental Constraints: What are the constraints and limitations that will impact the solution and its success?
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Source: <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/management/whats-the-problem-find-out-using-catwoe.html>

Stage 4. This stage consists of the conceptual model, which represents the minimum set of procedures for the system to be able to achieve the desired transformation.

Stage 5. At this stage comparison of the conceptual model and the real world (Stage 2 and stage 4) is made.

Stage 6. At this stage, discussion on improvements is made to ascertain cultural feasibility taking into account stakeholders' views, backgrounds and experiences of the people involved.

Stage 7. This stage has to do with taking action and implementing the changes that would improve the system. This may involve attitudinal changes, change in organisational climate/culture, finance, equipment, personnel training etc.

After implementing the changes it is necessary to get a feedback by measuring the systems performance. Checkland & Scholes (2001) advocate the use of the 3 E's which they describe as: Efficacy (for 'does the means work?')

Efficiency (for 'amount of output divided by amount of resources used')

Effectiveness (for 'is it meeting the longer term aim?')

With the above insight in mind, we decided to re-visit the management of tourism in Nigeria using the SSM. In doing this, we highlighted the settings for the study; which is a brief recapitulation of the evolution and history of tourism in Nigeria. Thereafter, we set forth the methodology, which involves a step by step application of the SSM to the study. The outcome of the analysis informed the conclusions that are drawn and the recommendations made. The study seeks to establish among other things if the successful application of this methodology will help the tourism industry in Nigeria to realize its full potentials and indeed other developing countries especially in the sub- region.

SETTING FOR THE STUDY

Man and his society have come a long way in the evolution process; paving way for various peoples in different countries to contribute meaningfully to the global milieu of civilization and development. In agreement with this, Njoku (2003) opined that this among others has fired the desire of man to seek out things, people, places, food and opportunities that are exciting around or even far from his surroundings. He further posits that this desire has taken man away from his natural environment to places inviting, refreshing, educating and even intriguing. According to him, tourism can be defined as a form of recreation, involving overnight travel of a certain distance away from home in search of excitement, relaxation, and cure for various ailments among others. It comprises activities of people travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environments for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (World Tourism Organization, 1990).

There are two major categories of tourism; namely - national or domestic tourism and international or outbound tourism. The former involves residents of a country visiting tourist sites within that country. While the later involves non-residents of a country visiting the country for tourism purposes. This has in no small way facilitated the increasing case of travel and smoothness of movement across international boundaries. Resultantly, tourism is being made one of the most important global industries of today. Scholars agree that the tourism sector boasts of being the world's biggest export earner; generating enormous foreign exchange earnings and employment (Adora, 2010; Bhatia, 2002; Dabour, 2003; Okpolo and Okpolo, 2002). It is in agreement with this that Okey (2003) and Okpolo, Emeka & Dimlayi,

(2008) posited that the tourism sector in Nigeria has the potentials to generate significant foreign exchange earnings, employment and investment towards economic development.

The Nigerian society is culturally rich and characterized by its “more than the usual” hospitality. Her people dwell richly in welcoming visitors, using various approaches and means such as dance, drama, mouth-watering dishes, artworks, crafts etc. The country is equally blessed with locations such as beaches, unique wildlife, tropical forest, magnificent waterfalls and great art works that showcase the lifestyle and creativity of the people. A good number of these have been developed into tourist sites that attract several foreign and local tourists. It is a truism that the availability of tourism products and services as well as tourism destinations stimulate tourism development in any country (Okpolor et al, 2008; Holloway 2001). These products and destinations are abundantly available in Nigeria. Such tourist destinations are either natural or man-made and are managed to some appreciable level. Tourist destinations can be a place or a resort where tourists go and stay or it could be an area or country in which a visitor stays and travels (Holloway, 2001). Regarding tourism in Nigeria, Okpolor et al argues that Nigeria is blessed with attractive tourist products and destinations. They classify Nigeria’s tourist resources into two main categories; namely: Natural Features and Cultural/Historic Attractions. These are found in all the 36 states of Nigeria, including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Below are their classifications:

North Eastern Circuit (Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Taraba and Adamawa States)

Natural Attractions

- i. Lake Chad Sanctuary
- ii. Kyarimi Part
- iii. Lake Alau
- iv. Lake Njakira
- v. Yankari National Park
- vi. Wikki Warm Spring
- vii. Lame Burra Game Reserve
- viii. Manbila Plateau
- ix. Hot Spring at Lamale
- x. Kamale Peaks of Mubi
- xi. “Three Sisters Rocks” at Sorg
- xii. Jangani Mountain range of Ganye
- xiii. Rolling Uplands of Muri
- xiv. Zanda Hills

Cultural/Historic Attractions:

- i. Kukas (Tombs of the Shehus)
- ii. Maliki Dance of the Kanuris
- iii. Rabeh Fort at Dikwa
- iv. Birnin Ngazargamu
- v. The Legend Snake at Guwo
- vi. Collections of paintings and markings of the people of Gwozai
- vii. Shami-Menwala Festival
- viii. Bade Fishing Festival

- ix. Shira Rock Painting
- x. Kushi Festival
- xi. Gere Masquerade
- xii. Keffin Madaki Historic Monument
- xiii. Lamido Palace at Yola
- xiv. Grave yard of Modibbo
- xv. Calabash Carvings
- xvi. Mat Weaving
- xvii. Pottery and Metal Works

North Western Circuits: (Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Niger States including Abuja)

Natural Attractions:

- i. The River Garden in Kaduna with its historic Lugard Bridge
- ii. Kusugu Well in Daura
- iii. Buguadu/Rock Castle Area game reserve
- iv. Camping grounds at River Wudil
- v. Wana Fabi and Kuruju Rocks
- vi. Tigan Dam, Gurara falls
- vii. Zuma Rock and Shiroro Gorge

Cultural/Historic Attractions

- i. The Regimental Museum of Nigerian Army at Zaria City
- ii. National Museum at Kaduna
- iii. Lugard Hall at Kaduna
- iv. Katsina City Walls
- v. Gobarau Minaret in Katsina
- vi. Yan Awaki Camel Market
- vii. Groundnut Pyramids
- viii. Historic Building in Kano
- ix. Koba Mata Dye Pits, Kano
- x. Kano Central Mosque
- xi. Dubar in Kano
- xii. Makama Museum
- xiii. Kanta Museum
- xiv. Usman Dan Fodio Tomb
- xv. Sultan's Palace
- xvi. Argungu Fishing Festival
- xvii. Ohota Festival
- xviii. Abuja Pottery
- xix. Bida glass and bead Works
- xx. Hand Made glass beads and bangles
- xxi. Embroidery
- xxii. Dying etc

Middle Belt Circuit (Plateau, Benue, Eastern Area of Kogi, including Lokoja)

Natural Attractions

- i. Jos wildlife Sabari Park
- ii. Shere Hills
- iii. Assop Falls
- iv. Wase Rock
- v. Kara Falls
- vi. Karang Volcanic Mountain
- vii. Niger Benue Confluence Zone at Lokoja

Cultural/Historic Attractions

- i. Jos Zoological Garden
- ii. National Museum, Jos
- iii. Museum of Traditional Nigerian Architecture (MOTNA)
- iv. Barkin Ladi Golf Club
- v. Ogani Fishing Festival
- vi. Jos Cultural Centre
- vii. Kwagh-hir Theatre
- viii. Fishing Festivals at Katsina Ala
- ix. Iron of Liberty Cenotaph, Lokoja
- x. The First Primary School in Northern Nigerian at Lokoja
- xi. Ajaokuta Steel Complex

South Western Circuit (Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Kwara and Western Part of Kogi State)

Natural Attractions

- i. Badagry Beach
- ii. Bar Beach
- iii. Tarkwa Bay
- iv. Tin Can Island Park
- v. Lekki Beach
- vi. Erin Ijesha Water Falls
- vii. Ikogosi Warm Spring
- viii. Ebonmi Lake at Ipesi Akoko
- ix. Ipole/Itooro Water falls
- x. Borgu Game Reserve
- xi. Kainji National Park (Game Reserve)
- xii. Olumo Rock
- xiii. Uren Bank Holiday Resort

Cultural/Historic Attraction

- i. Tafewa Balewa Square
- ii. National Museum, Onikan
- iii. Badagry Slave Trade Chain
- iv. Eyo Festival
- v. Ilojo Bar
- vi. Zoological Garden at University of Ibadan
- vii. Osun Oshogbo shrines
- viii. Ife Museum of antiquities

- ix. The Palace of various Obas
- x. Owo Museum
- xi. Holy Apsotles Community (Aiyetoro)
- xii. Shrine of Brikisu Sungbo
- xiii. Agemo and Egungun Masquerade festivals
- xiv. Wreckage of Mungo Parks Boat at Jebba
- xv. Old City walls of Benin
- xvi. Bronze Casters' Studio in various parts of Benin City

South Eastern Circuit (Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Abia, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross River and Delta States)

Natural Attractions

- i. The wonder tree at Ikot Ekpene
- ii. Ogbunike Cave
- iii. Agulu Lake
- iv. Amaokpilla Lake
- v. The Coal Mines at Enugu
- vi. Agulu Nanka Erosion
- vii. Range of Hills around Enugu and Nsukka
- viii. Oguta Lake (Holiday Resort at Patani)
- ix. Arochukwu Cave
- x. River Niger Holiday resort at Patani
- xi. Niger Bridge at Asaba
- xii. Oil Towns of Sapele, Ughelli and Warri
- xiii. Obudu Cattle Ranch
- xiv. Agbokin Water fall near Ikom
- xv. Oil Museum Oloibiri
- xvi. Oil Refinery at Alesa Eleme
- xvii. Ahasse Beach
- xviii.

Cultural/Historic Attractions

- i. Oron Museum
- ii. The Mask Market at Ikot Ikpene
- iii. Mmonwu festival
- iv. Ofala Festivals in parts of the circuit
- v. Mkpokiti Aerobatic Dance Troupe, Umunze
- vi. Uzoiyi Cultural festival at Umuoji
- vii. Wide Range of local crafts including pottery at Inyi, Achi and Awgbu
- viii. Blacksmithing at Awka and Nkwerre
- ix. Zoological Garden at Enugu
- x. National War Museum at Umuahia
- xi. The Gigantic Ikoro Drums in Bende
- xii. Aba Central Market
- xiii. National Museum of Colonial History, Aba
- xiv. Grave of Mary Slessor in Calabar
- xv. King Jaja of Opobo's Grave, Monument and Palace

- xvi. Isaac Boro Amusement park
- xvii. Slave ports at Brass and Bonny
- xviii. National Museum, Port Harcourt
- xix. Amadioha Ozuzu Shrine etc.

In this study therefore, we decided to use the seven stages of SSM to evaluate the tourism industry in Nigeria with a view to actualizing a sustainable tourism development; as discussed below.

PROBLEM SITUATION UNSTRUCTURED

The manila declaration on world tourism argues that there are many constraints on the development of tourism in Nigeria (Adora, 2010). These constraints are not only enormous but hydra-headed. Stakeholders have differing views on what the problem is. This not only compounds the problem; but makes the problem situation highly unstructured. Some of the factors which have been observed as limiting the effective and efficient management of tourism in Nigeria include: Low level of demand, mainly caused by poor perception of tourism in Nigeria; Inadequate publicity and negative media reports (Olokesusi, 1990b); Inadequate measures to attract private investors; Poor/Insufficient tourism facilities, sites and supporting infrastructure (Olokesusi, 1990a); Lack of manpower/poor human capital development; Problem of land acquisition; Poor management information systems; Apathy of many Nigerians towards tourism; Security risk; Economic instability; Socio-cultural factors; etc

PROBLEM SITUATION ANALYSED

In order to analyze the problem situation, it is important to understand that the forces of demand and supply when optimally harnessed, serve the cause of economic development of nations; Nigeria not being an exception. Hence, any problem affecting the demand or supply angles of the equation poses a serious challenge. Accordingly, an understanding of the demand and supply factors in the Nigerian tourism industry is *sine-qua-non* to understanding and analyzing the problem situation. To this, Njoku (2003) opined that in the tourism business, the demand factors are those things that enhance the desire for tourism products and services, these include the quality of sectoral management, the state of development of economic and physical infrastructure; the standard of living of the people; the state of national security; the international reputation of the nation amongst others. According to him, the supply factors are the variety of attractions presented in the tourism market. These are the arts, the cultural programmes; availability and quality of game reserves; national monuments, industrial complexes, hotels, foods and cuisines, natural ecological settings (waterfalls, caves, beaches and mountains), etc. From this simple analysis, it is evident that the supply factors are abundantly available. What seem to be lacking are the demand factors. There is no doubt that the tourism sector of Nigeria's economy is deeply enmeshed in her developmental superstructure; and lacking in a thriving atmosphere. The atmosphere in many countries is that of heavy investment in the tourism sector; with resultant sophistication in facilities and opportunities. Countries like Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, Kenya are eloquent testimonies; earning significant proportions of their gross national product from tourism. But for Nigeria, the atmosphere is far from being encouraging. This uninspiring scenario was

succinctly captured by Njoku (2003) when he stated that for Nigeria with its wonderful tropical climate, large population of over 125 million with its people acclaimed as some of the greatest travelers in the world, the rich culture and diversity of people but hounded with serious problems of poor infrastructure, poor security ratings, the he most realistic option for government is to work hard to encourage in-country tourism. In addition to this, misuse of capital funds meant for developing the tourist environment and problem of insecurity persist. In talking about insecurity, the American State Department's warning to US citizens of the danger of travelling to Nigeria, cited in Bankole (2002) is very instructive.

It states, inter alia,

"The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the dangers of travel to Nigeria. Nigeria has limited tourist facilities and conditions pose considerable risks to travelers. Violent crimes, committed by ordinary criminals, as well as by persons in police and military uniforms, can occur throughout the country. Kidnapping for ransom of persons associated with the petroleum sector, including U.S. citizens, remains common in the Niger Delta area. Use of public transportation throughout Nigeria is dangerous and should be avoided. Taxis pose risks because of the possibility of fraudulent or criminal operators and poorly maintained vehicles. Most Nigerian airlines have aging fleets, and there are valid concerns that maintenance and operational procedures may be inadequate to ensure passenger safety."

From these insights, the problem situation in the Nigerian tourism industry can be captured under these headings, viz Poor investment by both the public and private sectors; Poor management of the industry; Poor infrastructural development; Insecurity of lives and properties; Low in-country tourism.

STEP 3: ROOT DEFINITION

This stage of the evaluation is an abstract view that captures the essence of the relevant system and ensures that it is constructed, giving consideration to all the elements brought to mind by the mnemonic CATWOE, Checkland, (1987). He indicates that each root definition reflects a different way of conceiving the problem situation. An application of CATWOE portends thus:

- C – (clients/customers): are the tourists who come from far and near to the tourist destinations for leisure. They stand to gain or benefit from the system. They are also the victims in case of negative eventuality.
- A – (actors): The actors perform the activities defined in the tourism support system. They are the problem solvers of the system e.g. the organizers of the tourism activities, stake holders, administrators/managers, state and the local communities.
- T – (transformation): This stage is shown as conversion stage. Transforming inputs in the form of investment, resources and enabling environment to outputs. In our case, the needed

transformation would be investing heavily in the sector so as to improve on the infrastructure, guarantee security and attract both local and foreign patronage.

- W – (weltanschauung or worldview): It justifies the existence of the system and also makes the transformation process meaningful. In this case, tourism is an important medium for increasing the gross domestic product (GDP) of Nigeria and diversifying her economy. It also helps in promoting international goodwill and friendship between Nigeria and other nations of the world. It promotes the varied culture and life style of the people, fosters regional understanding, corporation and social education between Nigeria and other regions of the world.

- O – (owners): The owners of the tourism sector are the government, states and local communities where the tourist attraction sites are located. Also included are private investors who partly or wholly own tourism facilities.

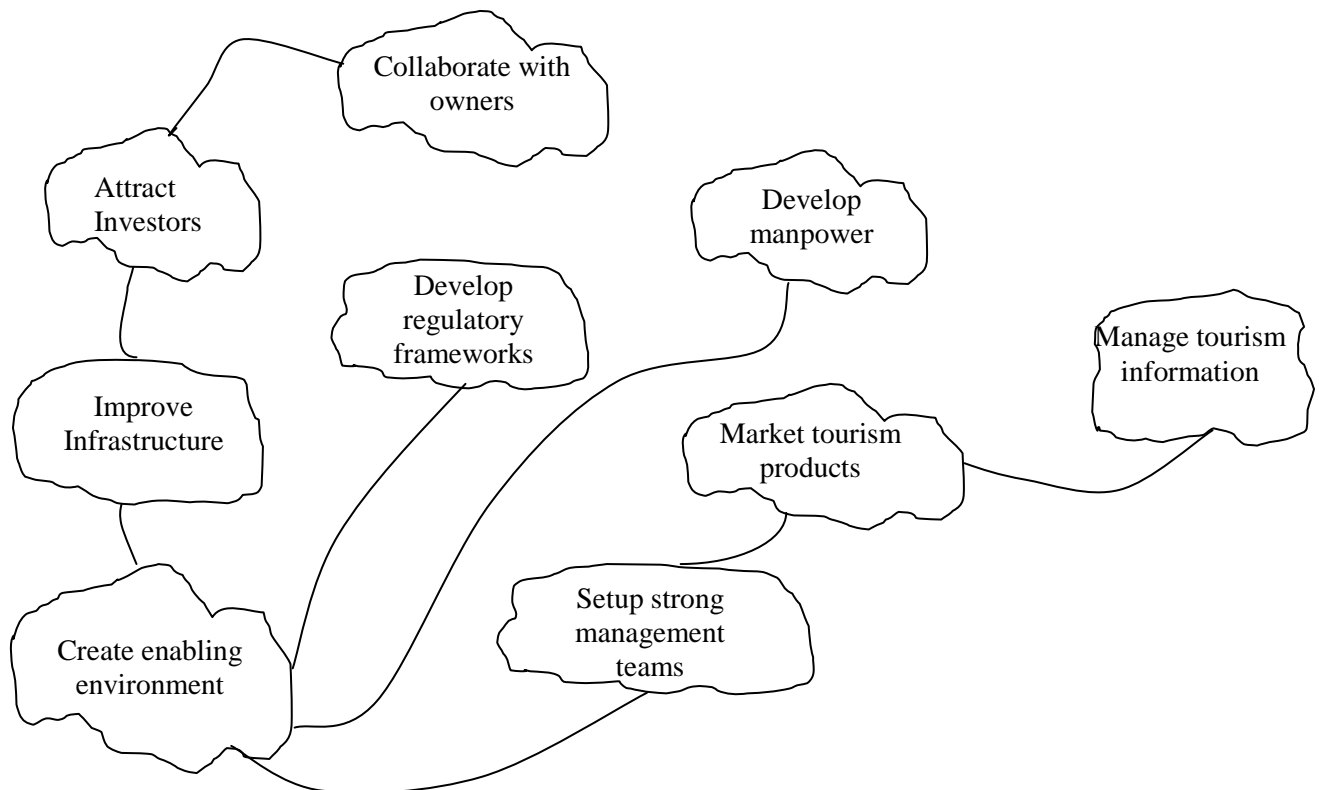
- E – (environment): These are external elements that exist outside the system which it takes as given. In our case, they include poor investment climate, changing government policies, poor infrastructure, insecurity of lives and properties, low level in-country tourism and inadequate manpower.

STEP 4: CONCEPTUAL MODELS

Conceptual modeling is logical representations of those minimum activities that are necessary to achieve the purpose enshrined in the root definition. The conceptual models for tourism support system are summarized in the following human activity systems.

- Collaborate with owners
- Attract investors (both public and private)
- Improve infrastructure to world class standards
- Liaise with stakeholders to create enabling environment
- Develop regulatory frameworks
- Develop adequate manpower
- Create strong management teams
- Market tourism products with special attention to in-country tourism
- Manage tourism information

These activities can be captured in bubble diagrams that give mental picture of the action flow, relationship with sub-systems and the environment.



Source: Researchers' Conceptualization, 2013

Fig. 2: Conceptual Model of Tourism Management using the SSM Methodology

STEP 5: COMPARISM OF THE CONCEPTUALISED MODEL WITH PROBLEM SITUATION ANALYSED

At this stage, conceptual models, which were developed in stage 4 are compared with what is perceived to exist in the real world. With respect to poor investment which may have been caused by poor understanding of the potentials of the industry, security risks and lack of capital, collaboration with stakeholders and massive awareness campaigns will help attract investors into the industry. This will engender healthy competition that will facilitate the availability of demand and supply factors in the industry. Performance can also be measured with relative ease as number of tourists attracted can easily be ascertained. Other key performance indicators like shareholders satisfaction will help performance measurement. Eventually, this process will lead to the benefit of all stakeholders as desired states are achieved. Collaboration with stakeholders will help manpower development. Foreign investments can also attract management expertise. These put together will lead to improved performance as evidence can be seen in the efficient and effective management of the system. Infrastructural development will no doubt be improved with the attraction of investors and stakeholder collaboration. Since government will be mainly responsible for regulatory framework, adequate security measures and improved infrastructure especially at the general level will be imperative. With the strong management teams in place, aggressive marketing will no doubt create awareness for in-country tourism. Public and private organizations can

also partner with owners to encourage this by sponsoring leisure trips for their staff members. With these possibilities, the conceptual framework will definitely fit into solution kits for the analyzed problems.

STEP 6: IDENTIFYING CHANGES

In identifying the feasible and desirable changes in tourism development, the service provider (actors) and government (owners) have greater responsibility. These change factors are aggregated as follows:

Owners and actors knowing that they cannot achieve the desired success without necessary collaborations with stakeholders; have the responsibility of attracting investors (foreign and local). These investors have the resources and are looking for favourable investment climate and destinations. It becomes a case of investment meeting opportunities. These can be achieved through massive campaigns using diplomatic ties and relationships, foreign media, business forums. The vast knowledge and experience of the ministry of culture and tourism can be utilized to enlighten people on the tourism potentials in the country. The federal government, states and local governments, communities, corporate organizations and wealthy individuals can pool resources together to invest in tourism development.

Owners and actors also have the responsibility of gathering stakeholders in a round table discussion to agree on responsibilities, management teams, equity interests and revenue sharing formula. This will help resolve issues associated with power sharing formula and controls.

They also have the responsibility of setting up regulatory frameworks. This can be achieved through sponsoring of relevant bills for necessary legislation; review of existing policy statements, setting up of various ministries and boards with membership drawn from interest groups and stakeholders.

With regulatory bodies in place, activities of management teams can be closely monitored so as to ensure conformity with set standards.

Management teams now have the responsibility of driving tourism activities in the direction of predetermined objectives and goals. Aggressive marketing of tourism products and management of tourism information are equally their responsibility. In order to encourage in-tourism in their marketing activities, they may need to liaise with stakeholders to fashion out feasible ways.

STEP 7: IMPLEMENTATION

Having identified the feasible changes, responsibilities need to be assigned as detailed in step 6 above. It behooves on the relevant stakeholders to implement the recommended changes while a feedback framework for monitoring/evaluating is integrated into the system. This will help compare results / output to desired changes.

CONCLUSION

The bottom-line position of this paper is that efficient and effective tourism management via the SSM, is a fast track tool towards actualization of a sustainable economy for Nigeria. Currently, investment in this sector is low. Consequently, there is a great need to encourage both local and foreign investment in this sector. Government at all levels must strive to build strong partnerships and collaborations with relevant stakeholders for the actualization of the desired state of affairs in the sector. Necessary frameworks for structural change and adequate regulation will more effectively support the tourism industry.

Therefore, urgent action is needed to improve tourism information management, research and forecast. This will more effectively serve the need of the industry and help potential investors; tourists and sundry stakeholders complete the desired re-branding of domestic and international tourism marketing. Based on this therefore, it can be concluded that in fuzzy and complex situations such as those examined in the course of this study, Checkland's soft system methodology can be said to be appropriate. This is because societal problems are usually complex and adaptive in nature.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Suffice it to say that the application of Soft Systems Methodology in real life problem situations is relatively new in Nigerian setting and would therefore require several workshops to propagate the use of this Methodology.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the discourse so far, it is clear that the gains of tourism are not only economic, but also socio-cultural and political among others. To optimize the benefits of the SSM approach adopted for this study, we make the following recommendations.

5. 1 Government should initiate a national, regional, state and local tourism stakeholders' summit. This will provide the necessary forum for discussing the way forward for the tourism sector.

5.2 Owners and actors in the tourism sector should attract both foreign and local investors into the Nigerian tourism industry. This can be achieved through massive campaign using diplomatic relationships, foreign media, and business forums. The vast knowledge and experience of the ministry of culture and tourism can be utilized to enlighten people on the tourism potentials in the country. The federal, state and local governments, plus communities and wealthy individuals can pool resources together to invest in tourism development.

5.3 Government should not only sustain the current effort at infrastructural development but improve on it. It should collaborate with investors and relevant stakeholders to develop infrastructure such as good road network to tourist destinations, improved power supply, adequate supply of portable water, world class standard hotels and lodging facilities. Funds appropriated for public sector expenditure on tourism could be consciously channeled to develop facilities that will profit the tourism industry. It should be noted that these are *sine-qua-non* to a robust and viable tourism industry.

5.4 In order to attract investors, government should provide enabling environment for investment activities to thrive. Hence, incentives such as tax holidays, repatriation of funds, excise-duty-free grants for imported facilities, certificate of occupancies (C of O) etc., should be given to prospective investors so as to encourage them.

5.5 The federal, state and local governments, communities, corporate organizations and wealthy individuals should be encouraged to pool resources together and invest in tourism development.

5.6 Government should review the activities of existing regulatory bodies (such as the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and National Orientation, Nigerian Tourism development Council etc.) so as to ensure that the purposes for which they were setup are achieved. Where it is necessary, non-performing ministries and bodies can be disbanded and new ones set up. Interest groups and stakeholders should be made to be members of these regulatory bodies to ensure attainment of objectives.

5.7 Stakeholders are encouraged to sponsor relevant bills for necessary legislation a review of existing policies. This is intended to help standardize activities in the tourism industry while protecting the interest of relevant stakeholders.

5.8 In order to develop adequate manpower in the industry, tourism related courses should be introduced in institutions of higher learning in the country. Such educational programmes should be sponsored through public and/or private scholarships; especially abroad. Membership of professional bodies, conferences, internships, technical collaborations and knowledge transfer through expatriate assistance are some other tools that can help in achieving this purpose.

5.9 Adequate security should be put in place in order to secure lives and properties. This can be achieved through international collaborations, joint military actions (JTF) and stakeholders' involvement.

5.10 Management teams should device effective marketing strategies that will not only attract foreign tourists but encourage in-tourism activities. This can be achieved by embarking on active campaigns to encourage Nigerians to regularly take and enjoy holidays. The current practice whereby government/public servants are compelled to work during their leave periods or reschedule them, is not to the best interest of the workers. Tourist destinations and reserves which are abundantly available in Nigeria form excellent settings for holidays. There is need to explore them for healthy leaving purposes. Information packages on affordable tours, especially subsidized ones by the state or organization should be regularly made available to interested persons. Such strategic investments will not only discourage staff from taking their holidays in foreign countries but will encourage the growth of our local economy.

5.11 For efficient and effective management of the tourism industry in a volatile and unpredictable business environment, tourism information management system is necessary. Hence, management teams should develop strategies for adequate information management.

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