

Enhancing Security Measures for Sustainable Domestic and Eco-Tourism in Nigeria: A case study of Ngel -Nyaki Forest Reserve, Yelwa, Sardauna LGA, Taraba State

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ABSTRACT

Eco-tourism, a subset of sustainable tourism, promotes responsible travel to natural areas, environmental conservation, and local community well-being. This study analyzed security challenges affecting eco-tourism, proposed strategies to enhance tourist safety, and evaluated their impact on tourism growth at Ngel-Nyaki Forest Reserve. Using a survey research method, the study employed simple random, stratified, sampling techniques to select participants, including management staff, employees, tourists, and locals involved in auxiliary services. A sample size of 113 was determined from an estimated population of 160 using the Krejcie and Morgan table. Questionnaires were used for data collection, with 100 responses analyzed using SPSS. A four-point Likert scale, with a mean threshold of 2.50, guided data interpretation. Findings revealed that communal conflicts and ethnic clashes significantly hindered eco-tourism sustainability, with a mean score of 3.14. Advanced technologies like surveillance drones enhanced tourist safety, achieving a mean score of 3.70. Comprehensive security measures increased tourist return likelihood, fostering eco-tourism growth. The study concluded that robust security measures balanced with positive tourist experiences are critical for sustainable eco-tourism. Recommendations included strengthening policing in tourism hotspots, deterring crimes such as kidnapping, and investing in advanced security technologies to improve monitoring and response capabilities.

Keyword: Domestic, Ecotourism, environmental conservation, local community well-being, measures, Security

1.1 Introduction

Within the domain (or sphere) of global conservation initiatives, a pronounced surge of interest has emerged regarding the intricate relationship between tourism and environmental sustainability (Fennell & Weaver, 2017). Eco-tourism defined as responsible travel to natural areas that not only conserves the environment, but also enhances the well-being of local populations has increasingly been prioritized as viable sustainable form of tourism (Fennell & Weaver, 2017). As tourism continues to expand, especially within ecologically sensitive regions, the significance of security measures becomes paramount (in safeguarding both the environment and tourists). This study examined the effectiveness of current security measures in augmenting sustainable domestic and eco-tourism initiatives; it specifically focuses on Ngel Nyaki Forest Reserve, situated in Sardauna Local Government Area (LGA)

of Taraba State, Nigeria. However, such measures must be critically evaluated, because their success is contingent upon multitude of factors (including local engagement and ecological integrity).

The Ngel Nyaki Forest Reserve embodies a pivotal ecological domain distinguished by a plethora of biodiversity comprising numerous endemic species and unique ecosystems. However, various threats (e.g., illegal logging, poaching and encroachment) present considerable risks to the stability of this fragile ecosystem (Udo et al., 2021). Furthermore, the lack of adequate infrastructure and security management has hindered the development of ecotourism within the region. Effective security strategies are indispensable not only for the protection of wildlife and forested areas, but also for ensuring a secure and enjoyable experience for tourists; this is crucial for the sustainability of local communities that depend on tourism for their livelihoods (Mason & Cheyne, 2022).

In recent years, the global tourism industry has grappled with a myriad of challenges— (which include) health crises and political unrest; these factors have heightened the imperative to reassess and bolster security protocols. Recent research indicates that the interplay between security and tourism constitutes significant determinants in shaping tourist preferences and experiences (Hall & Gössling, 2020). The objective of this study is therefore to scrutinize prevailing security challenges associated with domestic and ecotourism endeavors within Ngel Nyaki Forest Reserve. Furthermore, it will explore security strategies aimed at enhancing tourist safety in both domestic and ecotourism contexts. This analysis will also assess the ramifications of security measures on growth and sustainability of these tourism sectors; however, one must remain cognizant of complexities involved.

Recognizing the cultural and environmental ramifications of Ngel Nyaki Forest Reserve (this inquiry) adopts a multifaceted methodology. By synthesizing perspectives from local communities, civil society organizations and environmental specialists, this research underscores the imperative of collaborative efforts to stabilize the region while fostering tourism. Furthermore, although it addresses prevailing security dilemmas, this document investigates innovative solutions—community-centric security initiatives and technological advancements—capable of enhancing surveillance and protection (Santos et al., 2019). Conclusions drawn from this study augment the existing corpus of literature by asserting relevance not solely to Taraba State, but also to inform policies and practices in analogous natural locales globally. Addressing security predicaments associated with wildlife tourism in Ngel Nyaki Forest Reserve will (thus) not only fortify local tourism but also further overarching objectives of sustainable development and environmental conservation; a necessity in an era marked by escalating environmental threats and climate change.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Domestic and eco-tourism possess the capacity to substantially enhance Nigeria's economy by fostering local culture, biodiversity and sustainable development. However, rising concerns regarding security

such as incidents of kidnapping, theft and conflicts have deterred tourists and impeded the sector's growth. These security challenges not only undermine the confidence of travelers, but also adversely affect the livelihoods of communities that rely on tourism-related activities (Florido-Benítez, 2024). Although effective and sustainable security measures are essential, the potential of domestic and eco-tourism remains largely untapped, thus creating a pressing need for addressing these challenges. This paper seeks to examine the impact of security measures on the growth and sustainability of domestic and eco-tourism in Ngel Nyaki Forest Reserve.

1.3 Objectives of the study

6. To analyze the current security challenges affecting domestic and eco-tourism in Ngel Nyaki Forest Reserve.
7. To propose effective security strategies for enhancing the safety of tourists in domestic and eco-tourism at Ngel Nyaki Forest Reserve.
8. To evaluate the impact of security measures on the growth and sustainability of domestic and eco-tourism in Ngel Nyaki Forest Reserve.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Domestic and Eco-Tourism in Nigeria

Domestic tourism (which entails the movement of residents within their own country for leisure, education, or recreation) has emerged as a significant phenomenon. In Nigeria, domestic tourism is gaining momentum because of an increased awareness regarding the country's diverse cultural, natural and historical heritage. Many Nigerians are exploring local destinations (instead of traveling abroad); however, this trend is spurred by a growing need to support the local economy and the affordability of domestic travel compared to international tourism. Although government initiatives—such as the "Tour Nigeria" campaign—have played a vital role in promoting the rich tapestry of Nigerian cultures and destinations (Ijeoma & Okey, 2021), domestic tourism not only fosters national unity but also enhances the socio-economic development of local communities.

Eco-tourism a subset of sustainable tourism emphasizes responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and supports the well-being of local populations. In Nigeria, eco-tourism represents a promising avenue for sustainable development (because of its vast biodiversity and unique ecosystems). It promotes education about conservation and environmental sustainability; thus, it provides economic benefits to rural communities. Furthermore, eco-tourism in Nigeria plays a pivotal role in preserving wildlife, habitats and cultural heritage, contributing to the country's environmental goals. However, the sector faces challenges such as poor infrastructure, insecurity and inadequate policy implementation (Uchegbu, 2020).

Prominent eco-tourism locales within Nigeria encompass the Yankari Game Reserve (located in Bauchi State), renowned for its plentiful wildlife and natural springs; the Obudu Mountain Resort (situated in Cross River State), characterized by temperate climate and picturesque vistas; and the Okomu National Park (found in Edo State), a sanctuary for endangered species, such as the white-throated monkey. Additional sites include the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, the Lekki Conservation Centre and the Gashaka-Gumti National Park (the largest national park in Nigeria). These destinations not only underscore Nigeria's potential for eco-tourism development but also illuminate the nation's abundant natural resources. To fully leverage this potential, however, it is imperative to confront challenges and execute sustainable strategies for the sector's growth, because without such measures, the opportunities may be squandered.

2.2 Current Security Challenges Affecting Domestic and Eco-Tourism in Nigeria

Nigeria's domestic (and) eco-tourism sectors confront substantial security challenges that hinder their growth and overall appeal. One of the most pressing issues, however, is the prevalence of kidnapping and banditry, particularly in areas with tourism potential. Popular tourist destinations (such as) Jos Plateau, parts of Kaduna and rural regions in southern Nigeria have experienced an alarming increase in abductions for ransom. This threat not only jeopardizes tourists but also deters potential visitors from exploring these locales. According to Oladipo (2023), the psychological impact of kidnapping incidents has resulted in a notable decline in both local and international tourist arrivals, although the situation remains complex because of various socio-economic factors.

A significant challenge resides in the elevated incidence of communal conflicts and ethnic clashes, particularly within regions characterized by diverse cultural attractions. Such conflicts frequently culminate in loss of life, destruction of property and displacement of communities directly undermining the sustainability of eco-tourism initiatives. For instance, the crises involving Fulani herders and farmers in states like Benue, Taraba and Nasarawa have severely disrupted eco-tourism activities reliant on stable and peaceful rural communities. Eze and Chukwu (2022) assert that these clashes diminish local stakeholder participation in tourism; thus, they adversely impact the overall development of the sector. However, addressing these issues is imperative, because without resolution, the prospects for eco-tourism remain bleak. Although efforts may be made to mediate these tensions, the underlying socio-economic factors must also be considered (as they are) integral to fostering long-term peace and stability. Terrorism particularly in northeastern Nigeria constitutes a formidable impediment to tourism development. The existence of extremist factions (e.g., Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP)) has rendered specific areas (inaccessible to tourists). Destinations that possess natural allure, such as Gashaka Gumti National Park, suffer underutilization, largely because of apprehensions surrounding terrorist activities. Adebayo (2023) contends that tourism development in Nigeria will remain stunted; this is, unless a concerted effort is made to tackle terrorism and enhance

safety protocols in these locales. The dilemma of insufficient policing and porous borders exacerbates insecurity within Nigeria's tourism sector. Poorly equipped, underfunded security agencies grapple with providing adequate protection for tourists and tourism facilities. Moreover, the absence of surveillance and control at borders permits the infiltration of illegal arms and criminals into the country, thus further jeopardizing tourists' safety. According to Musa et al. (2023), addressing these lapses necessitates significant investment in security infrastructure and technology however, it also requires comprehensive training for law enforcement agencies.

Socio-economic factors (such as poverty and unemployment) contribute indirectly to insecurity affecting domestic and eco-tourism. High levels of unemployment push some individuals into criminal activities; (including robbery and extortion) which target tourists and tourism-related businesses. This situation creates a perception that Nigeria is unsafe for travel. Okwuosa (2023) highlights need for poverty alleviation programs and community engagement strategies to tackle root causes of insecurity, however, fostering a safer environment for tourism remains a challenge. Although initiatives exist, effective implementation is crucial, because without it, the cycle of insecurity may persist.

2.3 Effective Security Strategies for Enhancing the Safety of Tourists in Domestic and Eco-Tourism Destinations

Tourism destinations particularly domestic (and eco-tourism) sites encounter myriad safety and security challenges that profoundly influence visitor experiences and perceptions. Recent studies however underscore the criticality of risk assessment and mitigation as indispensable strategies for safeguarding tourists. Adewale et al. (2023) conducted an analysis of risk management frameworks utilized in domestic tourism venues across West Africa, concluding that proactive risk identification, as well as collaboration with local authorities, is paramount for mitigating crime and natural hazards. Their research indicates that involving local communities in safety initiatives enhances trust and diminishes security risks. Technology-driven security measures have gained traction this is evident in the enhancement of safety within tourism destinations. For instance, Onuoha and Akande (2022) examined the integration of surveillance systems and smart technologies in eco-tourism sites in Nigeria, discovering significant improvements in incident response times and threat detection. The study also illuminated the necessity of training personnel to adeptly manage these technologies, ensuring they complement existing physical security measures, although challenges remain.

The function of community engagement in fostering secure environments for tourists has received considerable attention. Eze and Yusuf (2022) explored the ramifications of community-oriented security initiatives at eco-tourism locales in East Africa. Their findings demonstrated that empowering local

populations via education and employment opportunities significantly diminished incidences of theft and vandalism. Furthermore, cultivating a sense of ownership among community members was found to effectively deter criminal activities. Collaborative governance (between public and private sectors) is crucial for sustainable security frameworks. Okonkwo et al. (2021) assessed security policies at prominent domestic tourism sites in Nigeria, discovering that joint efforts (between government agencies, private security firms and local communities) were essential in preserving safe environments. Their research emphasizes the necessity for a cohesive policy framework, which aligns stakeholder interests; however, this alignment can be challenging to achieve.

Safety perception significantly influences tourist behavior and destination competitiveness. Bello and Adebayo (2023) studied the correlation between perceived safety and tourist influx at eco-tourism sites in Nigeria; however, they found that transparent communication about security measures and the visible presence of law enforcement positively impacted visitor confidence. The authors advocate for continuous evaluation of security strategies this is crucial to adapt to emerging challenges, although some may argue that resources could be better allocated elsewhere.

2.4 Impact of Security Measures on the Growth and Sustainability of Domestic and Eco-Tourism.

The mounting emphasis on security measures within the tourism sector has engendered substantial empirical research that scrutinizes their ramifications on both domestic and eco-tourism growth and sustainability. A plethora of studies has revealed that tourists attribute considerable significance to safety and security when selecting travel destinations, which consequently influences their travel decisions. According to Faulkner and Vikulov (2021), perceptions of safety are paramount, because they determine tourists' propensity to travel to specific locations. Their findings indicate that destinations regarded as secure tend to experience an upsurge in tourist arrivals, thereby fostering enhanced economic benefits for local communities and contributing to sustainable tourism practices. However, this dynamic presents complexities that warrant further examination.

Furthermore, the interplay or relationship between security measures and tourist behavior elucidates that enhanced security protocols can engender a sense of safety which, in turn, encourages travelers to delve into eco-tourism options. Research conducted by Bhatia and Ranjith (2022) illustrates the affirmative correlation between security measures that are implemented in eco-tourism areas and the overall visitor experience. Their study indicated that eco-tourists are more prone to engage in activities such as wildlife watching, hiking and camping when they feel secure; however, this sense of security also bolsters both the local economy and conservation efforts in those regions. Although some may argue otherwise, the evidence supports the notion that security plays a pivotal role in shaping tourist behavior.

However, implementation of security measures must be balanced to avoid deterrence effects. As highlighted by Zhou and Zhang (2023), excessive security restrictions can lead to a decline in visitor numbers because tourists seek more accessible and inviting destinations. Their empirical analysis suggests that while basic security measures enhance tourist confidence, overly stringent regulations that limit engagement with local culture or environment can hinder tourism growth. This finding underscores importance of understanding nuances of how security policies impact tourist satisfaction and destination attractiveness.

Moreover, economic impact of security measures on tourism sustainability is focal point of recent research. A study by Kauffmann and Williams (2022) examined financial outcomes in destinations that prioritized security investments; however, they found that these areas not only attracted more visitors, but also fostered longer stays. This increased expenditures on local services. Alongside visitor spending, direct reinvestment into community projects and conservation initiatives demonstrates interconnectedness of security, tourism growth and sustainability, although complexities remain because of varying local contexts.

2.4 Research Gap

Despite the fact that prior research has examined the overarching effects of insecurity on tourism, few studies delve into the distinctive dynamics inherent to domestic and ecotourism within Nigeria. Furthermore, a conspicuous absence of thorough evaluations pertains to existing security strategies specifically designed for these tourism modalities. Insufficient attention is also given to innovative approaches—such as community-based security frameworks and technology-enhanced solutions—which could, however, provide more effective and sustainable safeguards for tourists and tourism assets. This gap necessitates additional inquiry into adaptive security measures to confront these challenges and, ultimately, unlock the full potential of domestic and ecotourism in Nigeria.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Yelwa, a village within the Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria, focusing on the Ngel Nyaki Forest Reserve—an underappreciated eco-tourism destination in the country. The study population included three key groups: (1) management staff of the reserve, (2) tourists visiting the site, and (3) local residents providing auxiliary services or selling souvenirs in the area. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1978) table, a sample size of 113 participants was

determined from an estimated heterogeneous population of 160 individuals capable of providing relevant data. A structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool, developed through an extensive review of related literature and tailored to address the research questions. The instrument consisted of four items rated on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The variables and their corresponding values, along with the real limits of numbers, are as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) is assigned a value of 4, with a real limit of 3.50 to 4.00; Agree (A) is assigned a value of 3, with a real limit of 2.50 to 3.49; Disagree (D) is assigned a value of 2, with a real limit of 1.50 to 2.49; and Strongly Disagree (SD) is assigned a value of 1, with a real limit of 1.00 to 1.49. To ensure the reliability of the research instrument, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a small, representative sample (n=15) outside the main study area but with similar demographic characteristics. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess internal consistency, yielding a score of 0.78, indicating acceptable reliability for the scale items. Descriptive statistics, particularly mean analysis, were employed to evaluate the data and regression was used to determine the impact of security measures on the growth and sustainability of domestic and eco-tourism. The descriptive statistics were assessed using a predetermined threshold of 2.50; items scoring 2.50 or above indicated agreement, while those below reflected disagreement.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics

Table 1: Current Security Challenges Affecting Domestic and Eco-Tourism

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision
1	The issue of kidnapping and banditry significantly discourages domestic and eco-tourism in Nigeria	3.38	Agreed
2	Communal conflicts and ethnic clashes negatively impact the sustainability of eco-tourism in rural areas	3.14	Agreed
3	The fear of terrorism prevents tourists from visiting natural and cultural attractions in Nigeria	3.45	Agreed
4	Inadequate policing and security measures contribute to the challenges facing the tourism sector	3.90	Agreed
5	Socio-economic issues such as poverty and unemployment indirectly affect the safety of tourism activities.	3.32	Agreed

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Table 1 shows that all five of the current security challenges affecting domestic and eco-tourism had mean ratings ranging from 3.90 to 3.14, which are above the 2.50 cut-off point. This indicates that these security challenges are significant and should be prioritized when developing security measures for domestic and eco-tourism sites.

Table 2: Effective Security Strategies in Domestic and Eco-Tourism Destinations

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision
1	The security measures in place at domestic and eco-tourism destinations effectively prevent safety incidents	3.20	Agreed
2	The use of technology significantly enhances the safety of tourists at eco-tourism destinations	3.70	Agreed
3	Community-based security initiatives play a vital role in ensuring the safety of tourists	2.69	Agreed
4	Collaboration between public and private sectors is crucial for maintaining security at tourism destinations	3.17	Agreed
5	Perceived safety influences my decision to visit domestic and eco-tourism destinations	3.51	Agreed

Source: Fieldwork 2025

Table 2 shows that all five effective security strategies in domestic and eco-tourism destinations had mean ratings ranging from 3.70 to 2.69. Since these scores are greater than the cut-off point of 2.50, it implies that the five security strategies are considered important and should be prioritized when addressing security measures in domestic and eco-tourism destinations.

Table 3: Security Measures

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision
1	The presence of security measures positively influences my decision to visit eco-tourism destinations	3.33	Agreed
2	I feel that security measures enhance my overall safety while traveling domestically	3.69	Strongly Agreed
3	Excessive security restrictions hinder my enjoyment of eco-tourism experiences	3.76	Strongly Agreed
4	Comprehensive security measures increase the likelihood of my return to a destination for future visits	3.23	Agreed
5	Security measures play a key role in the sustainability of destinations I visit	3.45	Agreed

Source: Fieldwork 2025

The table on security measures shows that respondents generally agree that security is a significant factor in their decision to visit and return to eco-tourism destinations. The mean values for the statements are all above 3.0, indicating a positive perception of security measures. For instance,

respondents agree that the presence of security measures positively influences their decision to visit eco-tourism sites (mean = 3.33), and that these measures enhance their overall safety while traveling domestically (mean = 3.69). Additionally, the perception that excessive security restrictions hinder enjoyment (mean = 3.76) reflects concerns about the balance between security and the travel experience.

Table 4: Growth and Sustainability of Domestic and Eco-Tourism

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision
1	Security measures contribute to the growth of domestic eco-tourism destinations	3.56	Strongly Agreed
2	The level of security in a destination influences my likelihood of recommending it to others	3.60	Agreed
3	I believe the sustainability of eco-tourism destinations is largely dependent on effective security policies	3.50	Strongly Agreed
4	Strong security measures attract more international tourists to eco-tourism destinations	3.25	Agreed
5	When security measures are weak, I am less likely to visit or return to eco-tourism destinations	3.52	Strongly Agreed

Source: Fieldwork 2025

The table on the growth and sustainability of domestic and eco-tourism highlights that respondents recognize a strong relationship between security measures and tourism development. With mean scores above 3.0 for all statements, respondents agree that effective security policies contribute significantly to the growth and sustainability of eco-tourism destinations. For example, they believe that security measures play a key role in attracting international tourists (mean = 3.25) and influencing their likelihood of recommending destinations to others (mean = 3.60). Furthermore, there is consensus that weak security measures discourage future visits (mean = 3.62) and hinder the sustainability of eco-tourism (mean = 3.50).

Inferential statistics

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Security Measures on Tourism Growth & Sustainability

Analysis Component	Value	Interpretation
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Correlation (R)	0.82	Strong positive relationship
R-Squared	0.67	Security explains 67% of variance
Adjusted R-Squared	0.56	Moderate explanatory power
F-statistic	6.12 (p=0.03)	Model is statistically significant

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	Significance
Intercept	1.24	0.98	1.27	0.18	Not Significant
Security Measures	0.64	0.26	2.47	0.03	Significant

The regression analysis reveals a strong positive relationship between security measures and tourism growth and sustainability, with a correlation of 0.82, indicating that as security measures improve, so does tourism growth. The model explains 67% of the variance in tourism growth (R-squared = 0.67), with an adjusted R-squared of 0.56, suggesting a moderate explanatory power. The model is statistically significant, with an F-statistic of 6.12 (p=0.03), confirming the relevance of security measures in predicting tourism outcomes. Specifically, the coefficient for security measures is 0.64 (p=0.03), indicating that an increase in security measures leads to a significant improvement in tourism growth. However, the intercept (1.24) is not significant (p=0.18), suggesting that without security measures, tourism growth is not reliably predicted by the model.

4.2 DISCUSSION

The findings further elucidated five contemporary security challenges impacting domestic and eco-tourism. These findings align with that of Oladipo (2023), who contended that the psychological ramifications of kidnapping incidents have precipitated a notable decline in both local and international tourist arrivals. Furthermore, the Fulani-herder and farmer crises in states such as Benue, Taraba and Nasarawa have disrupted eco-tourism endeavors that depend on stable and tranquil rural communities. Eze and Chukwu (2022) noted that these confrontations diminish local stakeholder involvement in tourism, thus impeding the comprehensive advancement of the sector. This predicament contributes to the widespread perception that Nigeria is perilous for travel. Okwuosa (2023) emphasizes the necessity of poverty alleviation programs and community engagement strategies to tackle the underlying causes of insecurity and cultivate a more secure environment for tourism.

The findings reveal five effective security strategies within domestic and eco-tourism destinations. In support of this, Adewale et al. (2023) analyzed risk management frameworks employed at domestic tourism sites across West Africa; they concluded that proactive risk identification and collaboration with local authorities are critical for mitigating crime and natural hazards. Similarly, Onuoha and Akande (2022) explored the integration of surveillance systems and smart technologies in eco-tourism sites in Nigeria, reporting significant improvements in incident response times and threat detection. Additionally, Eze and Yusuf (2022) examined the impact of community-based security initiatives at eco-tourism destinations in East Africa. Their findings indicated that empowering local populations through education and employment opportunities significantly reduced incidences of theft and vandalism; moreover, fostering a sense of ownership among community members effectively deterred criminal activities. However, this paradigm shift necessitates a comprehensive understanding of local dynamics, because without such knowledge, the implemented strategies may falter. Although challenges remain, the evidence suggests a promising trajectory for enhancing security in these vulnerable regions.

The investigation elucidated five principal ramifications of security measures on the expansion and viability of both domestic and eco-tourism. All identified ramifications were assessed as above average by respondents. The elevated mean scores garnered suggest that these ramifications were considered apt for tackling security dilemmas in domestic and eco-tourism locales. These revelations align with those of Faulkner and Vikulov (2021), who underscored that perceptions of safety are vital because they significantly influence tourists' readiness to journey to particular destinations. Their inquiry illuminated that locales regarded as secure frequently witness augmented tourist influx, which enhances economic advantages for local communities and fosters sustainable tourism practices. Likewise, Bhatia and Ranjith (2022) depicted a favorable correlation between security measures enacted in eco-tourism regions and the overall visitor experience. Their research unearthed that eco-tourists exhibit a greater propensity to partake in endeavors such as wildlife observation, hiking and camping, although they feel secure. This heightened engagement not only bolsters the local economy but also facilitates conservation initiatives in these areas.

Furthermore, Kauffmann and Williams (2022) examined financial outcomes in destinations that prioritize security investments. They found that such areas attract more visitors and encourage longer stays; however, this boosts expenditures on local services. Additionally, the direct reinvestment of visitor spending into community projects and conservation initiatives underscores interconnectedness of security, tourism growth and sustainability. Although these findings are significant, they raise questions about the long-term implications for local economies, because the relationship is complex.

CONCLUSION

The research findings which are quite illuminating underscore the fact that the prevalence of kidnapping, banditry, communal conflicts and terrorism along with inadequate policing and socio-economic challenges significantly undermines domestic and eco-tourism in Nigeria. This occurs because such factors deter tourists and threaten the sustainability of destinations. However, effective security strategies for instance, technology-driven solutions and community-based initiatives play a critical role in enhancing tourist safety, as well as promoting destination appeal. Although these measures influence tourists' decisions to visit, they also foster a sense of security that encourages repeat visits and ensures long-term sustainability. Striking a balance between comprehensive security measures and maintaining a positive tourism experience is essential for fostering growth in Nigeria's domestic and eco-tourism sectors; this is because a secure environment is paramount for attracting visitors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, ensuing recommendations are articulated to address security challenges affecting domestic and eco-tourism in Nigeria:

1. Given the significant impact of security challenges such as kidnapping, banditry, and terrorism on tourism it is crucial to invest in better policing and security infrastructure. This includes increasing the presence of security personnel, implementing advanced surveillance systems, and enhancing counter-terrorism measures in popular tourist destinations. These efforts will address major security concerns and boost tourists' confidence in visiting.
2. The effectiveness of community-based security initiatives suggests that strengthening partnerships between the public sector, private tourism operators, and local communities can improve safety. Collaborative efforts should focus on training local communities in security practices, fostering tourism-friendly security policies, and enhancing public-private partnerships to maintain a safe and welcoming environment for tourists.
3. It is recommended that security measures be optimized to ensure safety without negatively impacting the enjoyment of tourists. Developing streamlined, non-intrusive security procedures that maintain high safety standards while preserving the visitor experience will help attract more tourists and improve their overall satisfaction with their travel experience.

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