

STRATEGIC PROCESS AND INNOVATION IN FIRMS IN NIGERIAN TOURISM INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the strategic processes and innovation practices adopted by firms in the dynamic tourism industry of Nigeria. Using qualitative research methods such as document analysis and interviews, the study analyses how these firms strategize to take advantage of opportunities and overcome obstacles in a competitive market. Some of the key themes that emerge from this research are the development and implementation of strategic plans customised to the specific socio-economic context of Nigeria, the role of leadership in promoting an innovative culture through building knowledge and capabilities that supports innovation, and the effects of technological advancements on customer experience and service delivery which is the vehicle that drives research and development in the current industry. We conclude that from a thorough analysis of the sector's strategic process and innovation management, innovation and strategic planning tools are essential building blocks for realising the Nigeria tourism industry's full potential. This is because Nigeria's abundant natural riches, rich cultural diversity, expanding domestic tourism industry, and growing investor interest have contributed to a tangible sense of optimism despite the country's shortcomings in terms of infrastructure, security, regulations, and skills shortages. We therefore recommend that the Nigerian government and stakeholders in the industry should improve infrastructure, security, build capacity and promote innovation in the industry to attain full potentials

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The tourism industry is essential to sustainable development, cross-cultural interchange, and economic prosperity. Given Nigeria's wealth of natural resources, cultural diversity, and historical significance, the tourism industry offers a sizable window of opportunity for both employment creation and economic diversification. However, over the years, a number of obstacles have impeded the Nigerian tourism industry's growth and development, despite its enormous potential. Nigeria's tourism business has a long history that dates back hundreds of years, with more than 250 ethnic groups; the nation has a rich cultural legacy that has influenced a wide range of customs, dialects, and artistic expressions. In the past, Nigeria served as a trans-Saharan commerce hub, drawing traders and tourists from all across Africa, the Middle East, and beyond. Nigeria's tourist industry started during the colonial era when the British colonial authorities established infrastructure like hotels, trains, and landmarks. Destinations such as the Tinapa Resort in Cross River State and the Yankari Game Reserve in Bauchi State were created to draw in tourists from abroad who were interested in seeing Nigeria's natural beauty and cultural legacy.

In spite of Nigeria's historical significance and wealth of attractions, Nigeria's tourism industry faces numerous obstacles that have constrained its expansion and potential. Inadequate infrastructure, encompassing lodging, transportation, and basic services, represents a major obstacle. Inadequate transport systems, restricted availability of potable water and power, and a deficiency of contemporary amenities have impeded the growth of tourism spots and turned off prospective travellers. Another major obstacle facing Nigeria's tourism industry is security. Travellers' unfavourable opinions of the nation have been exacerbated by instances of civic turmoil, ethnic strife, and terrorist attacks. Nigeria's insecure environment has deterred both local and foreign tourists from visiting due to the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, community conflicts in the Middle Belt, and abduction events in the Niger Delta.

Furthermore, Nigeria's exposure as a tourism destination has been limited by a lack of efficient marketing and promotion strategies. Alongside regulatory bottlenecks, inconsistent regulations, and bureaucratic red tape have made it more difficult for the private sector to innovate and develop in the tourism sector using enhanced strategic process. Strategic process is planning process of setting business goals and creating an action plan to implement the strategies (Umar *et al.*, 2020). It involves developing a process to guide an organisation to a successful and sustainable future (Ogosi, *et al.*, 2023). The essence is making those decisions that will provide a vehicle for efficient use of resources. It is the action taken by managers to create a framework that ensures the attainment of organizational goals (Umar *et al.*, 2020; Maleka, 2015). The Strategic process leverages innovation in an organisation. Innovation is any practice that is new to organisations. It involves a new or changed entity, realizing or redistributing value (Ramachandran, 2020). Innovation management, therefore, is the managing of processes in innovation (Kalender *et al.*, 2014). Strategic process provides the vehicle for innovation management through research and development intensity; and knowledge and capabilities of managers in the industry.

Nigeria's tourist industry has enormous growth and development potential despite these obstacles. The nation's abundant natural resources, which include beaches, mountains, waterfalls, and wildlife refuges, present a variety of chances for the growth of the tourism industry (Olu et al., 2018; Umoh and Ndu, 2013). The role of tourism in Nigeria's economic diversification and growth has come to be recognised more and more in recent years (Guanah, 2017). The government has made several efforts to diversify its revenue from oil, such efforts include changes in tourism policy. Though with differing degrees of success, initiatives have been made to encourage domestic and international tourism, strengthen security, and improve infrastructure. Additionally, new chances for promoting Nigerian tourism to a global audience are presented by technological improvements and digital marketing. Amidst all these, the Nigerian tourism industry offers enormous potential for expansion and development despite facing several obstacles. Nigeria can fully realise the potential of its tourism industry and establish itself as a top global travel destination by addressing infrastructure deficiencies, bolstering security measures, putting effective strategies into place, and encouraging private sector participation. It is important, therefore, to examine the strategic process and innovation management in selected firms in the Nigerian tourism sector.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The Nigerian tourism industry has great potential to attract huge investment into the Nigerian economy which will boost her contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, the industry is experiencing infrastructural deficit due to the state of the Nigerian economy and the policies that hinders the introduction of foreign investment into the sector. Also, the security situation in the country where Nigeria was listed as one of the terrorist state hinders the growth of the Nigerian industry. The current government policies on tax and regulation of the industry leave less to be desired by intending investors. Also, the lack of technological infrastructure that encourages the extensive of virtual and augmented reality in business and marketing strategies has also added to the Nigeria problem. This situation can also be a result of the managers Nigerian industry lack of capability to engage in strategic processes that will enhance innovation and growth in the industry. Innovation is known to provide the vehicle to overcome challenges and stir growth.

It seems managers in the Nigerian industry lack the requisite capabilities that will bring enhanced strategy through research and development which enhances strategic process. Strategic process provides the leverage need for innovation in organisation through research and development intensity and knowledge capabilities, however, this seems to be in short supply in the Nigerian industry. It is at point that it was pertinent to seek understanding of the strategic process and innovation management in Nigerian tourism industry. The essence is to provide insight to managers in the tourism industry on how to use strategic tools to overcome challenges and provide the needed innovation for industry growth and sustainability.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this paper is to examine the influence of strategic process on innovation management in the Nigerian tourism sector. Two components of strategic process: Research and development; and knowledge and capabilities were used in this study. The specific objectives were to:

- (i) examine the influence of Research and Development Intensity on Innovation Management in firms in the Nigeria Tourism Sector; and
- (ii) assess the effect of knowledge and capabilities of managers on Innovation Management in firms in the Nigeria Tourism Sector.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were crafted for the study:

- (i) Is there any influence of Research and Development Intensity on Innovation Management in firms in the Nigeria Tourism Sector?
- (ii) Can Managers knowledge and capabilities affect Innovation Management in firms in the Nigeria Tourism Sector?

2.0 Literature Review

Organisations in a variety of industries are seeing the value of strategic process and innovation management in the fast-paced, cutthroat business world of today. These ideas are fundamental to determining the competitiveness, sustainability, and long-term course of businesses. This section literature in term concepts, theories and empirical evidence as it regards the importance of strategic process and innovation management with emphasis on how they affect the development and success of organisations in the Nigerian tourism industry will be discussed.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

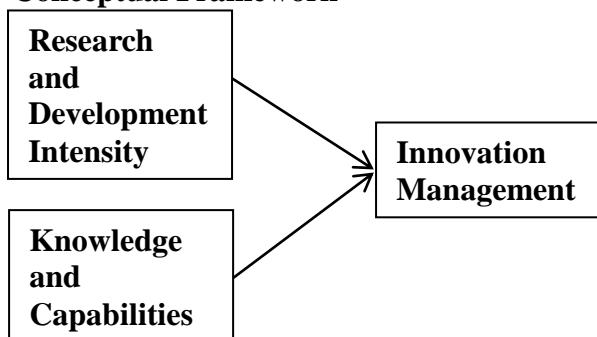


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model

Source: Researcher

Figure 2.1 shows that conceptual model of this study. In the fast-paced corporate world of today, innovation management and strategic process are essential to an organization's development and success. The planning process of establishing corporate objectives and formulating an action plan for the effective execution of the organization's strategy is known as the strategic process (Umar *et al.*, 2020). It creates a framework for making strategic decisions in an organization. This framework rely so much the quantity and quality of information gathered through research and development (Ogosi *et al.*, 2023). The utilization of the information provided by research and development is embedded in the knowledge, competence and capabilities of the managers in the organisation (Simsit *et al.*, 2014). The use of this information aligned with competence and capabilities creates and manage innovation process. Innovation can be seen as a favourable displacement of the status quo for a more efficient, improved and acceptable equipment, technology, process, procedure and regulations. Thus, information technology plays a vital role in the efficacy of strategic process for innovation. In this study, it implies that there a causal relationship between strategic process and innovation in the Nigerian tourism industry. This is so because strategic process and innovation management are integral components of organizational success and growth in today's dynamic business environment. It is therefore important to look at the importance of strategic process and innovation management.

2.1.1 The Significance of Strategic Process and Innovation Management in Tourism

1. Strategic Process

- a. **Establishing Direction:** The strategic process entails the creation and execution of plans and programmes meant to accomplish the goals and objectives of the organisation. Organisations can establish a clear course for the future, pinpoint important goals, and distribute resources efficiently by implementing strategic planning. As a result, businesses are able to concentrate their resources on tasks that support their overarching vision and goal, which enhances output and performance.
- b. **Adaptation to Change:** Survival in the fast-paced, unpredictable business environment of today depends on one's ability to adapt. Organisations can adapt to changes in the external environment, such as shifting consumer tastes, technological breakthroughs, and competitive dynamics, by using strategic processes. Through consistent observation of market developments and strategic adaptation, organisations can maintain a competitive edge.
- c. **Resource optimisation:** A well-designed strategic process allows organisations to make the best use of their resources, including money, people, and technology. By matching resource allocation to performance objectives and strategic priorities, businesses can maximise productivity, reduce waste, and ensure that resources are allocated to areas that yield the most value and support sustainable growth.
- d. **Stakeholder alignment:** A well-designed strategic process encourages collaboration and alignment among a variety of stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, employees, and investors. By involving stakeholders in the strategic planning process and effectively communicating the organization's vision and goals, businesses can establish credibility, and foster collective efforts towards goal attainment.

2. Innovation Management

- a. **Promoting Growth:** Innovation management entails the conception, creation, and application of novel concepts, goods, services, and procedures that provide value for stakeholders and consumers. Growth cannot be achieved without innovation since it allows businesses to stand out from the competition, break into untapped markets, and increase the range of goods and services they offer. Companies can create new revenue streams and maintain an advantage over rivals by investing in R&D and cultivating an innovative culture.
- b. **Increasing Competitiveness:** Innovation is a major factor in competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy of today. Businesses that value innovation are better able to predict and adapt to shifting consumer demands, industry trends, and technology upheavals. Through constant innovation and enhancement of their offerings, organisations can set themselves apart from competitors, foster customer loyalty, and increase their market share.
- c. **Risk Management:** Taking calculated risks and looking for new opportunities for growth and value creation are all part of innovation management. Although innovation is by its very nature uncertain and experimental, good risk management techniques help minimise potential risks and increase the likelihood of success. By using a methodical approach to innovation management, businesses can recognise, evaluate, and control risks in advance, ensuring that their investments in innovation provide a positive return.
- d. **Employee Engagement:** Innovation management encourages experimentation, creativity, and learning in the workplace. Employers may fully use their workforce by giving staff members the freedom to experiment, share ideas, and take charge of innovation projects. Better performance and results result from motivated, productive, and devoted staff members who are committed to the success of the company.

Strategic process and innovation management have a dynamic set of interrelationships and an integral part of organisations success and growth in every industry especially in the volatile tourism industry. The relationship between strategic process and innovation is complex and multifaceted. Üniversitesi (2010) found that the type of strategy development process can impact the forms of innovation, with a negative effect on both exploitative and exploratory innovation. Ivanova (2019) emphasized the role of open innovation as a strategic approach to company development, enabling the acceleration of innovation processes and the meeting of user requirements. Chereau (2018) highlighted the need for a strategic fit between a company's innovation behavior and its strategic choices, as well as the different competences required for exploration and exploitation of innovation. Birchall (2003) proposed a model for managing the innovation process, identifying factors that strengthen an organization's ability to achieve successful innovative outcomes and offering a perspective on where to concentrate effort. These studies collectively underscore the importance of aligning strategic processes with innovation, and the need for a strategic fit and a model for managing the innovation process.

Research conducted in Nigeria has demonstrated how innovation and research can propel economic competitiveness and industrial expansion (Kwon-Ndung, 2014). However, elements like the institutional structure and knowledge pool make it more difficult to convert R&D results into concrete goods and services (Egbetokun, 2007). Process innovation has

been shown to greatly improve organisational agility in the banking industry (Ekweli, 2020). This can also be applied to the Nigerian tourism industry to create an agility industry with increased contribution to the economic growth of the country. Financial limitations have been noted as a deterrent to innovation adoption in quantity surveying and tourism organisations, notwithstanding the possible advantages (Peter, 2019).

Many creative approaches have been put out to change the Nigerian tourism industry. In addition to highlighting the importance of tourism entrepreneurship in developing a destination's tourism spirit, Esu (2015) offers a model that incorporates entrepreneurial initiatives, makes use of already-existing hospitality businesses, encourages community-based tourism, and establishes efficient regulatory frameworks. While Nwokorie (2015) emphasizes the significance of culinary tourism for regional economic growth and national branding, Omoera (2010) emphasises the potential of television in reshaping the business. Taofeek (2015) calls for government assistance to address issues in this sector and emphasises on the entrepreneurship of rural tourism as a strategy for economic growth. All of these studies point to the possibility that innovation in Nigeria's tourist industry might be fostered by entrepreneurship, media, food tourism, and rural development.

Nigerian tourism strategic management is a complicated process that calls for an innovative mindset (Benson-Eluwa, 2019). This is especially crucial given the fierce competition, unstable political and economic environments, and changing customer needs (Sandybayev, 2016). Infrastructure, market demand, financial markets, and labour have all been identified as major risk factors (Awodele, 2011). Risk management is therefore essential. Additional issues include managing and putting sustainable tourist development plans into action, with administrative and political roadblocks impeding progress (Aina, 2015). All of these studies point to the necessity of a thorough and creative approach to Nigerian tourism innovative management.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theory of Resource-Based View, or RBV, has become a well-known theoretical viewpoint in the field of strategic management literature (Mansour et al, 2022; Gupta et al, 2018). This theoretical framework concentrates on an organization's internal resources and skills in order to explain competitive advantage and firm performance (Taher, 2012; Liang and you, 2009). The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory emphasizes the role of unique and valuable resources in determining competitive advantage. It has been applied across various fields. Liang (2009) and Mansour (2022) both found support for the theory, with the latter suggesting that the use of capabilities and sustained competitive advantage in a mediated model is effective. Mahoney (1992) further highlights the potential for RBV to bridge different research perspectives in strategic management. However, Taher (2012) points out the need to consider the orchestration of resources, particularly in the context of Information Technology projects, to fully understand the impact of RBV.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) paradigm represents a major shift in the thinking of strategic management (Mansour et al, 2022). The growth of RBV theory came as a result important figures and foundational studies. This development of RBV theory shows a constant improvement and extension of its conceptual foundations, starting with Edith Penrose's ground-breaking observations on the function of firm-specific resources and

continuing through the important contributions of Jay Barney, Wernerfelt, and others (Foss and Stieglitz, 2010; Dalta, 2007).

Fundamental ideas of RBV theory, such as resources, capabilities, competitive advantage, and sustained competitive advantage, are explained in the differences between capacities that are dynamic and those that are not, as well as how immobility and heterogeneity contribute to competitive advantage. It covers a broad spectrum of areas such as organisational theory, economics, and strategic management. It aligns with ideas from the knowledge-based view, transaction cost economics, and property rights theory. Although RBV theory has received a lot of praise, yet it is not without flaws and limits. Some of the main criticisms of RBV theory are its tautological nature, failure to include outside influences, difficulties with operationalization, and lack of empirical testing. RBV theory can be strengthened by the integration of institutional theory, dynamic capabilities theory, and stakeholder theory, among other theoretical vantage points.

Numerous applications of RBV theory cover everything from resource allocation and innovation management to competitive analysis and strategic decision-making. Its paradigm offers a number of interesting directions for theoretical advancement and research. The importance of dynamic skills in resource orchestration, the effect of digitalization on firm resources, and the integration of RBV with cutting-edge disciplines like sustainability and social responsibility are just a few of the important applications. Generally, the theory of Resource-Based View (RBV) provides a strong perspective for comprehending the origins of firm performance and competitive advantage. RBV theory offers important insights for organisational analysis and strategic decision-making by concentrating on internal resources and capabilities. RBV theory is still a mainstay of strategic management research and practice, despite several drawbacks. It is constantly changing and adapting.

2.3 Empirical Framework

Kadar and Taylor (2023) in their study of the tourism industry in South Africa, viewed tourism as the most significant potential engine of economic growth and employment creation among all industrial groupings. They asserted that coronavirus had a terrible effect on the travel and tourism industry both internationally and in South Africa. Their main aim was to introduce design thinking to the tourism industry, comprehend its special ability to address difficulties unique to the industry, and eventually identify design thinking as a key strategic tool for advancing tourism in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In this study, they employed a qualitative research methodology with purposive sampling. Their major findings showed that participants in the study expressed a desire for design thinking adoption in tourism industry and offered a variety of activities to help achieve this goal. They recommended that the tourism industry collaborates with key stakeholders and develop various customized strategies in human resource design thinking competency to help the growth in the tourism industry.

Oyelude et al (2023) saw that the use of cell phone technologies, and information systems, among others, can be referred to as the fourth industrial revolution. This fourth industrial revolution, they believed, is characterized by a sporadic adoption of technology in the business world. They also asserted that it enabled organizations to develop noticeable skills for the achievement of organizational goals. As a result, they saw that hotel businesses are

faced with various changes as a result of the adoption of technology. Their main aim was to capture digitalization of human resource management practices in the Nigeria's hospitality industry. They discovered that the evidences from hotel businesses showed that human resource management practices in the 21st century embraces the concept of digitalization. They concluded that there will be increase in the future trends in digitalization and HRM practices.

Kwon-Ndung and Migap (2014) saw that there are opportunities in Nigerian tourism industry fuelled by the full influence of research ideas and knowledge to transform business products and processes into long-term innovation. They argued that business research and innovation contribute significantly to improvement in enterprise productivity and quality; and that it is the integral components of business strategy and success. Drawing heavily from published literature, their paper highlighted the enormous benefits of continual research and innovation on industry growth such as the tourism industry. They recommended that Nigeria could use improvements in strategic process and innovation management to promote its tourism industry competitiveness at the global level.

Ekweli (2020) studied that banking industry but his work can also be relevant in the tourism industry. He examined the relationship between process innovation and organizational agility experienced in the banking sector and how it can transform the Nigerian economy. He used a cross sectional survey research design and selected 36 top and middle managers from 18 Deposit Money Banks. He employed Pearson Product Moment Coefficient in testing the hypotheses. His findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between process innovation and organizational agility in all sectors in Nigeria economy. He asserted that process innovation can lead to high sensing agility, decision agility and acting agility. He recommended that there should be more emphasis on process innovation for the attainment of sensing agility in the pursuit of organizational agility. It should be noted that the process innovation is usually carried out through strategic process.

Benson-Eluwa (2019) work focused on the concepts of strategic thinking that are central to the efficient conduct of marketing-led organizations in travel and tourism. He emphasises was on the competitive future orientation of strategy in an era of globalization, constant change and the redrawing of traditional industry sector boundaries facilitated by information technology. Tourism growth is generally rapid although at varying degrees depending on the level of attention given, to the industry and technological advancement in the country. He believed that tourism is one of the fastest growing and promising areas of management with a high economic and social importance for the economy of many countries. Current conditions of tough competition in the tourist market, economic and political instability in many regions, the fast-growing needs and demands of tourists are proposing a new challenge of transition to an innovative path of tourism development industry. He discussed the issues of strategic innovative activity in the sphere of tourism and presents the main areas of innovation in the tourism sector, as well as factors affecting the innovative development of tourism. He concluded that the factors underlying features of innovative activity in tourism includes specific properties of the tourism product, producers and consumers of tourism services.

Aina and Apoola (2015) suggested that managing sustainable tourism is recognized as an important aspect of tourism growth in a developing economy such as Nigeria. They argued

that in managing sustainable tourism strategic process and innovation is paramount to ensure sustainability. They believed that sustainability of any tourism plan depend on a strategy and innovation. Their paper focus on the process and the challenges involved in the implementation and management of the Nigeria tourism development plan and the effort of the Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) in the planning and management of tourism facilities and destinations in the country. Their Findings revealed that though the final master plan has not been officially released since the draft was published in year 2006, implementation of the draft plan has suffered a lot of political and administrative bottlenecks. They recommended the full implementation of the tourism master plan which will only be effective with the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders in the tourism industry in aspects of funding, planning and management of tourism development in Nigeria for effective sustainability. This study shows that they players in the Nigerian tourism industry will have to play a significant role in the development and sustainability of the industry. These players can only improve the system by improving their strategic process and innovation management.

Chen and Chiu (2018) suggested that the public and economies depend on leisure and recreation to become stronger which has made the tourism very important industry in economic growth and development. They argued that sustained-yield management can only be achieved through strategic process and innovation management. They emphasised that it for this reason that innovation is inevitable in tourism business operations. They discovered that the tourism industry is facing lots of tests, and the operation is getting difficult. It therefore through strategic innovation that firms can enhance their competitive advantage. They used supervisors and employees in tourism in Taichung City as the research objects and distributed 420 copies of questionnaire. A total 317 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 75%. Their results showed significant positive relationship between 1. innovation strategy and competitive advantage, 2. competitive advantage and operational performance, and 3. innovation strategy and operational performance. They concluded that firms in the tourism industry can enhance their competitiveness and operational performance through strategic innovation. However, for strategic innovation to take place sophisticated strategic processes must have taken place.

Okoi et al (2022) sought to examine strategic entrepreneurship practices and performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria's hospitality industry. Their main aim was to examine the relationship between strategic resource management and the quality of SMEs services/products, as well as ascertain the relationship between entrepreneurial innovation and increased sales volume of SMEs in Nigeria's hospitality industry. They adopted the survey design and sampled 400 respondents drawn from 1,294 employees from selected SMEs of the Nigerian hospitality industry, 365 respondents were filled and retrieved. This represents 91.25% of the total sample administered. Using multiple linear regression techniques to test the research hypotheses, their findings showed that strategic resource management and entrepreneurship innovation have a significant influence on the performance of SMEs in the Nigerian tourism industry. Furthermore, that strategic resource management enhanced performance of Tourism SMEs in Nigeria and entrepreneurship innovation supports. They concluded that tourism managers should progressively incorporate new decision-making using the tools of strategic process and promote innovation in their organisation.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Meta-synthesis Methodology

Producing new idea, meta-synthesis approach entails methodically evaluating and synthesising previous research works. In the Nigerian tourism business, a meta-synthesis technique pertaining to strategic process and innovation management was carried out through the following steps:

3.1.2 Finding Relevant Literature

To find research on strategic process and innovation management in the Nigerian tourism business, conduct a thorough search of academic databases, journals, conference proceedings, and other pertinent sources. To narrow down the results, consider using keywords like "tourism industry Nigeria," "strategic management," "innovation," and "competitive advantage."

3.1.3 Selection Criteria

Studies used in the meta-synthesis analysis were between 2014 and 2024, any study that is above those period were excluded from the study and analysis. Also studies that were either focus on tourism industry globally or within Nigeria were included in the study provide they aim were to establish a nexus between strategy, process, competitive advantage and innovation.

3.1.4 Analysis and Synthesis

The literature included in the study was used to establish patterns, trends, and connections. For analysis was done to determine similarities, differences, and gaps and the creation of broad themes that captured the innovative management techniques and strategic procedures used in Nigeria's tourism sector.

3.1.5 Meta-synthesis Report

A tabula report was generated using summary of the findings that have been synthesised, practical and research implications. Using the knowledge gained from the meta-synthesis, the report generated will give a concise account of the strategic procedures and innovation management techniques used by the Nigerian tourism sector.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Meta-Synthesis Report

Findings	Authors in Support
The Tourism industry contributes significantly to economic growth in the Nigerian economy.	Kadar and Taylor, 2023; Oelude, 2023; Ogosi et al, 2023, Umar et al, 2020, Aina, 2015, Benson-Eluwa, 2019,

Strategic Process is important in developing strategic framework in Nigerian Tourism Industry.	Umar et al, 2023; Ogosi et al, 2023; Ivanava, 20018;
Cooperation and partnership will lead to significant growth in the industry	Benson-Eluwa, 2019; Aina, 2015, Nwokirie, 2015; Esu, 2015, Toafeek, 2015
There is introduction of Destination Management Organisations into the industry	DeBruyn and Mayer 2022; Okure,2021; Arasli et al, 2021
Product creation, service delivery, marketing tactics, and technology are the common innovations in tourism industry	Oyelude, 2023; Arasli et al, 2021, Umar et al, 2020; Ekweli, 2020
Customised innovation is needed in the Nigerian industry for growth and sustainability.	Ekweli, 2020, Peter, 2019; Benson-Eluwa, 2019; Nwokorie, 2015; Aina, 2015
Technological innovation such Virtual and Augmented Realities will increase growth and sustainability	Kadar and Taylor, 2023, Oyelude, 2023, Arasli et al 2021.
The major challenges in the industry are: infrastructure deficit; lack of security; regulatory restrictions and innovative skill shortage.	Benson-Eluwa, 2019; Aina, 2015, Nwokirie, 2015; Esu, 2015, Toafeek, 2015; DeBruyn and Mayer 2022; Okure,2021; Arasli et al, 2021; Kadar and Taylor, 2023; Oelude, 2023; Ogosi et al, 2023, Umar et al, 2020, Aina, 2015, Benson-Eluwa, 2019,
The industry has a lot of potentials because of : existence of abundant natural resources; growth in domestic tourism and investment potentials.	Benson-Eluwa, 2019; Aina, 2015, Nwokirie, 2015; Esu, 2015, Toafeek, 2015; DeBruyn and Mayer 2022; Okure,2021; Arasli et al, 2021; Kadar and Taylor, 2023; Oelude, 2023; Ogosi et al, 2023, Umar et al, 2020, Aina, 2015, Benson-Eluwa, 2019,

Source: Researcher Compilation from Literature, 2024.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

Nigeria's tourist industry, which is distinguished by its rich cultural legacy, stunning natural surroundings, and dynamic customs, has enormous potential for economic growth and development. The industry has placed an increasing focus on strategic process and innovation management in recent years in an effort to maximise its potential and obtain a competitive advantage in the global tourism market. In-depth study on strategic process and innovation management in the Nigerian tourism sector is the basis for this debate, which highlights important trends, obstacles, and opportunities.

Strategic Process in Tourism Industry in Nigeria

In the Nigerian tourist industry, developing and putting into practice plans to attain competitiveness and sustainable growth are the main objectives of the strategic process. According to research, the industry has a number of difficulties in this area, such as poor infrastructure, little assistance from the government, and unstable socio-political environments. To address these issues and promote progress, there are a number of noteworthy programmes and strategic frameworks in place as well. The significance of partnerships and cooperation between the different stakeholders in the tourism ecosystem is one of the main conclusions. According to research, effective strategic processes frequently entail cooperation between non-governmental organisations, the public and corporate sectors, and local communities. Public-private partnerships, or PPPs, have proven crucial in providing finance for many industry projects, such as creating capacity, marketing campaigns, and developing infrastructure (Umar et al, 2023; Ogosi et al, 2023; Ivanava, 2018). Moreover, findings highlight the role of destination management organizations (DMOs) in spearheading strategic initiatives and promoting destination competitiveness. DMOs play a crucial role in destination marketing, product development, and stakeholder coordination. However, there are concerns regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of existing DMOs in Nigeria, with calls for greater accountability, transparency, and performance evaluation (DeBruyn and Mayer 2022; Okure,2021; Arasli et al, 2021).

Innovation Management in the Nigerian Tourism Sector

In Nigeria's tourist industry, innovation management is becoming more widely acknowledged as a vital factor in fostering sustainability and competitiveness. Product creation, service delivery, marketing tactics, and technology breakthroughs are just a few of the many activities that fall under the umbrella of innovation. The results show that even if the value of innovation is becoming more widely recognised, there are still a number of obstacles the industry must overcome to promote an innovative culture (Oyelude, 2023; Arasli et al, 2021, Umar et al, 2020; Ekweli, 2020). One of the most important conclusions is the requirement for customised innovation techniques that match the special traits and difficulties of the Nigerian travel industry. Given the nation's prevailing sociocultural, economic, and infrastructure constraints, generic innovation models might not be appropriate in this particular setting. Thus, there is a need for innovation frameworks that are context-specific and include the various requirements and goals of enterprises, visitors, and local communities (Ekweli, 2020, Peter, 2019; Benson-Eluwa, 2019; Nwokorie, 2015; Aina, 2015).

Furthermore, studies demonstrate how technology can spur innovation in the Nigerian tourism industry. Virtual reality, big data analytics, and mobile applications are examples of digital technologies that have the potential to completely transform the tourist value chain in a number of ways, including marketing, distribution, and visitor experiences. Adoption of technology is still hampered by a number of issues, such as poor internet access, low digital literacy, and legislative limitations. Additionally, research indicates that innovation in the Nigerian tourism industry includes social and cultural innovation in addition to technology innovations. Innovative strategies that support destination distinction and tourist happiness include cultural festivals, community-based tourism initiatives, and sustainable tourism practices (Oyelude, 2023; Arasli, 2021).

Challenges and Opportunities

The Nigerian tourism industry is confronted with various obstacles that impede its progress, even if it has the capacity for expansion and novelty. Among these difficulties are:

- (a) Deficiencies in Infrastructure:** Inadequate lodging options, transit systems, and basic amenities restrict traveller happiness and impede tourism growth.
- (b) Security Concerns:** Both domestic and foreign tourists are discouraged from visiting Nigeria due to enduring security difficulties, such as terrorism, abduction, and civil upheaval.
- (c) Regulatory Restraints:** Investment and innovation in the industry are hindered by onerous bureaucratic procedures, inconsistent rules, and regulatory bottlenecks.
- (d) Skills Shortage:** The industry's capacity to effectively compete is hampered by a shortage of trained workers in fields like marketing, sustainable tourism, and hotel management (Benson-Eluwa, 2019; Aina, 2015, Nwokirie, 2015; Esu, 2015, Toafeek, 2015; DeBruyn and Mayer 2022; Okure, 2021; Arasli et al, 2021; Kadar and Taylor, 2023; Oelude, 2023; Ogosi et al, 2023, Umar et al, 2020, Aina, 2015, Benson-Eluwa, 2019).

Notwithstanding these obstacles, the Nigerian tourist industry presents noteworthy prospects for strategic expansion and novelty. Among these opportunities are:

Cultural Diversity: Nigeria offers a wide range of cultural experiences and attractions, making its rich cultural legacy and diversity a unique selling proposition for the country's tourist development.

- (a) Natural Resources:** There is a tonne of opportunity for eco-tourism and adventure tourism in the nation's varied natural environments, which include pristine beaches, national parks, and wildlife reserves.
- (b) Domestic Tourism:** Growing awareness of Nigeria's tourism sites, urbanisation, and increased disposable incomes are all contributing to the growing trend of domestic travel.
- (c) Investment Potential:** Despite the difficulties, the government's dedication to promote tourism as a vital engine of economic development is generating a rising amount of interest from both domestic and foreign investors in Nigeria's tourist industry (Benson-Eluwa, 2019; Aina, 2015, Nwokirie, 2015; Esu, 2015, Toafeek, 2015; DeBruyn and Mayer 2022; Okure, 2021; Arasli et al, 2021; Kadar and Taylor, 2023; Oelude, 2023; Ogosi et al, 2023, Umar et al, 2020, Aina, 2015, Benson-Eluwa, 2019).

The discussion's conclusions highlight the significance of innovation management and strategic process in promoting expansion and competitiveness in Nigeria's tourist industry. The industry has many obstacles to overcome, such as inadequate infrastructure, security issues, and legislative limitations, but it also has a lot of room to develop and innovate. Through the use of strategic relationships, innovation, and the resolution of significant obstacles, Nigeria possesses the capacity to become a preeminent global tourism destination. However, in order to fully realise this potential and harness the socio-economic advantages

linked to the development of tourism, coordinated efforts by the public, commercial, and civil society sectors are needed.

5.1 Conclusion

In its quest for competitiveness and sustainable expansion, the Nigerian tourist industry is facing both possibilities and challenges at this pivotal point in its history. It is clear from a thorough analysis of the sector's strategy process and innovation management that innovation and strategic planning are essential building blocks for realising the sector's full potential. Nigeria's abundant natural riches, rich cultural diversity, expanding domestic tourism industry, and growing investor interest have all contributed to a tangible sense of optimism despite the country's shortcomings in terms of infrastructure, security, regulations, and skills shortages (Benson-Eluwa, 2019; Aina, 2015, Nwokirie, 2015; Esu, 2015, Toafeek, 2015; DeBruyn and Mayer 2022; Okure, 2021; Arasli et al, 2021; Kadar and Taylor, 2023; Oelude, 2023; Ogosi et al, 2023, Umar et al, 2020, Aina, 2015, Benson-Eluwa, 2019).

In Nigeria, the tourist industry, the strategic process—which includes stakeholder collaboration, destination management organisations (DMOs), and customised strategy frameworks—is essential to overcome obstacles and seizing opportunities (DeBruyn and Mayer 2022; Okure, 2021; Arasli et al, 2021). A comprehensive strategy that tackles policy reforms, marketing tactics, infrastructure development, and capacity building is necessary for effective strategic planning. Working together, the public and corporate sectors, local communities, and non-governmental organisations may better coordinate efforts, mobilise resources, and put sustainable solutions into action.

Moreover, it becomes clear that innovation management is essential to raising competitiveness and promoting long-term expansion in Nigeria's tourist industry. Innovation encompasses social, cultural, and environmental aspects in addition to technology, and it has the enormous potential to change tourism experiences. To promote equitable growth and drive good change, Nigeria's distinct socio-cultural and economic environment requires the development of context-specific innovation solutions (Benson-Eluwa, 2019; Aina, 2015, Nwokirie, 2015; Esu, 2015, Toafeek, 2015; DeBruyn and Mayer 2022; Okure, 2021; Arasli et al, 2021; Kadar and Taylor, 2023; Oelude, 2023; Ogosi et al, 2023, Umar et al, 2020, Aina, 2015, Benson-Eluwa, 2019).

The results emphasise that in order to overcome the obstacles preventing strategic process and innovation management in the Nigerian tourism industry, all stakeholders must work together. To improve visitor experiences and draw investment, infrastructure development—especially in the areas of transit networks, lodging options, and basic amenities—is essential. In addition, the government needs to give security changes top priority, simplify regulatory procedures, and allocate funds for skill development in order to create a skilled labour force that can spur innovation and provide top-notch tourism services.

5.2 Recommendations

The following suggestions are put forth in light of the data and conclusions obtained from the examination of innovation management and strategic process in the Nigerian tourism industry:

1. **Infrastructure Development:** To improve the allure and accessibility of tourist attractions throughout Nigeria, the government should give infrastructure development—which includes transportation networks, lodging options, and basic amenities—primary funding. Infrastructure projects can be financed through public-private partnerships (PPPs), which also guarantee the facilities' long-term upkeep and operation.
2. **Enhancement of Security:** Resolving security issues is critical to gaining back the trust of both domestic and foreign travellers. To fight crime and protect travellers and tourism assets, the government should enact extensive security reforms, improve law enforcement capacities, and work with pertinent parties.
3. **Policy Reforms:** To foster the growth and investment of the tourism industry, it is imperative to streamline regulatory procedures, cut down on bureaucratic red tape, and establish uniform rules. It is recommended that the government collaborate closely with industry stakeholders to identify regulatory obstacles and implement reforms that foster accountability, efficiency, and openness.
4. **Building Capacity:** Putting money into programmes aimed at developing skills and increasing capacity is essential to creating a workforce that is qualified to provide top-notch tourism services and to spur innovation in the industry. One can use academic collaborations, training programmes, and vocational education to give people the information and abilities they need to succeed in a variety of tourism-related jobs.
5. **Promotion of Innovation:** By encouraging entrepreneurship, supporting R&D projects, and providing incentives for the adoption of new technologies, the government, working with industry stakeholders, should work to create an innovative culture in the travel and tourism sector. To assist creative entrepreneurs and SMEs in the tourism sector, innovation hubs, incubators, and funding programmes might be set up.

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