

# **APPRAISAL OF TOURIST MAPPING IN NIGERIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Nigeria is richly endowed with a lot of tourist attractions and cultural heritage. However, the tourism industry in the country remains largely underdeveloped. Hence this sector is yet to contribute substantially to the overall national economic development. Various factors are responsible for the poor state of tourism development in the country. However, one outstanding factor is the near total absence of functional maps that could be used in tourism planning and management. The current status of tourist mapping in the country is quite disturbing. This is as a result of several factors such as inappropriate government policy on mapping, shortage of relevant geographically referenced tourist data, fiscal inadequacy, low level of tourist activities in the country and ignorance of tourism practitioners and government of the potency of maps in tourism resources planning and management. Improving the status of tourist mapping in Nigeria will require some drastic institutional, policy, technical, legal and technological reforms.

## **Introduction**

At present Nigeria could be said to be operating a mono-cultural economy. She derives more than ninety-percent of her foreign exchange earnings from the export of crude oil and allied products. An awareness of the dangers of depending mostly on one source of income is however beginning to perplex the government and people of Nigeria. Hence there have been persistent calls on government to diversify the nation's economy. To this end, the tourism industry is seen as having the potentialities to diversify and boost the nation's economy. Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural tourist attractions. She is equally richly endowed with a wide spectrum of cultural heritage. Most of the potential tourism resources of the country are yet untapped.

Various concerted efforts are currently being made to develop the tourism sub-sector. In 1976 a national tourism policy was formulated and the Nigerian Tourist Board (NTB) was consequently inaugurated to implement the policy. However, in 1990 the tourism policy of the country was reviewed with a view to making it more effective. Also the NTB was replaced with the Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC). Similarly, a State Tourism Board now exists in each of the 36 States that presently make up the federation of Nigeria. Both the public and private sectors are currently involved in the development of tourism in the country. Most of the efforts are concentrated on the physical development of tourist sites, and the provision of allied facilities and services such as accommodation, transportation, travel agency, and so on.

In spite of the numerous efforts being made to improve tourism in Nigeria, that sub-sector still remains largely under-developed. A lot of factors are responsible for this scenario. However, of particular interest is the near total neglect of maps and mapping in the on-going crusade to make tourism an all-time notable foreign exchange earner in Nigeria. To say that the level of tourism mapping in the country at present is appalling, is to state the matter mildly. The sad reality is that tourist mapping - in the true sense of it - is almost non-existent in the country. This situation is significantly responsible for the country's current poor state of tourism development.

This paper attempts to present a brief but vivid account of the current status of tourist mapping in Nigeria. Equally presented are some of the problems and prospects of tourists mapping that exist in the country. A framework for improving tourist mapping in a developing country such as Nigeria is also suggested.

## **Maps and Tourism Development**

The importance of maps in tourism development cannot be over-emphasised. Developing the tourism industry involves important tasks such as project initiation, planning, implementation, promotion, monitoring and evaluation. Maps are essentially needed in carrying out any of the above-mentioned tasks. In the main, maps can be used to "vividly portray the location, nature, condition, size, abundance, distribution and accessibility of available potential and actual tourism resources" (Uluocha, 1999a). Functional maps are definitely part of the linchpins of integrated tourism planning and management. Tourism

is mostly a space-related activity. Just like every other space-related activity, no satisfactory integrated and sustainable tourism planning, development and management can take place without the use of relevant geographically referenced information. Maps remain and indeed will ever remain the most effective means of encoding and disseminating geo-spatial information. This therefore makes it quite imperative to use maps to graphically present and transmit tourist information.

Some of the plethora of potential uses of mapped information in tourism development and management are shown in Table 1 (See also Uluocha, 1991; 1996; 1999a and 1999b)

**Table 1 Application areas of maps in tourism development**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identification of existing and potential tourist attractions.</li><li>• Delimitation of natural habitats with touristic value.</li><li>• Parcellization of tourism land use.</li><li>• Apportionment of tourism land to developers.</li><li>• Formulation of tourism resources development and management policy.</li><li>• Establishment of tourism development schemes.</li><li>• Tourism land use planning, zoning and control.</li><li>• Monitoring of tourism land development.</li><li>• Inventorying tourism resources.</li><li>• Monitoring the state of tourist facilities.</li><li>• Tourism land protection.</li><li>• Maintenance of tourist facilities.</li><li>• Inventorying vacant land for tourism development.</li><li>• Tracking and monitoring tourist land development to ensure that each piece of land is used exactly for the type of tourism activity it was carved out.</li><li>• Quick detection of threatened tourist sites and facilities.</li><li>• Evaluation of level of damage/threat to tourist land/facilities owing to ecological hazards such as erosion, fire outbreak, landslides, flooding, etc.</li><li>• Tourist information communication.</li><li>• Promotion, advertising and marketing of tourist attractions/facilities.</li><li>• Intelligent decision-making.</li></ul>
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## **Status of Tourist Mapping in Nigeria**

Generally speaking, the current level of tourist mapping in Nigeria is low. Although some sort of tourist-related maps have been produced, the fact remains that there is a total lack of organized, coordinated and conscious effort towards developing tourist mapping in the country. Tourist maps are yet to be properly recognized as vital ingredients for tourism development. Since the dawn of organized or modern mapping in the country, which dates back to the colonial days, no tourist atlas of the country has been produced. Not even a section was devoted to tourism in the existing national atlas. The Federal Surveys Department, which is the official mapping agency of the federal government, is yet to publish what could rightly be regarded as a tourist map of Nigeria. The country is really lacking in up-to-date, reliable and comprehensive cartographic products that could graphically furnish relevant information on the geographical location, distribution, nature, size and accessibility of both existing and potential tourist resources.

Inasmuch as proper tourist mapping is yet to commence in the country, some tourist-related maps nonetheless exist. Road maps covering the entire country or parts thereof have been published. Some of these road maps equally show some remarkable natural or cultural landmarks. The national atlas of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which was published in 1978, contains a one-page 1:3,000,000 map showing the locations and classes of some hotels, catering rest houses, non-catering rest houses and major highways and railways. However, it is instructive to note that this twenty-two years old atlas is outdated; hence a new and current one is obviously needed. A 1:1,500,000 wall map of the country titled *NIGERIA: Road and Tourism*, was published in 1997 courtesy of the Federal Surveys. However, this map is largely deficient in tourist information, only very few tourist attractions were indicated. Another major shortcoming of the map is that some of the symbols used to represent certain tourist features lacked uniformity; for instance, different symbols were used to represent the same type of museums in various places where they exist.

Topographical map series at scale 1:50,000 have also been produced for almost every part of the country, although the maps are largely outdated. Efforts are however currently being made to produce an entirely new series of topographical maps at a larger scale, namely 1:25,000. These topographical maps contain vitally important geo-referenced information that could be used in tourism resources planning and management.

Many urban centers in Nigeria, especially the Federal capital, Abuja and State capitals have published Street Guides. Although strictly speaking these Street Guides are not tourist maps, yet they contain useful information that the potential tourist could find quite beneficial. Most of the existing Street Guides contain tourism-related information such as street/road network and alignment, important physical landmarks, hotels and other hospitality facilities/services, financial institutions, telecommunication points, police stations, petrol (gas) stations, and so on. It must be noted however that most of these tourism-related facilities are only sparingly shown in the Street Guides. This is quite understandable given that the Street Guides were not produced specifically for the purpose of tourism. Certain literature about Nigeria that focus partially or wholly on

tourism equally contain some sort of tourist maps showing some of the tourist attractions that exist. Such textbook tourist maps are however devoid of a lot of salient details that might be of immense benefit to the tourists and tourism managers alike.

Some States in the country have actually produced some sort of tourist maps covering their respective States. However, most of the State tourist maps are small scale in resolution and they simply show some of the tourist spots and cultural heritage of the State. Again, almost each State and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, has a land cover/use map, which equally shows the areas designated for tourism activities. But it is only very few of the States that have actually gone ahead to further develop their tourist land use maps to some extent.

### **Problems of Tourist Mapping in Nigeria**

Certain bottlenecks are currently impeding tourist mapping in Nigeria. Some of the major factors affecting tourist mapping in the country are highlighted in Table 2. Generally, the Nigeria tourism industry is under-developed. A weak culture of tourism exists among Nigerians. This has led to low participation of people in tourism and also the present low level of development of tourist resources; consequently Nigeria is currently not a popular destination for international tourists (Adejoh and Adekeye, 1999). Tourism is not yet a very viable activity in the country, although many consider it as a potential goldmine. A situation like this does not augur well for tourist mapping in the country. Generally speaking, mapping in Nigeria is still an activity largely dominated and driven by economic considerations. Hence it is mostly those sectors or activities that generate a lot of immediate revenue that are also mapped. Unfortunately, tourism is not yet one of such activities.

The low ebb of tourist mapping in Nigeria is equally a resultant effect of the overall poor state of thematic mapping in the country. The existing national mapping policy is incomprehensive; it mostly favours the production of general-purpose maps. Consequently, the national mapping agency, the Federal Surveys, hardly embark on the production of thematic maps. The national policy on mapping maintains a disturbing silence on tourist mapping. Most of the existing tourist-related maps were actually produced by private organizations that are fully or partially engaged in mapping.

Lack of adequate awareness of the usefulness of tourist maps is equally contributory to the sordid state of tourist mapping in Nigeria. The government, tourism managers and other stakeholders seem not to be sufficiently aware of the potency of maps in the proper planning, development and management of tourist resources. As a result, no conscious efforts have so far been made to acquire a comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date geographically referenced database for tourist mapping and some other purposes. At present, shortage of data poses as a bane of tourist mapping in the country.

**Table 2 Some obstacles to tourist mapping in Nigeria**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shortage of geo-referenced tourist data.</li><li>• Lack of policy on tourist mapping.</li><li>• Underdeveloped tourism industry.</li><li>• General shortage of funds for mapping.</li><li>• Inadequate awareness of the strategic role of maps in tourism planning and management.</li></ul>
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## **The Way Forward**

In view of the immense benefits of maps/mapping to tourism development, Nigeria cannot afford to continue maintaining a lackadaisical posture towards tourist mapping. Without any doubts, a strong tourist mapping culture will surely facilitate the development of the tourism industry. To achieve a successful and sustainable tourist mapping in the country a formidable framework is needed. Putting such a framework in place will obviously entail embarking on some institutional, policy, technical, legal and technological reforms. The following modest suggestions are therefore made towards moving tourist mapping in Nigeria forward.

- The national mapping policy should be revised, with more emphasis placed on thematic mapping.
- The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and other frontline players in the tourism sector should be mandated and empowered to make tourist mapping a policy matter. Mapping should form an integral part of the overall tourism development package. As a further step forward, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism should establish and properly equip a functional cartographic unit.
- A purposeful nation-wide tourism resources inventory/survey should be undertaken. This, hopefully, will yield the much-needed geo-referenced database for tourist mapping. Also a comprehensive classification of the various tourist resources in the country should be undertaken. This will help in developing national standard cartographic symbols for graphical representation of the tourist resources.
- Tourist mapping should be adequately funded. To achieve this, all stakeholders in the tourism industry should be mandated to invest substantially in tourism information resources development, of which mapping will form a part.
- The Nigerian Cartographic Association (NCA) in liaison with some other related bodies should embark on a mission to popularize tourist maps. This could be accomplished by initiating insightful research efforts on the utility of maps in tourism planning, development, promotion, marketing and management. Besides, cheap and colourful tourist promotional maps should be produced and made readily available to the public at little or no cost. This will both create the much-needed awareness and also arouse the interest of the general public on tourist maps.

## Conclusion

Tourist mapping in Nigeria is still at a low level of development. Thus the contribution of maps to tourism development in the country is currently low. This is by no way as a result of the weakness or inability of maps to encourage tourism development, but rather it is an indictment on the part of tourism practitioners and the government who have so far failed to recognize the usefulness of maps to the tourism industry. Maps are largely neglected in the planning, development and management of tourism. This is rather an unfortunate precedent that needs to be jettisoned forthwith. In an era when spatially referenced information has become a critical success factor in any space-related activity, no form of tourism development and management can be conceived and actualized satisfactorily without the use of relevant, up-to-date, comprehensive and accurate mapped information.

Notwithstanding the major constraints currently bedeviling tourist mapping in the country, any careful prognosis of contemporary happenings in the country will surely unveil the fact that the prospects of big-time tourist mapping are quite bright. If the present clarion calls on the government to diversify the economy and make tourism a focal point is heeded, then tourist mapping will hopefully receive a boost. More so, if the national mapping policy is thoroughly reviewed with more emphasis placed on thematic mapping and cartographers in the country are given appropriate recognition, the state of tourist mapping in Nigeria will greatly improve.

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