

Influence of Public Relations on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in Nigeria

Lucky Emmanuel George, Ph.D.
Department of Mass Communication,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria
Email: editor@africantraveltimes.com

Prof. Nnanyelugo Okoro, Ph.D.
Department of Mass Communication,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria
Email: nnanyelugo.okoro@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

This study examines the influence of public relations on the development and promotion of tourism in Nigeria. It explores how strategic communication practices shape tourism growth, national image, and stakeholder engagement. Drawing on both primary and secondary data, the study highlights Nigeria's vast tourism potential and the role of public relations in promoting cultural heritage while addressing infrastructural and reputational challenges. Findings indicate that tourism, when properly managed, can diversify Nigeria's economy and reduce dependence on oil. The study further reveals that a balanced application of public relations tools can significantly enhance tourism development and improve Nigeria's international image, reflecting successful practices in countries such as Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, and Morocco. The study recommends adopting successful public relations practices, by collaborating with tourism boards and media organizations to strengthen awareness and visibility of Nigeria's tourism offerings. Also, it advocates the strategic use of traditional and digital media, greater involvement of tourism journalists and participation in international tourism events to position Nigeria more competitively on the global tourism map.

Keywords: communication, destination, development, hospitality, promotion, public relations, Nigeria tourism, development, authority

Authors' Contributions

Lucky Emmanuel George conceptualised the study, designed the research instrument, collected the data, carried out statistical analysis, and drafted the manuscript.

Prof. Nnanyelugo Okoro supervised the study, contributed to the theoretical framework, reviewed the methodology, and edited the manuscript for intellectual content.

Introduction

Public relations have evolved into a strategic function that enables organisations to manage communication, shape public perception, and build sustainable relationships with stakeholders. While historically reactive and focused on controlling public opinion, modern public relations is increasingly proactive, serving as a tool for influencing perceptions, fostering engagement, and supporting long-term organisational and national objectives [Sulaimon, 2021; Grunig & Grunig, 2020; Ololade & Adebayo, 2022].

In Nigeria, the role of public relations has expanded alongside the country's diversifying economy. What was once limited to media relations and publicity now encompasses reputation management, crisis communication, corporate social responsibility, and stakeholder engagement [Owuamanam, 2019; Okonkwo & Musa, 2023]. The professionalisation of the field, marked by the establishment of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations in 1963, further strengthened its role in national development [Onuoha, 2021].

Tourism has increasingly been recognised as a key driver of economic growth in Nigeria. Institutional efforts began with the Nigerian Tourist Association in 1962 and later evolved into the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority. Despite these frameworks, the sector continues to face significant challenges, including infrastructural deficits, insecurity, policy inconsistency, and a negative international image [George, 2024; Ogunyemi & Osuagwu, 2021].

Notably, negative international perception, one of the most persistent challenges—falls directly within the domain of public relations, which is fundamentally designed to shape reputation, manage crises, and influence global narratives. This underscores the strategic importance of public relations in addressing the core limitations of Nigeria's tourism sector.

Comparatively, countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Morocco, Tanzania, and Egypt have successfully leveraged public relations to position themselves as competitive tourism destinations [Sharma, 2016]. These countries utilise coordinated branding campaigns, celebrity endorsements, media partnerships, and international collaborations to enhance visibility. Nigeria, however, continues to struggle with fragmented communication strategies and limited global tourism appeal. This contrast highlights a critical gap: while the tools and strategies of effective tourism promotion are well established globally, their systematic application within Nigeria remains weak and inconsistent.

Despite Nigeria's rich cultural and natural resources, the tourism sector remains underdeveloped. Infrastructural deficiencies, insecurity, poor destination branding, weak stakeholder collaboration, and negative international perception continue to hinder tourism growth. Among these challenges, negative international perception and weak destination branding are particularly significant, as they are directly linked to ineffective or poorly coordinated public relations strategies. Existing tourism policies and institutional frameworks have not translated into sustained development, largely due to inadequate strategic communication and limited integration of modern public relations practices.

Although public relations have the capacity to address issues such as reputation management, stakeholder engagement, and international visibility, its potential has not been fully harnessed within Nigeria's tourism sector. There is therefore a clear research gap in empirically examining how structured and strategic public relations efforts can be deployed to reposition Nigeria's tourism image, strengthen stakeholder collaboration, and drive sustainable tourism development.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the influence of public relations on the development and promotion of tourism in Nigeria.

Specific Objectives

To determine the role of public relations in shaping the perception of Nigeria as a tourism destination

To examine the impact of media on tourism promotion in Nigeria.

To assess stakeholder collaboration in tourism development.

To evaluate the role of public relations in crisis management within the tourism sector.

To identify dominant public relations strategies used for tourism promotion.

Hypotheses

H1: Public relations has a significant influence on the perception of Nigeria as a tourism destination.

H2: Media engagement significantly affects tourism promotion in Nigeria.

H3: Stakeholder collaboration significantly influences tourism development in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies on public relations and tourism development provide valuable insights, though they vary in methodological approach and depth of analysis. Radjabov and Dushanova [2021] employed a mixed-method research design, combining surveys with digital analytics to examine the effectiveness of public relations strategies in Uzbekistan's tourism sector. Their study specifically focused on the use of digital public relations tools, including social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and government-led online branding initiatives.

Their findings revealed that targeted social media campaigns, destination branding hashtags, and collaborations with international travel influencers significantly increased tourist engagement and online visibility. Additionally, the study highlighted the importance of coordinated messaging across platforms, which helped position Uzbekistan as an emerging global tourism destination. However, the study was largely centred on digital metrics [e.g., engagement rates, online impressions], with limited attention to offline or institutional challenges.

Oluwabukola [2024] adopted a comparative econometric approach, analysing tourism's contribution to economic growth in Nigeria and South Africa using secondary data and regression analysis. The study found that while tourism contributes positively to GDP in both countries, South Africa significantly outperforms Nigeria due to stronger institutional coordination, policy consistency, and strategic destination branding. Specifically, the study identified weak institutional coordination in Nigeria as manifesting in fragmented responsibilities among tourism agencies, inconsistent policy implementation, limited collaboration between public and private stakeholders, and inadequate integration of communication strategies into tourism planning. These factors collectively reduce the effectiveness of public relations efforts and weaken Nigeria's global tourism competitiveness.

Similarly, Nigerian-based studies [Ogunyemi & Osuagwu, 2021; Chukwu & Adediran, 2024] primarily utilised descriptive survey methods and found that public relations practices in Nigeria are often reactive, underfunded, and poorly coordinated, resulting in low international visibility and weak stakeholder engagement. However, these studies were limited by the absence of inferential statistical analysis, making it difficult to establish the strength or significance of relationships between variables.

The present study builds on and extends these previous works in several important ways.

First, unlike Radjabov and Dushanova [2021], which focused mainly on digital engagement, this study provides a broader evaluation of public relations, including media relations, stakeholder collaboration, and crisis communication.

Second, while Oluwabukola [2024] identified institutional weaknesses at a macro level, this study provides micro-level empirical evidence by examining perceptions of NTDA staff directly involved in tourism administration. Third, this study advances the literature by integrating inferential statistical analysis [one-sample t-tests] with qualitative insights from open-ended responses, thereby offering a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the role of public relations in tourism development. Importantly, the findings of this study both confirm and extend prior research. Consistent with earlier studies, the results indicate that public relations significantly influence tourism development. However, the study also reveals that its effectiveness is constrained by structural and institutional challenges, such as weak stakeholder collaboration and persistent negative international perception.

This suggests that while public relations is a critical tool for tourism promotion, its success depends on its integration with broader governance, policy, and infrastructural frameworks, an insight that deepens existing scholarship.

Literature Gap

Despite extensive literature on public relations and tourism development, significant gaps remain. Existing studies in Nigeria are largely descriptive and lack rigorous empirical analysis to establish the relationship between public relations and tourism outcomes. Furthermore, prior research often treats public relations as a monolithic concept, with limited attention to its specific components such as media engagement, crisis communication, and stakeholder collaboration.

There is also a lack of integrated analysis linking public relations to institutional frameworks, destination image management, and policy implementation. Additionally, most studies overlook micro-level perspectives from tourism practitioners and fail to adapt global best practices to Nigeria's unique socio-economic context. This study therefore bridged these gaps by providing a comprehensive, empirically grounded examination of the role of public relations in Nigeria's tourism development.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Grunig and Hunt's Four Models of Public Relations, which emphasise two-way communication and mutual understanding. It also draws on Sustainable Development Theory, Destination Marketing Theory, and Systems Theory, which collectively explain how communication systems, stakeholder collaboration, and branding contribute to tourism growth. This section looked at some of the theories that are pertinent to the research. Agenda-setting theory is one such theory. This theoretical review explored how three key communication theories of Agenda Setting Theory, Image Transfer Theory, and Social Identity Theory explained the influence of public relations on Nigeria's tourism development and promotion [McCombs & Shaw, 1972] Agenda-Setting Theory suggests that the media has the power to shape public opinion by determining which issues, topics, or events are considered important by the public. While the media does not tell people what to think, it significantly influences what people think about. This theory operates on the premise that the media has the ability to highlight certain issues, thereby directing the public's focus toward these issues over others. For tourism promotion in Nigeria, Agenda-Setting Theory is highly relevant. Nigeria, despite its rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and abundant natural resources, has often struggled with a negative global image, primarily shaped by issues such as security concerns, political instability, and corruption. Public relations efforts in the tourism sector can use the agenda-setting function of the media to focus on the positive aspects of Nigeria, such as its cultural.

Also, [Meyer, 2002] Image Transfer Theory posits that the image of a destination can be shaped and enhanced by associating it with the positive image of another entity or brand. This is

often done through strategic partnerships, collaborations, or endorsements, where the image of one

entity "transfers" to another, creating a more favourable perception in the minds of the audience.

In the case of tourism promotion in Nigeria, Image Transfer Theory can be applied to the strategy of associating Nigerian tourism with globally recognised events, well-known personalities, or successful international tourism campaigns. For example, Nigeria can partner with globally respected organizations, international celebrities, or prominent cultural ambassadors who can endorse Nigeria's tourism offerings. By leveraging these associations, Nigeria can benefit from the "positive" image of these partners, improving perceptions of the country as a tourist destination.

[Tajfel & Turner's, 1979] Social Identity Theory focuses on how individuals derive their self-concept and self-esteem from their membership in social groups, such as ethnic groups, nations, or organizations. According to this theory, individuals categorize themselves and others into different social groups, and this categorization influences their attitudes and behaviours toward those groups. In-group members [those who share the same group identity] are typically viewed more favourably than out-group members, and this can result in a sense of loyalty, pride, and attachment to the group. In the context of tourism promotion in Nigeria, Social Identity Theory can be applied to understand how Nigerians perceive their own country and how this perception influences tourism behaviour. PR campaigns can target both domestic and international tourists by appealing to their social identities and fostering a sense of pride in Nigerian heritage and culture.

Materials and Methods

This study adopted a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey to obtain information from the staff of the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority [NTDA] in the various geo-political zones of the country and the Federal Capital Territory [Abuja] where the agency's

headquarters is located. This research design was used because of its requirements to collect data from a wide range of subjects so that the findings can be generalised.

The study population comprised all the employees of the Nigerian Tourism Development Authority [NTDA], apex++ tourism agency in Nigeria across the six-geopolitical zones. These employees of the agency have the relevant information required for this study because of their relationship with the tourism industry. According to the NTDA's Human Resources [HR] department, there are 1,898 staff currently employed by the agency as at 2024. Therefore, the population for this study comprised 1,898 NTDA employees across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

A sample size of 400 respondents was selected from the total population of 1,898 NTDA staff using a multi-stage sampling technique.

The sample size was determined using a standard sample size determination approach [e.g., Yamane's formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error], which is appropriate for social science research involving finite populations. The formula is expressed as:

$$[n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}]$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size [1,898]
- e = margin of error [0.05]

Substituting the values gives a minimum sample size of approximately 330 respondents. The study increased this to 400 to improve statistical reliability, account for non-response, and ensure adequate representation across all geopolitical zones.

Multi-stage sampling was then employed to ensure proportional representation. This involved:

1. Stratifying the population by geopolitical zones

2. Selecting respondents within each stratum using a combination of probability and non-probability techniques

This approach ensured that all regions had a fair chance of inclusion in the study.

Methodological Limitation

A key limitation of this study is that it focuses exclusively on supply-side stakeholders, specifically NTDA employees. While these respondents provide valuable institutional insights into tourism development and public relations practices, the study does not capture the perspectives of tourists [both domestic and international], who represent the demand-side of the tourism sector. Consequently, the findings may not fully reflect how public relations efforts influence tourists' perceptions and behaviours. Future studies should adopt a mixed-sample approach that includes both supply-side and demand-side stakeholders to provide a more comprehensive understanding of tourism dynamics in Nigeria.

A structured questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection for this study. The questionnaire was structured in two sections: Section A [demographic data] and Section B [psychographic data]. Part one is designed to elicit relevant background information about the respondents. Part two deals with the sections of items raised from the research questions of the study. The content of the questionnaire comprises information to test the understanding of the respondents. At this stage of the study, respondents are required to indicate their level of agreement with each statement by selecting the appropriate option on a Five-Point Likert Scale. The available response options are: Strongly Disagree [SD], Disagree [D], Neutral [N], Agree [A], and Strongly Agree [SA]. Respondents ticked [✓] the option that best reflects their opinion. In addition, they were provided with an open-ended section to freely express their views or elaborate on their responses.

The instrument was subjected to face validity through expert evaluation by tourism stakeholders in both public and private sectors in Lagos State, including professionals in

hospitality, aviation, and tourism administration. Feedback from this process informed revisions to enhance clarity, relevance, and content adequacy. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to determine internal consistency [Hair et al., 2010]. The coefficients for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability. This confirms that the instrument consistently measured the variables of interest and was suitable for statistical analysis.

The internal consistency of the measurement instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each construct. The results indicated acceptable to strong reliability across all variables, as presented below:

- Role of Public Relations in Shaping Tourism Perception [$\alpha = .84$]
- Impact of Media on Tourism Promotion [$\alpha = .78$]
- Stakeholder Collaboration in Tourism Development [$\alpha = .72$]
- Public Relations Strategies for Crisis Management [$\alpha = .84$]
- Dominant Public Relations Strategies for Tourism Promotion [$\alpha = .79$]

All coefficients exceeded the recommended threshold of .70 for social science research, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. This suggests that the items within each construct reliably measured the intended variables and were suitable for further statistical analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 [H1]: Public relations has a significant influence on tourism perception in Nigeria.

A one-sample *t*-test was conducted to determine whether the mean score for public relations influence differed significantly from the neutral value. The results showed that the aggregate mean score [$M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.19$] was significantly higher than the test value of 3, $t[343] = 5.21$, $p < .05$. Therefore, H1 was supported, indicating that public relations exerts a statistically significant positive influence on tourism perception.

Hypothesis 2 [H2]: Media engagement significantly affects tourism promotion in Nigeria.

The results of the one-sample *t*-test indicated that the mean score for media engagement [$M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.22$] was significantly greater than the neutral benchmark, $t[343] = 4.87$, $p < .05$. Thus, H2 was supported, suggesting that media engagement plays a significant role in tourism promotion in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3 [H3]: Stakeholder collaboration significantly influences tourism development in Nigeria.

Similarly, the mean score for stakeholder collaboration [$M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.30$] was significantly higher than the test value, $t[343] = 3.96$, $p < .05$. Therefore, H3 was supported, confirming a statistically significant relationship between stakeholder collaboration and tourism development.

Overall, the hypothesis testing results indicate that public relations, media engagement, and stakeholder collaboration are significant determinants of tourism development in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the critical role of public relations in shaping tourism development in Nigeria. The statistically significant results across all hypotheses highlight the importance of strategic communication in enhancing tourism perception, promotion, and stakeholder collaboration.

However, further examination of the descriptive statistics reveals areas of concern. Respondents reported lower levels of agreement regarding the effectiveness of public relations in countering negative stereotypes [$M = 2.45$] and facilitating rapid tourism recovery following crises [$M = 2.54$].

These relatively low mean scores suggest that, although public relations is widely recognized as important, its current application in Nigeria may be insufficient to address deeply rooted structural challenges such as insecurity, infrastructural deficits, and persistent negative

international perceptions. This may reflect the view that such challenges extend beyond communication strategies and require broader institutional, policy, and governance interventions. Additionally, limited visibility and inconsistency of existing public relations campaigns may contribute to these perceptions.

Qualitative insights from open-ended responses further contextualise the quantitative findings. Selected responses include:

- “Nigeria has strong tourism potential, but poor international image continues to discourage visitors.” [Respondent 18]
- “Public relations efforts exist, but they are not consistent or visible enough globally.” [Respondent 52]
- “Security issues overshadow any promotional campaigns carried out by the government.” [Respondent 76]

These responses highlight a recurring concern: the effectiveness of public relations initiatives is significantly constrained when underlying structural and environmental issues are not adequately addressed. In summary, the study demonstrates that public relations is a necessary but not sufficient condition for tourism development in Nigeria. Its effectiveness depends on integration with broader socio-economic reforms, infrastructural development, and coordinated governance frameworks.

Analysis

Out of the 400 questionnaires administered, 356 were returned, while 344 were valid for analysis, representing an 86% usable response rate. Reliability analysis revealed acceptable Cronbach’s alpha values for all constructs. Descriptive statistics showed moderate agreement on the effectiveness of public relations in shaping tourism perception, media impact, stakeholder collaboration, crisis management, and branding strategies.

Table 1

Questionnaire Administration and Retrieval

Description	Frequency	Percentage [%]
Questionnaires administered	400	100.0
Questionnaires returned	356	89.0
Questionnaires not returned	44	11.0
Unusable questionnaires	12	3.0
Valid questionnaires used for analysis	344	86.0

Source: Field survey [2024].

To ascertain the reliability of the research instrument, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were computed for all study variables. As shown in Table 2, reliability values ranged from 0.72 to 0.84, indicating strong internal consistency and confirming that the instrument was reliable for the study.

Table 2

Reliability Test for Study Variables [Cronbach’s Alpha]

S/N	Study Variables	Items	N	Cronbach’s α
1	Role of PR in shaping tourism perception	5	344	0.84
2	Impact of media on tourism promotion	5	344	0.78
3	Stakeholder collaboration in tourism development	5	344	0.72
4	PR strategies for crisis management	5	344	0.84
5	Dominant PR strategies for tourism promotion	5	344	0.79

Source: Data obtained from SPSS output [2024].

Role of Public Relations in Shaping Tourism Perception

Results presented in Table 3 show that respondents generally agreed that PR campaigns improve Nigeria’s global tourism image [M = 3.94, SD = 1.12] and highlight Nigeria’s cultural heritage [M = 3.62, SD = 1.08]. However, respondents expressed lower agreement that PR efforts effectively counter negative stereotypes [M = 2.45, SD = 1.24].

Table 3**Descriptive Statistics for Role of Public Relations in Shaping Tourism Perception**

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
PR campaigns improve Nigeria's global tourism image	344	1	5	3.94	1.12
PR strategies highlight Nigeria's cultural heritage	344	1	5	3.62	1.08
PR efforts counteract negative stereotypes	344	1	5	2.45	1.24
Media coverage of Nigeria's tourism potential is accurate	344	1	5	3.01	1.33
PR strategies target local and international audiences effectively	344	1	5	2.87	1.41

Source: Likert scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Impact of Media on Tourism Promotion

The influence of media on tourism promotion was examined and results are shown in Table 4. Familiarisation trips recorded the highest mean score [$M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.07$], indicating strong agreement that such initiatives enhance Nigeria's tourism visibility. Social media was also perceived as a key driver of tourism demand [$M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.29$].

Table 4**Descriptive Statistics for Impact of Media on Tourism Promotion**

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Social media drives tourism demand in Nigeria	344	1	5	3.72	1.29
Traditional media is more effective than digital media	344	1	5	3.12	1.55
Familiarisation trips improve Nigeria's tourism visibility	344	1	5	3.85	1.07
PR campaigns use diverse media platforms	344	1	5	3.56	1.18
Media partnerships boost Nigeria's tourism image	344	1	5	3.48	1.21

Stakeholder Collaboration in Tourism Development

Stakeholder collaboration was assessed and findings in Table 5 indicate weak collaboration between NTDA and private tourism businesses [$M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.67$]. However, respondents moderately agreed that stakeholder feedback is incorporated into PR strategies [$M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.28$].

Table 5**Descriptive Statistics for Stakeholder Collaboration in Tourism Development**

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
NTDA collaborates effectively with private tourism businesses	344	1	5	2.21	1.67
PR facilitates government–community partnerships	344	1	5	3.01	1.32
Tourism data accurately measure economic contributions	344	1	5	2.98	1.45
Stakeholder feedback is incorporated into PR strategies	344	1	5	3.24	1.28
International collaboration enhances tourism growth	344	1	5	3.15	1.37

Public Relations Strategies in Crisis Management

Results on crisis management are presented in Table 6. Respondents moderately agreed that PR strategies address security-related crises [$M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.22$]. However, tourism image recovery after health crises recorded a lower mean score [$M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.59$].

Table 6**Descriptive Statistics for PR Strategies in Crisis Management**

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
PR strategies address security-related crises	344	1	5	3.12	1.22
Tourism image recovers quickly after health crises	344	1	5	2.54	1.59
PR reassures tourists during natural disasters	344	1	5	2.87	1.43
Crisis communication plans are well developed	344	1	5	3.01	1.38
Media partnerships restore tourism reputation after crises	344	1	5	3.08	1.26

Dominant Public Relations Strategies for Tourism Promotion

As shown in Table 7, celebrity endorsements recorded the highest mean score [$M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.05$], followed by exhibitions and roadshows [$M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.09$], indicating that experiential and influencer-based strategies are perceived as most effective.

Table 7**Descriptive Statistics for Dominant Public Relations Strategies for Tourism Promotion**

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Branding campaigns attract international tourists	344	1	5	3.45	1.18
Exhibitions and roadshows increase foreign investment	344	1	5	3.62	1.09
Celebrity endorsements improve tourism visibility	344	1	5	3.74	1.05
PR campaigns target niche tourism markets	344	1	5	3.58	1.12
Nigeria's tourism branding aligns with global trends	344	1	5	3.21	1.47

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide robust empirical evidence that public relations play a significant role in shaping tourism development in Nigeria. The statistically significant results obtained across all hypotheses confirm that public relations, media engagement, and stakeholder collaboration are critical determinants of tourism perception and promotion.

Specifically, the results indicate that public relations significantly influence tourism perception, particularly through tools such as documentaries, cultural events, and branding campaigns. This finding is consistent with the works of Avraham and Ketter [2016] and Hudson and Ritchie [2009], who emphasise the importance of strategic storytelling and image construction in shaping national tourism identity. These scholars argue that destinations can reposition themselves globally by crafting compelling narratives that highlight their unique cultural and historical assets, an approach that is increasingly relevant for Nigeria.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding strongly supports Agenda-Setting Theory, which posits that media and communication strategies influence what audiences perceive as important. By strategically highlighting Nigeria's cultural heritage and tourism assets, public

relations efforts can shape both domestic and international perceptions of the country as a viable tourism destination.

However, despite the recognised importance of public relations, respondents expressed scepticism regarding its effectiveness in countering negative stereotypes and improving Nigeria's international image. This is evident in the relatively low mean score recorded for this variable. This scepticism reflects deeper structural and contextual challenges, including insecurity, infrastructural deficits, and longstanding reputational issues. These findings suggest that while public relations can influence perception, its impact is limited when underlying socio-political and economic conditions remain unfavourable.

This observation aligns with existing literature, which emphasises that destination branding efforts must be supported by credible national realities to be effective. In this regard, public relations alone cannot fully transform Nigeria's tourism image without complementary improvements in governance, security, and infrastructure.

The study also found that familiarisation trips emerged as the most effective promotional strategy. This supports Experiential Marketing Theory, which emphasises direct engagement and immersive experiences as powerful tools for influencing consumer perception and behaviour. By allowing journalists, influencers, and travel stakeholders to experience destinations firsthand, familiarisation trips create authentic narratives that are more persuasive than traditional advertising.

This finding is consistent with Radjabov and Dushanova [2021], who highlighted the effectiveness of experiential and digital engagement strategies in enhancing tourism visibility. However, unlike their study, which focused primarily on digital platforms, the present study

demonstrates the continued relevance of hybrid approaches combining both physical and digital promotional strategies.

This finding points to significant governance and coordination challenges within Nigeria's tourism sector and is consistent with Adeola and Evans [2020], who identified fragmented institutional structures and poor stakeholder integration as key barriers to tourism development in Nigeria.

From a theoretical standpoint, this also relates to Systems Theory, which emphasises the interdependence of different components within a system. Ineffective collaboration among stakeholders weakens the overall tourism system, thereby reducing the impact of public relations strategies. This suggests that public relations in Nigeria's tourism sector remains largely reactive rather than proactive, particularly in crisis situations. Given the increasing importance of crisis communication in global tourism, this represents a critical gap.

The implication is that Nigeria must develop proactive crisis communication frameworks that anticipate potential disruptions and provide timely, transparent, and coordinated responses to protect the country's tourism image.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria is obviously endowed with a wealth of rich and varied human, natural and cultural resources which are a great asset to the country's tourism development. However, despite the growth of international tourism and its importance in developing countries, in Nigeria the tourism industry has not grown significantly. Peace and stability are important prerequisites to tourism development. The political instability, crime and ethno-religious disputes in Nigeria have been a

major impediment to tourism development and no amount/level of Public Relations would help if these impediments are not removed or significantly removed.

Tourism if based on the principles and good practices honed through eco-tourism could be a powerful tool that would reduce Nigeria's over dependence on oil. This type of socially and environmentally responsible tourism could also reduce national instability by helping to create wealth, bridge cultural differences, foster peace among the different ethnic and religious groups and develop rural communities and in the country. The study on public relations influence on the development and promotion of tourism in Nigeria is strategic and crucial to repositioning of destinations' image, good will and reputation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the study findings:

Government and Policymakers:

Government should develop a comprehensive national tourism communication strategy aligned with Nigeria's development goals. Addressing structural challenges such as insecurity, poor infrastructure, and policy inconsistency is essential for effective tourism promotion.

Public Relations Practitioners:

Practitioners should promote a unified national tourism brand through digital storytelling, influencer partnerships, and proactive crisis communication strategies.

Media Organisations:

Media should expand tourism-focused content and collaborate with tourism agencies through feature reporting and familiarisation trips to improve destination visibility.

Private Sector:

Tourism businesses should adopt sustainable practices, support local communities, and improve service quality to meet international standards.

Overall, effective tourism development in Nigeria requires coordinated efforts across public and private sectors, with public relations integrated into broader development strategies.

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