

SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES AND NIGERIA TOURISM ECONOMY: IMPLICATION FOR THE INDUSTRIES' ENHANCED PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH

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Abstract

The paper proposes Sustainable Global Best Practices and Tourism Economy Performance and growth model to explain the connection between the two constructs in respect of Nigeria. The study adopted a literature review approach to present a hypothetical model of Sustainable Global Best Practices as an independent variable with six dimensions (i.e. Sustainable tourism / hospitality business infrastructure, sustainable security architecture, sustainable AI and technology adoption, sustainable tourism / hospitality business policy, sustainable data gathering and data management, and tourism resources profiling and tourism / hospitality product development) that influences Tourism Economy Performance and growth in Nigeria. The argument in this study opines that Sustainable Global Best Practices has the capability of enhancing the realisation of Tourism Economy Performance and growth in Nigeria if given due attention. The model is useful for analysis in academic and tourism business research, including impact studies. The framework has potential application in sustainable tourism development in respect of Nigeria. It can as well serve as a guide for tourist mobility planning and assessing government policies on tourism development issues. The limitations of this study stem from the nature of the study itself. As a theoretical model, it aims to integrate the goals identified in the existing literature. Thus, future research must try to examine the existing relationships among the aforementioned factors. In particular, it must analyse the weight of each goal and the relative importance of each for the factor it belongs to. Since there are few studies that reported the association between tourism and sustainable development goals in Nigeria from an integrated point of view, this paper contributes to bridging this gap. Thus, contributing to tourism and sustainable development goals literature in an emerging economy.

Keywords: Tourist arrival, Tourist receipts, Sustainable global best practices; Tourism economy performance; Tourism economy growth.

Introduction

Globally, tourism performance is well on track to return to pre-pandemic levels in 2024. Report has it that international tourism performance ended in 2023 at 88% of pre-pandemic levels, with an estimated 1.3 billion international arrivals (UNWTO, 2024). The Middle East led the recovery in relative terms to overcome pre-pandemic levels with arrivals put at 26% above 2019 as at July 2024. African tourism sector stepped-up in her performance put at 7% recovery above the pre-pandemic visitors' arrivals. However, Europe, Americas and the Asia / Pacific are also making a conscious effort to exits pre-pandemic levels as shown in Figure 1.

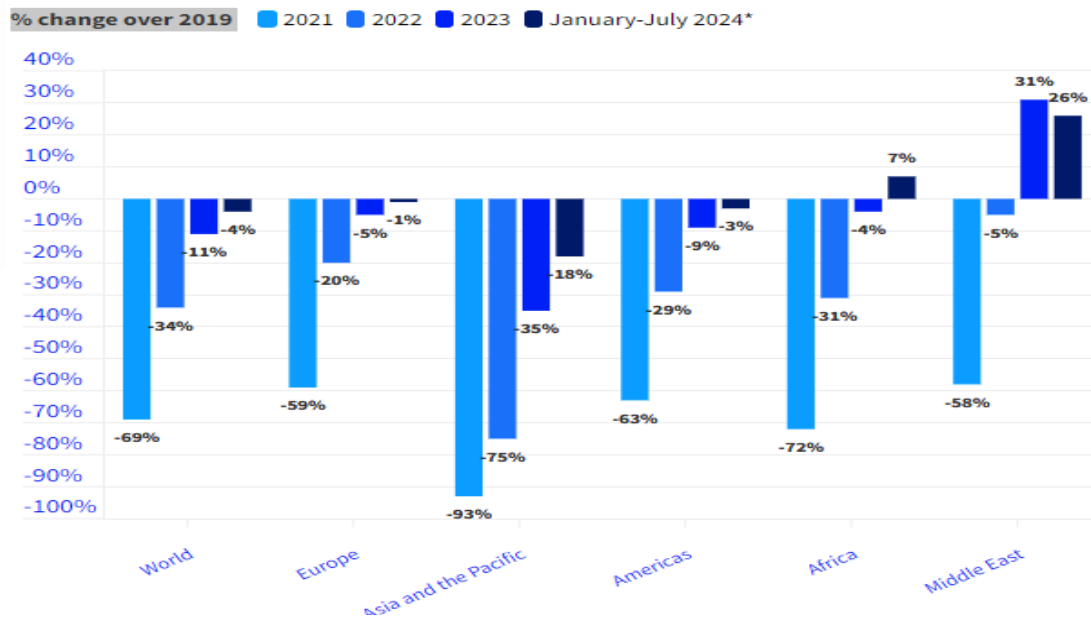


Figure 1: International Tourist Arrivals (% change over 2019).

Source: UNWTO (2024).

The index in the above implies that the Middle East and Africa are the only two regions that overcame pre-pandemic levels with arrivals of 26% and 7% above 2019 performance respectively hence, estimated that other regions are expected to underpin a full recovery by the end of 2024. Thus, this latest UNWTO data underscores tourism's resilience and rapid recovery as the rebound is already having a significant impact on economies, jobs, growth and opportunities for countries.

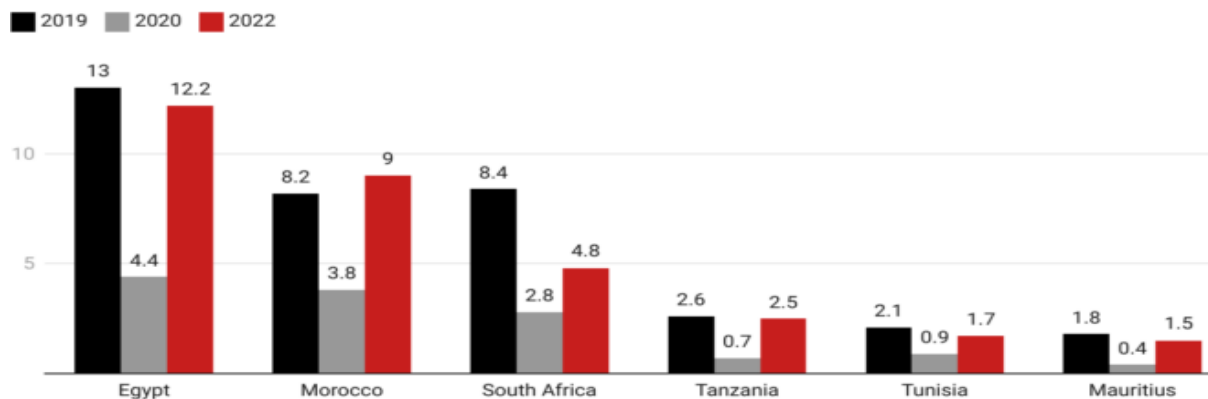
In terms of tourism receipt, international tourism receipts reached USD 1.4 trillion in 2023 hence, put at about 93% of the USD\$ 1.5 trillion earned by destinations in 2019. The total export revenues from tourism (including passenger transport) are estimated at USD\$ 1.6 trillion in 2023, almost 95% of the USD\$ 1.7 trillion recorded in 2019. Preliminary estimates on the economic contribution of tourism, measured in tourism direct gross domestic product (TDGDP) point to USD\$ 3.3 trillion in 2023, or 3% of global GDP. This indicates a recovery of pre-pandemic TDGDP driven by strong domestic and international tourism. Several destinations reported strong growth in international tourism receipts during the first ten to twelve months of 2023, exceeding in some cases growth in arrivals. Strong demand for outbound travel was also reported by several large source markets within the period, with many exceeding 2019 levels. Aside, the sustained recovery also reflected in the performance

of the hospitality industry as the global occupancy rates in accommodation establishments reached 65% in November, slightly above 62% in November 2022 (STR Data, 2023).

Despite the insightful tourism and hospitality sector performance at the global level, a critical observation of the Nigerian tourism and hospitality sector shows that the sector is not performing competitively compared to other countries in Africa (Bello, 2024). It was reported that Nigeria tourism industry is unable to find her feet in the African tourism regional market as critical tourism performance indices are not in her favour (Bello, 2024). For instance, in terms of tourist arrival, Nigeria is below expectation as it is lagging far behind Egypt adjudged to reigns supreme when it comes to tourist arrivals in Africa. Visa Guide World (2023) reported that Egypt in 2023 welcomed a record-breaking 14.9 million international tourists. This is closely followed by Morocco that attracted 14.5 million international tourists in 2023 (Moroccan World News, 2023). South Africa took the third position as it welcomed nearly 11.5 million tourists in 2023 (World Visa Guide, 2023). Tunisia had 8.9 million visitors in 2023 (African News, 2023). Kenya attracts 2.6 million tourists, Zimbabwe (2.06 million), Mozambique (1.60 million), and Mauritania (1.15 million) (UNWTO, 2024).

In terms of international tourist receipts, Egypt leads the charge for most international tourism receipts in Africa recording USD\$ 12.2 billion in tourism revenue as of 2022 (Bethel, 2024). Morocco earned USD\$9 billion, South Africa (USD\$4.8 billion), Tanzania (USD\$2.5 billion), Tunisia (USD\$1.7 billion), and Mauritius (USD\$ 1.5 billion) in 2022 as shown in Table 1 (Bethel, 2024). However, Nigeria earned USD\$404 million put at 1.2% of the entire international tourist receipts accrued to the Sub-Sahara Africa (UNWTO, 2022). The index in the above information shows a poor performance of the tourism industry in Nigeria.

Table 1: African countries with highest international tourism receipts post-covid in USD\$ Billion



Source: Bethel (2024).

Bello and Bello (2024) further reported that only very few among many tourism and hospitality industries established in Nigeria yearly could be sustained while the few ones that exists continue to suffocate as the industrial profitability is badly squeezed due to rapid declined in economic condition. It is therefore pertinent to state that many factors may be responsible for these negative performances' indices. Common among these factors as identified by the experts ranges from poor application of sustainable global best practices to inadequate application of strategic management techniques. This implies that non-performance of the Nigeria tourism and hospitality sector can be explained by the ravaging

effect of poor adoption of sustainable global best practices hence, the focus of this paper to conceptualise these practices and its corresponding impacts to growing the performances and growth of the tourism and hospitality sector in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION: SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

Sustainable global best practices (SGBP) have multiple meanings and particular connotations. Simon (2022) defined sustainable global best practices as actions that allows the company to create a positive impact on people, society, and the environment while also making a profit. It encompasses successful business initiatives (i.e., practical and contextual) that transcend national boundaries which have a demonstrable and tangible impact on improving people's quality of life (Asogwa, 2024). The term "sustainable global best practices" denotes the most efficacious and proficient methods of conducting business, managing resources, and attaining goals across different nations and cultures (Christofi et al., 2023). It denotes a distinctive mode of global business management that relies on existing practices to establish claims of business success and welfare of her publics (Cagno et al., 2023; Bernstein & Ven, 2017). Asides, the concept refers to activities or methodologies considered superior to alternatives and have been proven to lead to desired outcomes (Fauci et al., 2023).

According to Kerzner (2018), "Sustainable Global Best Practices" means the implementation of effective and successful approaches or strategies in various domains on a global scale. It involves identifying and disseminating practices that have proven successful in achieving desired outcomes (Horodyska et al., 2015). According to Purinton et al. (2022) and Zou (2024), the concept of SGBP refers to universally recognized and accepted measures that have been developed as a standard for achieving optimal outcomes in various fields on a global scale. They are characterized by their applicability in different organizations and ability to bring about positive change (Shaya et al., 2023). Watts et al. (2023) reported, "SGBP" refer to guidelines, ethics, and standards widely accepted and recognized as the most effective and efficient way to accomplish a task or goal, enhance work quality, minimize errors, and boost efficiency. Global best practices are not only based on existing practices but also encompass expert consensus and are continually evolving based on new knowledge and experiences.

As it applied to the hospitality and tourism sector, the concept of sustainable global best practices are the most effective and efficient methods of conducting hospitality and tourism business, managing resources, and achieving goals across different countries and cultures. Bello (2024) highlighted these practices to include but not limited to sustainable tourism / hospitality business infrastructure, sustainable security architecture, AI and technology adoption, sustainable tourism / hospitality business policy, data gathering and data management, and tourism resources profiling and tourism / hospitality product development among others.

MEANING OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY SECTOR

The concept explains all businesses that cater for the needs of the travelling public (Wall & Mathieson, 2006; Robert et al. 2010). Tourism and hospitality sector is seen as economy type that support businesses that focused on the provision of tourists' products and services capable of enhancing the touristic experience of tourists while contributing towards the economic

development of the host communities (Naido, 2007). The concept is defined as those internationally impactful economy with wide cross section components of products such as religion (Bello & Bello, 2017; Bello & Majebi, 2018), education (Bello & Raja, 2017), sport (Bello et al. 2017), accommodation (Bello & Bello 2015; Bello & Majebi, 2018), recreation (Bello & Bello, 2017), food and other related services (Anthony et al. 2004; Jennifer & Thea, 2013; UNWTO, 2016). The index in the information above shows that tourism economy manages activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment or place of domicile to explore tourism products with the corresponding socio-economic impacts on the host communities.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

AI and Technology Adoption and Tourism / Hospitality Sector Performance and Growth

Artificial Intelligence technology is one of the most innovative inventions that have revolutionized and stimulates performance of various industries around the globe. Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be referred to as the development of computer systems that can perform tasks and activities which require human intelligence (Russell & Norvig, 2016). AI is the simulation of human intelligence operations by computers, particularly computer systems to performing specific tasks (Wang et al., 2020). AI has contributed significantly to the fourth industrial revolution (Behl et al., 2021), and its increasingly becoming a part of workplaces around the world today (Khaliq et al., 2022). These technology innovations are fast becoming a mainstay of tourism and hospitality industry performance and growth with new developments constantly raising the bar on functionality. At present, artificial intelligence has been well used in intelligent tourism, smart tourism, tourism and hospitality security, tourists and tourism resources profiling and relations among others. The development of artificial intelligence has brought opportunities and challenges to the tourism and hospitality industry. At the moment, virtually every company involved in tourism uses at least one AI-powered technology, with market forecasts reaching \$1.2 billion by 2026. It is also forecasted that AI could add over US\$15 trillion to the global tourism and hospitality economy in just 10 years. It is saddened to note that these benefits would not be evenly accrued by Nigeria and other developing economies and in fact, may bypass them altogether without deliberate policies, strategic action, and collaboration between relevant stakeholders.

Sustainable Business Policy and Tourism / Hospitality Sector Performance and Growth

This explains the extent to which the policy environment of a country supports tourism business investments (Okoli, 2001; Jennifer & Thea, 2013; Bello, 2018). In 2006, the Nigerian government developed the Nigeria Tourism Master Plan (TDI, 2014) with the sole aim to providing a policy thrust capable of enhancing the Nigeria tourism sector (BGL, 2014). The gazette takes into account the extent to which foreign ownership and foreign direct investment (FDI) in tourism are welcomed and facilitated by the government of Nigeria, how tourism

investment rights are protected, and the time and cost required for setting up a tourism business in Nigeria (NTDC, 2010). Other information contained in the gazette include; tourist's visa requirements, and bilateral air service agreements among others. Eighteen years after the master plan had been drawn; the performance and growth of the Nigeria's tourism industry is probably worse (BGL, 2014; Bello et al. 2016) due to poor implementation. Years after, the tourism and hospitality industry still represent a meagre (4.8%) of the Nigeria's GDP (Ekwujuru, 2023). The implication of this is that international tourists and tourism investors may likely choose tourism destinations outside Nigeria as a preferred tourist destination rather than Nigeria for patronage and investment respectively.

Sustainable Security Architecture and Tourism / Hospitality Sector Performance and Growth

Safety and security are important factors that defines the competitiveness of a country's tourism economy (Bello et al. 2014). This implies that tourists and tourism investors are likely to be deterred from traveling to or investing in Nigeria due to insecurity. Insecurity through crime and terrorism had been identified as one of the major problems confronting the development of tourism business in Nigeria (Bankole, 2002; Bello et al. 2014). According to 2023 edition of the Global Peace Index (GPI), Nigeria is ranked among the five least peaceful countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Aworinde, 2023). The GPI measures peacefulness across three domains: safety and security, ongoing conflict, and militarization. Despite notable military advances, and apparently premature proclamations of Boko Haram's defeat by government forces in Nigeria, the group remained a threat to national security. Abductions, suicide bombings, banditry, and attacks on civilian targets by Boko Haram persisted. Aworinde (2019) reports that at least 1,200 people died and nearly 200,000 were displaced in the northeast in 2018. In June, 2019 at least 84 people were killed in double suicide bomb attacks attributed to Boko Haram at a mosque in Mubi, Adamawa State. The author further opined that decades old communal conflict between nomadic herdsman and farmers in the Middle Belt intensified in 2020 and further aggravated the security situation in the country. At least 1,600 people were killed and another 300,000 displaced as a result of the violence. In July 13th- 19th, 47 deaths and 14 kidnappings occurred due to Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsman- related clashes. In July 20th, President Muhammadu Buhari condemns the killing of 37 innocent people by bandits in the Sokoto State. Also, in July 27th, more than 60 dead as Boko Haram target a funeral procession, in retaliation to an alleged incident where villagers fought off an earlier Boko Haram attack in Borno. In July 29th, 25 Soldiers and 47 Boko Haram militants were killed during a clash in Kukawa, Borno while in August 2nd, 5 pastors were reportedly abducted by the Fulani on their way to attend an annual church conference in Ogun State.

All the above-mentioned security cases affirmed failure in Nigeria's security architecture hence, the government of Nigeria cannot afford to compromise the safety and security of the tourism entrepreneurs and their investments, if intending to develop her tourism sector. The argument above shows that for a country to be competitive for tourism investment and tourist patronage, the government must take into account the costliness of common crime and

violence as well as terrorism, and the extent to which police services can be relied upon to provide protection from crime as well as the incidence of road traffic accidents in the country.

Resources Profiling and product Development and Tourism / Hospitality Sector Performance and Growth

It is pertinent to state that Nigeria ranks among the most privileged nations of the world in terms of endowment of tourist resources (Okoli, 2001; Bello & Bello, 2017). Nigeria's tourist resources are very great and diverse with a lot of potentials for economic transformations, poverty reduction, income redistributions and foreign direct investments (Okoli, 2001; Bello & Bello, 2017; Bello et al. 2014). Despite the abundant tourism resources available in the country the process of identifying, and processing tourist resource into tourist product or attraction is yet to be activated for the prosperity of the sector and the nation at large (Okoli, 2001). Effort must as well be made to discover tourist potential or resources based on tourism research. Aside, discovery of tourist resources could also be by chance and alternatively, through expert's on-site inspection or survey (Okpoko et al., 2011). The tourist resources discovered need to be evaluated by experts for its touristic values and capacity to attract tourists (Okoli, 2001). Tourist resources development must therefore follow, hence concerned with the provision of tourist infrastructure and superstructures capable of enhancing the touristic values of tourist potential or resources to a finished product.

Data Gathering and Data Management and Tourism / Hospitality Sector Performance and Growth

A recurring problem that has however been documented in several literatures on Nigerian tourism (Falade, 2000; Mohammed, 2009; Aimurie, 2012; Abubakar, 2014; Ayodele, 2017; Ijeomah and Eniang, 2018) is the lack of adequate empirical data on tourism destinations in the country and their viability, as such it has hindered policy making and prospective development. Further, there is a general lack of awareness both in the international community and also among the Nigerian populace about existing tourism destinations in Nigeria. A national awareness and patronage survey conducted by the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) revealed that less than 20 percent of Nigerians who spend their holidays out of the country had visited two of the most prominent destinations in the country; the Yankari Game Village or the Obudu Cattle Ranch, and more than 50 percent of the regular visitors to these destinations were foreigners (Adaramola, 2013). Also, a survey of tour operators in the UK, Europe and the United States of America indicated lack of information or knowledge about Nigeria as a tourist destination (Abubakar, 2014).

The current marketing approach is very weak, underfunded and lacks a strategic marketing approach (Ayodele, 2017). While a significant increase in marketing expenditure will be required to overcome the lack of awareness of Nigeria as a tourist destination and the very poor image of the country in the main global markets (Abubakar, 2014), the availability of right information about the destinations is important. This will not only encourage international tourism but also fosters domestic tourism.

Another critical issue is the provision of false information on some travel blogs and websites. Ayodele (2017) referred to this as unreliable poor data base. A personal experience during the reconnaissance survey of an intended research was the fact that the reality of the state of destination was different to the one presented on the website. The site was advertised as being a beach with functional activities and accommodation. This however turned out to be just a waterfront and a small fishing community with no tourism activities whatsoever. It is agreed that, if Nigeria must take a place in the committee of great nations, it cannot but begin to make concerted efforts to source revenue outside crude oil (Abubakar, 2014). However, tourism has since been selected as one of six priority areas central to the revival of the country's economy in view of declining global oil price (Adaramola, 2013). Nature based attractions hold high value, as these attractions need not be established but only enhanced. Ayodele (2017) in his inaugural lecture on tourism as a gateway to good health and good life concluded that there is a need for a development of reliable data base on tourism destinations in Nigeria and increased promotion and marketing strategies. Ijeomah and Eniang (2018) similarly in their review of the prospects and challenges of the ecotourism and national development of Nigeria concluded that the level of awareness on tourist attractions is still very low in many areas, and thus need active promotion. The current study therefore aims to identify the various nature-based tourism destinations in the country, explore its current state in terms of the facilities available and services offered, visitors' influx, motivations for its choice, and the management approach adopted for its development and sustenance.

Sustainable Tourism / Hospitality Infrastructure and Tourism / Hospitality Sector Performance and Growth

Tourism necessities help in creation of infrastructural utilities and amenities, which are not only used by the visitors but become valuable to the local population as well. The economic importance of tourism in national economy can be appreciated with reference to its contribution in infrastructure development (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). Tourist arrivals in a country increase effective demand for the infrastructure facilities. The government must encourage the private sector to put up tourist infrastructure. An attempt must be made to develop infrastructure in a planned manner so as to avoid congestion, overcrowding and damage to the environment that is where the role of the government is important. It is estimated that in the US alone some 25% of the traveling public is interested in some form of tourism.

PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A research model provides a framework within which a body of laws, theories and concept are transformed into a practical business reality. In view of the above, this paper proposed an integrated Sustainable Global Best Practices and Tourism / Hospitality Sector Development Model for Nigeria. The proposed model as shown in Figure 2 explains the relationships between the six dimensions of sustainable global best practices which consists of: Sustainable tourism / hospitality business infrastructure, sustainable security architecture, sustainable AI and technology adoption, sustainable tourism / hospitality business policy, sustainable data gathering and data management, and tourism resources profiling and tourism / hospitality

product development as independent variable, and tourism / hospitality sector performance / growth, the dependent variable.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

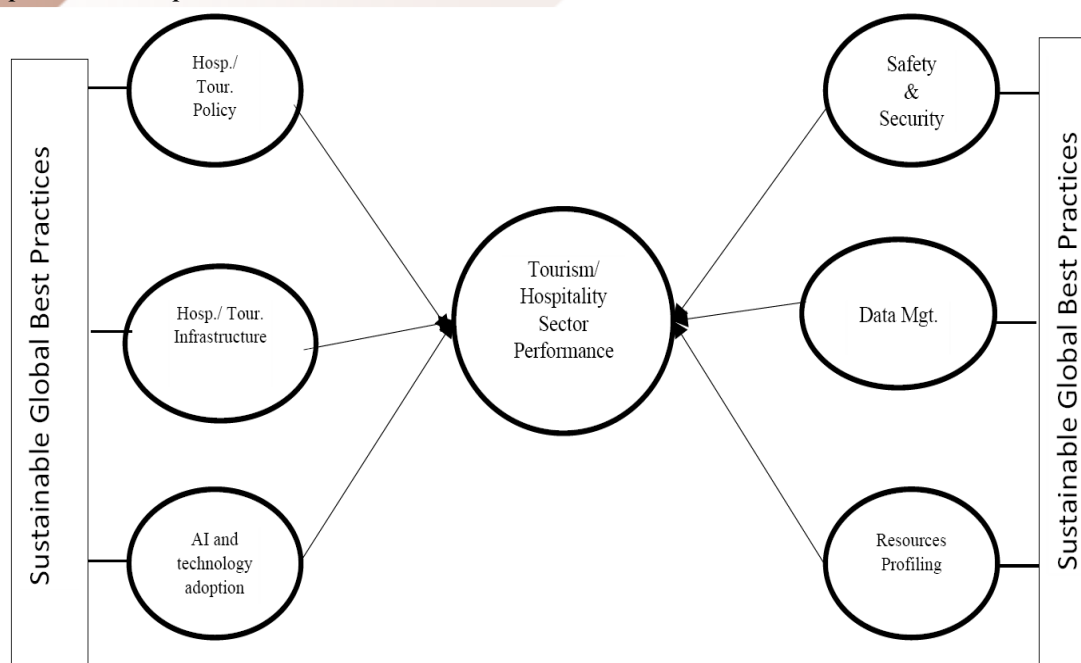


Figure 2: Showing Sustainable Global Best Practices and Hospitality and Tourism Economy Performance and growth Model for Nigeria.

The model provides that the adoption of Sustainable Global Best Practices in Nigeria Tourism and Hospitality sector have the capacity to improve the performance of the sector and stimulates growth. In specific terms, the model shows that investment in AI and technology adoption in the tourism sector in Nigeria have the capacity to stimulating the performance and growth of the sector. Aside, conscious effort by the stakeholders in the Nigeria tourism sector to invest into tourism / hospitality business infrastructure, enhancing sustainable security architecture, developed feasible and viable tourism / hospitality business policy, develop scientific approach to tourism data gathering and data management, and enhances the culture of tourism resources profiling and tourism / hospitality product development are bevvied would jumpstart the performance of the sector and stimulates its growth.

CONCLUSION, MANAGERIAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Until now, research that domesticates Sustainable Global Best Practices and Hospitality and Tourism Economy Performance and growth in respect of Nigeria is limited. Existing literature has concentrated on identifying the various Sustainable Global Best Practices but not applied to specific sector of the economy. The argument in this study is that tourism have the capability to enhance its performance in Nigeria if the culture of Sustainable Global Best Practices is given due attention. The limitations of this study stem from the nature of the study itself. As a theoretical model, it aims to integrate the factors identified in the existing

literature. Thus, future research must try to examine the existing relationships among the aforementioned factors. In particular, it must analyse the weight of each factor and the relative importance of each element for the factor it belongs to. Therefore, determining the relative importance of each element and factor would constitute an important source of information for future work in sustainable tourism studies in emerging economy.

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