
Building an Integrated Framework for Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development in Nigeria: Evidence from Policy, Infrastructure, and Community Livelihoods

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Abstract

Nigeria boasts one of the most rich cultural heritage landscapes in Africa, including more than 250 ethnic groups, globally known festivals, archaeological sites, museums, sacred groves, and traditional institutions. In spite of all the assets mentioned above, the cultural tourism industry of the country is underdeveloped and makes little contribution to economic diversification in comparison with other top tourism destinations in Africa and Asia. Previous researches have focused on separate aspects such as tourism policy, infrastructure, heritage conservation, community participation, and destination competitiveness without paying much attention to interactions between them in the context of industrial development. This paper presents a developed and validated model of sustainable cultural tourism development, which involves the analysis of impacts of tourism policy, infrastructure, heritage management, community participation, and digital tourism on sustainable cultural tourism development and destination competitiveness in Nigeria. The research employs a sequential explanatory mixed-method design; quantitative data have been gathered via survey among 1,200 tourists in four geo-cultural tourism clusters in Nigeria, while qualitative data have been collected via 40 interviews with key informants including policymakers, heritage managers, tourism operators, investors, and community representatives. SEM analysis was used in testing the hypotheses alongside thematic analysis and cultural assets mapping using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Results indicate that tourism infrastructure, policy coherence, heritage management, digital tourism, and community participation increase sustainable cultural tourism development, leading to increased destination competitiveness and livelihoods improvement. GIS analysis also shows significant spatial differences in infrastructure and access to cultural tourism destinations. This research makes contributions to tourism literature by incorporating theories such as Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, Stakeholder Theory, Institutional Theory, Tourism Area Life Cycle and Resource-Based View Theory within one analysis. An evidence-based policy approach is also presented in the paper that could be adopted by policymakers and other stakeholders when turning cultural heritage into a sustainable tool of economic diversification and cultural preservation. Implications of this research could be useful for tourism governance in developing countries aiming at sustainable development via cultural tourism.

Keywords: Sustainable cultural tourism; tourism policy; tourism infrastructure; destination competitiveness; digital tourism

1. Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the most important sectors in the modern economy, as it contributes significantly to employment creation, foreign exchange income generation, infrastructure development, regional integration, and inclusive economic growth. As indicated by UN Tourism (2025), global tourism has recovered and is performing better than before in many parts of the world post-pandemic, indicating the significance of tourism in sustainable economic development. Of all the types of tourism, cultural tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing types, due to an increased demand for experience-based tourism that includes heritage sites, festivals, indigenous cultures, historical landscapes, arts, architecture, cuisine, and lifestyle (Richards, 2021).

The importance of cultural tourism indicates the changing thinking in development economics, where culture is not considered only as a social good, but also as an economic good which has potential for creating employment, promoting entrepreneurship, establishing place identity, and promoting sustainable livelihoods. Some countries such as India, South Africa, Morocco, Spain, and Kenya have proved that through coordinated efforts in heritage preservation, infrastructure development, technology use, destination marketing, and participation of the local communities, cultural resources can be converted into a successful tourism industry.

It is worth noting that the guiding principles of sustainable cultural tourism are well aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDGs 8, 11, 12, and 17. In contrast to focusing on short-term economic gains, sustainable cultural tourism is based on balanced development in which economic sustainability, environmental protection, culture conservation, and social inclusion co-exist (UNESCO, 2023). Modern tourism research pays increasing attention to the fact that sustainable tourism needs well-coordinated governance systems, robust infrastructure, community empowerment, innovations in technology, and good institutional cooperation (Hall, 2020; UN Tourism, 2025).

Nigeria enjoys considerable comparative advantages in creating an internationally competitive cultural tourism industry. It should be noted that Nigeria has more than 250 ethnic groups, over 500 indigenous languages, various traditional institutions, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, archaeology, museums, sacred lands, internationally known festivals, and different kinds of art. Examples of cultural destinations are the Osun–Osogbo Sacred Grove, Sukur Cultural Landscape, Argungu International Fishing Festival, Calabar Carnival, Kano Durbar Festival, Nok Terracotta heritage sites, Badagry Slave Route, Benin cultural heritage, Igbo-Ukwu archaeology. All these assets form a solid basis for economic diversification and cultural diplomacy.

While the country boasts an abundance of cultural endowments, it has not been able to tap into its tourism potential yet. The contribution of tourism to the development of the economy of the country is lower than in some other countries, for instance, Kenya, South Africa, and India (Aremu, 2022; OECD, 2023; UN Tourism, 2025). It has been shown that the underperformance in terms of tourism is associated with a lack of policy integration, poor infrastructure, destination management, lack of digital transformation, investment, institutional coordination, security, and community involvement. Due to the above structural barriers, Nigeria is not able to leverage its cultural legacy and transform it into an attractive industry.

Another problem of the existing literature is associated with the fragmented approach to tourism development research. While empirical studies typically focus on separate aspects of tourism development, namely infrastructure, governance, cultural heritage preservation, or community involvement, they do not explore how these aspects interact to facilitate sustainable tourism development. Thus, there is a lack of empirical evidence that could prove that integrated policy frameworks are necessary to address all the aforementioned issues.

To overcome such weaknesses, a holistic perspective on analysing the tourism sector is needed by realising the fact that tourism itself is a socio-economic system rather than a set of unrelated events. Sustainable tourism operations are highly contingent on coordinated interactions between public organisations, private companies, local communities, technology systems, and heritage assets. To develop tourism policy to facilitate national development goals, it is important to comprehend such interaction mechanisms.

In this connection, the current research presents an evidence-based analysis on the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Nigeria. Namely, this study looks into the impacts of tourism policy, tourism infrastructure, community participation, heritage management, and digital tourism on the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Nigeria. This research uses a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach by conducting SEM, stakeholder interviews, and GIS asset mapping.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sustainable Cultural Tourism

Sustainable cultural tourism has emerged as one of the most prominent paradigms in today's tourism research field due to its ability to incorporate economic development with cultural protection, environmental sustainability, and social inclusiveness. In contrast with traditional tourism, which is usually driven by numbers and short-term profit maximisation, sustainable cultural tourism aims at preservation of heritage resources alongside welfare improvement of host communities and destination sustainability (Richards, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). As such, it is seen as a promising way to foster inclusive growth, especially in developing countries that have an abundance of cultural resources but lack industrial diversification.

The idea draws upon the principles of sustainable development formulated by the UN and acknowledges the fact that culture is both a public good and productive economic asset. Accordingly, sustainable cultural tourism calls for a proper balance of heritage preservation, guest satisfaction, environmental protection, institutional performance, and involvement in local economic activities (UN Tourism, 2025). Past studies showed that destinations able to successfully combine those factors tend to be more resilient and attractive to investments, and enjoy better image and community support (Hall, 2020).

There is immense potential for sustainable cultural tourism development within Nigeria owing to its great cultural diversity, traditional institutions, festivals, archaeology, museums and knowledge systems. Nonetheless, there has been underutilization of this potential owing to a lack of coordination within institutions, poor infrastructure, poor implementation of policies, inadequate investment, lack of digital integration and poor community participation (Aremu, 2022). This implies that sustainable tourism development necessitates interventions in several sectors, not just within the tourism sector.

2.2 Tourism Policies and Sustainable Cultural Tourism

Tourism policies constitute the institutional framework for sustainable tourism development. Good tourism policies make priorities, coordinate institutional roles, provide investment incentives, regulate heritage conservation, improve destination governance and encourage stakeholder cooperation (Hall, 2020). In countries where tourism is an important contributor to economic development, good policies have played an important role in bringing tourism together with infrastructure, environment, transport, culture, education and digital change.

In contrast, fragmented policy environments tend to result in duplication of institutions, inconsistency in implementation, regulatory uncertainty, and inefficiency in the allocation of public resources. These factors hinder private investments and reduce destination competitiveness. Current tourism policies in Nigeria recognise the importance of tourism in economic diversification but have been plagued by poor implementation in the past because of overlapping mandates of institutions, inadequate budget, and lack of effective monitoring systems (Nwosu, 2016; Aremu, 2022).

According to Institutional Theory, governance structures that are cohesive increase organisational efficiency because of reduced uncertainty and coordinated decision-making (Scott, 2014). Likewise, Stakeholder Theory also holds that policy success is contingent upon coordination between different stakeholders, including government agencies, private investors, local communities, and tourism organisations (Freeman, 1984). Overall, these theories imply that cohesive tourism policy will lead to sustainable cultural tourism development.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The current study utilized the sequential explanatory mixed-methods research design, which uses the quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry in two phases. This research design was chosen due to the multidimensional nature of sustainable cultural tourism and its economic, institutional, socio-cultural, infrastructural, environmental, and governance facets, which cannot be explained through a unidimensional approach. As Creswell (2023) recommend, the study started by collecting quantitative data to determine relationships between the research variables and proceeded to use qualitative methodologies to explain the obtained results.

In the quantitative phase, the focus was on the measurement of stakeholder perceptions related to tourism policy, tourism infrastructure, community involvement, heritage management, digital tourism, destination competitiveness, and sustainable cultural tourism development. In the qualitative phase, key stakeholders were interviewed to explain the quantitative results, reveal implementation difficulties, and propose recommendations for the suggested industrial blueprint.

3.2 Study Area

This research was carried out in four geo-cultural tourism clusters. They include:

- North-West cluster: Kano and Argungu, representing traditional festivals, emirate culture, crafts and architecture.
- South-West cluster: Osogbo and Badagry, representing sacred heritage, history tourism, Yoruba culture and UNESCO heritage attractions.

- South-South cluster: Calabar, representing festival tourism, cultural entertainment and performing arts.
- South-East cluster: Enugu, representing museums, masquerade traditions, indigenous art and Igbo culture.

These were selected because they reflect the most important cultural tourism resources in Nigeria.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study was mainly divided into two broad groups of respondents. The first group of respondents were domestic and foreign tourists who visited the selected cultural tourism destinations. The respondents provided data on destination attractiveness, tourist satisfaction, infrastructure, culture authenticity, digital connectivity, and destination competitiveness.

The second group included tourism stakeholders such as officials from the Federal Ministry of Art, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy; state tourism boards; the National Commission for Museums and Monuments; museum directors; community representatives; traditional institutions; tourism investors; hospitality managers; tour operators; private investors; and tourism researchers.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Strategy

The quantitative sample comprised 1,200 tourist participants, with 300 tourists from each of the four geo-cultural tourism clusters. The sample size is appropriate in line with the guidelines by Hair et al. (2022) on structural equation modelling, which suggests that large samples should be used in SEM studies for obtaining stable parameters and adequate statistical power.

The qualitative sample comprised 40 key informants chosen through purposive sampling based on their experience and roles in formulating tourism policies, managing cultural heritage resources, planning destinations, community leadership, private sector investments in tourism, and research in the field. The sample size was adequate for attaining thematic saturation.

Mixed sampling strategies were employed. Stratified random sampling was applied to ensure representation of all four tourism clusters proportionally. Systematic sampling was done within each tourism destination by picking up every fifth tourist who was willing to take part in the questionnaire. Purposive sampling was conducted to choose key informants knowledgeable about the purpose of the study.

3.5 Instruments Used for Data Collection

Different data collection instruments were used to collect quantitative, qualitative, documentary, and geographical data. The structured questionnaire was the main quantitative instrument used. The questionnaire had five parts that included respondents' demographics, experiences in cultural tourism, tourism infrastructure, tourism policy and governance, community participation, digital tourism, heritage management, and sustainable cultural tourism outcomes. Responses were measured on the Likert Scale, which had a range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The semi-structured interview was the main tool used in the qualitative phase of the research. The interview covered different aspects such as implementation of tourism policy, coordination among institutions, infrastructure shortages, heritage conservation, investment environment, digital transformation, community participation, and priorities for future development. GIS field observation checklist was used to obtain geographical coordinates, accessibility, condition of infrastructure, heritage conservation, visitor facilities, and tourism potential of the important cultural sites. GIS data was used in the development of the Digital Cultural Tourism Asset Atlas.

A document analysis guide was also used in analysing different documents such as national tourism policies, heritage laws, strategic development plans, and international tourism reports.

3.8 Procedure for Data Collection

Approval from the ethics committee was sought before the beginning of fieldwork. Training of research assistants was done on the administration of questionnaires, conduct of interviews, ethical considerations and procedure for collecting GIS data.

The questionnaires were distributed physically to the tourists at the chosen destinations while interviews were conducted personally. Interviews were taped with the permission of the respondents and later transcribed verbatim.

GIS data were collected through GPS equipment and fed into ArcGIS software for spatial analysis. Policy papers, development documents and institutional reports were also studied to supplement the primary data.

3.10 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 29) with descriptive statistical analysis, such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations.

Preliminary analyses included checking for missing values, outliers, normality, and multicollinearity.

To test the hypotheses about relationships between latent variables, a structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis was conducted using AMOS 28. The analysis was based on a two-stage process suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). At first, the measurement model was tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Next, the structural model was estimated. Adequacy of the SEM was estimated using multiple goodness-of-fit indices: Chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

Qualitative interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis and supported by NVivo software. Interviews were coded and categorized according to themes which were then interpreted in combination with the results of quantitative data analysis.

Spatial data obtained from GIS survey were analyzed using ArcGIS Pro. The spatial analysis included cultural assets mapping, accessibility analysis, infrastructure assessment, hotspot detection, and tourism clusters analysis. The GIS outputs informed the development of a Digital Cultural Tourism Asset Atlas, which constituted one of the principal outputs of the study.

3.11 Specification of Structural Equation Model

The conceptual model suggested that Tourism Policy (TP), Tourism Infrastructure (TI), Community Participation (CP), Heritage Management (HM), and Digital Tourism (DT) were exogenous latent variables which affect Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development (SCTD). In turn, SCTD was expected to positively affect Destination Competitiveness (DC) and Community Livelihoods (CL).

Structural relationships examined in the research were:

H1: Tourism Policy positively affects Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development.

H2: Tourism Infrastructure positively affects Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development.

H3: Community Participation positively affects Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development.

H4: Heritage Management positively affects Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development.

H5: Digital Tourism positively affects Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development.

H6: Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development positively affects Destination Competitiveness.

H7: Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development positively affects Community Livelihoods.

Model evaluation was based on the widely accepted criteria for SEM models: $\chi^2/df < 5.0$, $CFI \geq 0.90$, $TLI \geq 0.90$, $RMSEA \leq 0.08$, $SRMR \leq 0.08$ (Hair et al., 2022). These analytical methods provided empirical grounds for the examination of the factors affecting sustainable cultural tourism development and the formation of the proposed National Industrial Blueprint for Nigeria.

4. Results

4.1 Assessment of Measurement Model

The assessment of the measurement model was done using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) following the recommendations of Hair et al. (2022). In the assessment, reliability and validity of the latent constructs of Tourism Policy (TP), Tourism Infrastructure (TI), Community Participation (CP), Heritage Management (HM), Digital Tourism (DT), Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development (SCTD), Destination Competitiveness (DC), and Community Livelihoods (CL) were tested.

Standardised factor loadings for all the constructs were found to be above the recommended level of 0.70, with the lowest being 0.718 and the highest being 0.914, indicating that the observed indicators adequately represented the constructs. CR values varied between 0.84 and 0.93, while Cronbach's alpha coefficients varied between 0.81 and 0.92, suggesting good internal consistency. Moreover, AVE values for all the constructs were above the minimum recommendation of 0.50, showing good convergent validity. Discriminant validity was confirmed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, in which the square root of AVE values was found to be greater than the correlations of the constructs with other constructs.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity Statistics

Construct	Alpha	CR	AVE
Tourism Policy	0.87	0.90	0.69
Tourism Infrastructure	0.89	0.91	0.72
Community Participation	0.84	0.88	0.65
Heritage Management	0.86	0.89	0.68
Digital Tourism	0.88	0.91	0.71
Sustainable Cultural Tourism	0.91	0.93	0.76
Destination Competitiveness	0.89	0.92	0.74
Community Livelihoods	0.85	0.89	0.67

Based on the findings from the CFA analysis, the measurement model exhibits appropriate psychometric characteristics and can be used to estimate the structural model.

4.2 Testing of the Structural Model

The structural model was estimated using AMOS 28. Model fit indexes revealed good model-data fit.

Table 2. Structural Model Goodness-of-Fit

Fit Index	Recommended	Obtained
χ^2/df	<5.00	2.41
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.946
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.938
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.048
SRMR	≤ 0.08	0.041

It is evident from the findings that the integrated conceptual model appropriately represents the relationships between the variables used in the study.

4.3 SEM Analysis Results

Positive statistically significant relationships were found between the major constructs through SEM analysis.

Table 3. Structural Model Results

Hypothesis Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1 TP $\rightarrow$ SCTD	0.32	7.18	<0.001	Supported
H2 TI $\rightarrow$ SCTD	0.41	8.63	<0.001	Supported
H3 CP $\rightarrow$ SCTD	0.29	6.42	<0.001	Supported
H4 HM $\rightarrow$ SCTD	0.27	5.97	<0.001	Supported
H5 DT $\rightarrow$ SCTD	0.34	7.51	<0.001	Supported
H6 SCTD $\rightarrow$ DC	0.68	13.44	<0.001	Supported
H7 SCTD $\rightarrow$ CL	0.61	11.98	<0.001	Supported

Tourism Infrastructure had the highest direct impact on Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development ($\beta = 0.41$), followed by Digital Tourism ($\beta = 0.34$) and Tourism Policy ($\beta = 0.32$). On its part, Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development had a high positive impact on Destination Competitiveness ($\beta = 0.68$) and Community Livelihoods ($\beta = 0.61$).

The model accounted for 72% of the variance in Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development, 64% of the variance in Destination Competitiveness, and 58% of the variance in Community Livelihoods.

4.4 GIS Analysis

Spatial analysis showed considerable variation in regional distribution and accessibility to and infrastructural status of Nigeria's cultural tourism resources. More than 250 cultural tourism resources were mapped in the four geo-cultural regions and they included heritage sites, museums, sacred groves, historical monuments, traditional festivals, craft centers, and archaeological landscapes.

South-West region had the highest number of international heritage sites such as Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Badagry Heritage Corridor. North-West region stood out for its festival and historical urban landscapes while South-South region had high potential for festival tourism with Calabar Carnival being the focal point. In South-East region, there were cultural resources like museums, masquerade and archaeological resources.

Accessibility analysis showed that more than 46% of the cultural tourism resources identified are linked through roads in poor or moderate condition while digital infrastructures like online information systems and virtual tours were not available in many destinations. Some of the heritage sites did not have adequate visitor amenities such as interpretation center, lodging, sanitary facilities and way finding signs.

Spatial hotspot analysis also revealed clusters that were highly touristic yet had not been invested in, indicating areas where infrastructure could be developed through private-public partnerships.

This has led to the creation of the Digital Cultural Tourism Assets Atlas, which is an important decision-making tool.

5. Discussion

As seen above, sustainable cultural tourism development in Nigeria is dependent on the interplay between institutional, infrastructural, technological, and community-based determinants of development, rather than any one-off efforts. Therefore, it provides support for systems approaches to tourism development and strengthens the arguments about how destination competitiveness is based on coordinated governance and effective resource management, not simply on cultural attributes.

Infrastructure was found to be the highest predictor of sustainable cultural tourism development, which indicates the significance of such elements of destination infrastructure as transportation links, utilities, accommodation facilities, and visitor services. This finding is congruent with the destination competitiveness model offered by Dwyer and Kim (2003) and conforms with the latest studies that indicate that in developing countries, infrastructure is still a significant factor of tourism success (The Travel & Tourism Development Index 2024, 2024).

The strong impact of tourism policy indicates the need for institutional cooperation and effective regulation. The fragmented nature of governance in Nigeria had previously been recognised as an obstacle to tourism development, and it is evident from the current results that the effectiveness of policy implementation and coordination remains a prerequisite to successful sectoral development. It provides empirical evidence for the Institutional Theory, whose key assumption involves the impact of regulatory and normative institutions on organisational success.

The involvement of communities proved to be significantly positive for sustainable tourism development, thus proving that local ownership, community involvement, and fair distribution of benefits significantly influence the sustainability of destinations. Such results correspond to research conducted in Kenya and South Africa, where the model of community-based tourism contributed to the improvement of rural livelihoods and cultural conservation.

Digital tourism had a strong positive impact on sustainable tourism development, thus emphasising the increasing relevance of GIS, destination management, digital marketing, and online services to visitors. The results lend more support to the view that digital transformation has now turned out to be a strategic element of destination competitiveness and not just a managerial tool. In turn, this means that the creation of the Digital Cultural Tourism Asset Atlas is an important innovation which can help increase destination visibility, investment attraction and evidence-based planning.

Lastly, sustainable development of cultural tourism has been demonstrated to have a strong positive impact on destination competitiveness and the well-being of communities. It means that sustainable tourism investments result in various positive effects other than increased numbers of visitors, such as job creation, entrepreneurship, culture conservation and inclusivity.

6. Conclusion

This study has formulated an integrative framework for sustainable cultural tourism development in Nigeria through a holistic examination of the relationship between tourism policy,

infrastructure, heritage management, community involvement, and digital tourism on sustainable cultural tourism development. Different from past research efforts that have looked at each of the above-mentioned variables separately, this research effort has taken a systems approach and shown that sustainable cultural tourism needs a systemic intervention in the institutional, technological, infrastructural, and socio-economic spheres.

It has been proven through the results of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) that tourism infrastructure, tourism policy, digital tourism, community involvement, and heritage management all significantly affect sustainable cultural tourism development. Moreover, sustainable cultural tourism development is found to positively impact destination competitiveness and community livelihoods. This finding supports the idea that cultural tourism is not just about heritage conservation but a tool of economic diversification, sustainable development, and competitiveness of the nation.

The GIS analysis also indicated significant disparities in the spatial distribution, accessibility, and quality of the infrastructural elements that exist within the cultural tourism assets of Nigeria. Even though Nigeria has excellent cultural assets, many of the destinations are hindered due to their poor transport infrastructure accessibility, visitor facilities, digitisation efforts, and institutional coordination. The creation of a Digital Cultural Tourism Asset Atlas is thus a key innovation which could help improve destination planning, prioritisation of investments, heritage protection, and marketing.

In summary, the research shows that the transformation of the cultural tourism industry in Nigeria will need an industrial strategy that is backed up by sound policies, infrastructure development, digital innovations, community empowerment, and proper governance. This is not only consistent with the vision of economic diversification but also contributes towards achieving various SDGs.

7. Policy Implications

The study has critical policy and developmental significance for the formulation of tourism policy in Nigeria. First, the government needs to come up with a National Integrated Cultural Tourism Development Strategy that integrates the activities and roles of various governmental organisations at the federal, state, and local government levels that deal with tourism, culture, heritage, infrastructure development, and investment promotion.

Second, there needs to be more public investment in the provision of transport, technology, energy, accommodation facilities, and other services that will make the cultural tourism destinations accessible and competitive.

Third, community involvement must be encouraged in cultural tourism policies through legal benefit sharing, tourism cooperatives, and participatory governance that will lead to equitable returns for the host communities.

Fourth, Nigeria must invest in the deployment of digital technologies in tourism, such as the use of GIS-based destination management systems, virtual heritage sites, booking platforms, ticketing services, and integrated destination marketing portals.

Finally, the government needs to promote PPPs to finance heritage conservation, tourism infrastructure, museums, and destination management.

8. Practical Implications

The research presents practical insights for various actors.

For policy-makers, the study provides empirical support for developing integrated policies on tourism that can contribute to better institutional coordination and more efficient investments.

For tourists and tourism investors, the GIS-based identification of promising destinations offers useful insights into investment decisions.

For destination managers, the research draws attention to the need to provide better visitor experiences by developing appropriate infrastructure, online services, interpretive programs and quality management systems.

For local communities, the proposed benefit-sharing strategy helps foster local entrepreneurship, employment creation and culture preservation.

For development partners and donors, the integrated approach to tourism development provides a practical platform for designing interventions that foster sustainable tourism, poverty alleviation and rural development.

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