
**BANDITRY AS A MENACE TO HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRY
IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA: CAUSES, EFFECTS AND PANACEA**

EDEM C. E.

Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management
University of Cross River State, Calabar, Nigeria
essiencedem@unicross.edu.ng

ONYEONORO, C. O.

Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management
Micheal Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria
onyeonoro.okechukwu@mouau.edu.ng

&

OYOM ANNOINTED BASSEY

gurusprime@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates banditry as a menace to Hospitality and Tourism industry in Benue State: causes, effects and panacea. In doing justice to this study the following specific objective were examined: firstly, to determine the influence of ethno-religious-induced banditry on hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State, secondly, to examine the influence of political-induced banditry on hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State and finally to examine the influence of nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry on hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State. The study employed the survey research method for collecting primary data through the administration of questionnaire. Secondary data were collected from relevant material such as textbooks, journal articles, seminar papers, and periodicals. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population and the sample for this study was drawn from staff of Benue State Tourism Bureau and hotel staff in Benue State through a stratified random sampling technique. The state was stratified along the 18 local government areas and eight hotel staff were randomly selected from different hotels in each local government area, thus, making a total of 184 hotel staff. Hence, 184 hotel staff were selected for the study. Also, 36 staff of Benue State Tourism Bureau were selected using a simple random sampling. In all, a total of 220 respondents were administered with questionnaires out of which 180 returned. Data obtained were analyzed using mean score and standard deviation. Any mean score lower than 2.50 implied disagree while equal to or higher than 2.50 implied agree to the items. Multiple regression statistics was used in testing the null hypotheses. The research findings indicate that the three tables highlight the significant negative impact of ethno-religious, political, and nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry on the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State, with grand means indicating strong consensus among respondents (3.72, 3.66, and 3.69). Ethno-religious banditry leads to reduced tourist inflow, destroyed infrastructure, and increased insecurity for workers, aligning with Williams' Ethno-Religious Conflict Theory. Political instability similarly creates an unsafe environment, discouraging investment and business operations, consistent with Kalyvas' Political Disempowerment Theory. Additionally, nomadic herder conflicts disrupt rural tourism and business sustainability, supported by Waria's Nomadic Pastoralism Theory. The study emphasizes the need for policy measures to address these root causes, such as promoting inter-ethnic dialogue, improving governance, and sustainable resource management, to restore Benue State's tourism appeal. The study therefore made the following recommendations to address the challenges posed by ethno-religious, political, and nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry on the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State, the following recommendations were proposed, firstly, facilitate peace-building initiatives involving traditional leaders, religious authorities, and local government to address tensions between ethnic and

religious groups, fostering mutual understanding to improve safety and restore tourist confidence. Secondly, the state government should enhance transparency, reduce corruption, and strengthen law enforcement. Implementing security measures in tourist areas and supporting hospitality businesses with operational costs will help sustain the industry and enhance Benue State's image as a safe destination. Thirdly, adopt strategies to manage land resources effectively, establish designated grazing reserves, and promote dialogue between pastoralists and farmers to reduce conflicts, ensuring safer rural areas for tourism and supporting the hospitality sector's sustainability.

Keywords: *Banditry, Menace, Ethno-Religious, Political-Induced, Nomadic Free-Range Grazing, Hospitality and Tourism.*

Introduction

Insecurity is a global issue that must be tackled to create an enabling environment for socio-economic development. It does not only pose threats to the lives and properties of citizens, but deter the development of nations. Thus, there is a correlation between security and development. Peace and stability have been the main objective of most nations in the world over the years; however, insecurity have continued to remain a major hindrance to achieving meaningful socio-economic development in most African countries and Nigeria is not an exception. In recent time, Epron (2019) unveiled that Nigeria had continued to witness a tremendous setback in its socio-economic development stimulated by the continuous resurgence of different kinds of security threats particularly banditry, kidnapping, insurgency, pastoralists/farmer conflict, among others thereby posing a serious threat to the country's national security. Among these security threats in Nigeria, banditry has become more prevalence recently.

Banditry is a derivative of the term "bandit" meaning an unlawful armed group terrorizing people and confiscating their properties. It is synonymous with the establishment of gang groups who use small and light weapons to carry out attacks against people. In his insight, Shalangwa (2013) regards banditry as the practice of raiding and attacking victims by members of an armed group, whether premeditated, using weapons of offence or defense, especially in semi-organized groups for the purpose of overpowering the victim and obtaining loot or achieving some political goals. Such bandits are usually perceived as outlaws, desperate and lawless marauders who do not have a definite residence or destination but roam around the forest and mountains to avoid being identified, detected and arrested. In another sense, Okoli & Okpaleke (2014) refers banditry to the incidences of armed robbery or allied violent crimes, such as kidnapping, cattle rustling, and village or market raids. It involves the use of force, or threat to that effect, to intimidate a person or a group of persons in order to rob, rape or kill. Abbas (2018) defined banditry as a type of organized crime committed by outlaws typically involving the threat or use of violence. In this regard, banditry could mean a set-up criminal activity deliberately designed and carried out for personal gains. A person who engages in banditry is known as a bandit.

Looking at Nigeria very critically, one can identify so many causes of banditry. However, some of the causes are: porous borders, state governors lack synergy, the inability of state governors to direct operations, broken down rule of law, religious dichotomy, Governments neglect, unemployment, unequipped police, unpunished crimes, weak local government leadership among others (infoguidenigeria.com, 2023). The prevalence of under-governed spaces where the government's control is ineffective and limited is a major factor giving rise to banditry. Such areas are characterized by bad governance, weak legitimacy, protracted conflict, and poor leadership, which makes citizens vulnerable to exploitation by terrorist groups, traffickers, and other criminal elements. Such areas are not generally entirely devoid of the government's control but are governed poorly and differently from larger communities (Anka, 2017). These poorly governed territories are plagued by bandits and other criminal gangs due to their remoteness, which allows for the perpetuation of an array of illegal

business activities. Another major factor that has increased the incidence of banditry is the farmers-headers clashes.

The effects of banditry in hospitality and tourism industry abound. According to World Trade Organization (WTO) (2005), 66% of leisure traveler said crime is an important consideration in choosing a vacation destination and 62% travelers considering over travel had safety concerned as they made their plans. As tourism grows, security became more important and travelers will expect safeguarding measures in transportation and accommodation. Where there is security threat to tourist, hotels are in trouble because sales will be affected. Losses from banditry attacks could range from monetary, material, valuables, human resources and above all human lives. Banditry has brought about decline in the number of tourist arrivals, increase in cancelled bookings, decrease in the average length of stay of tourists and the average room occupancy. The number of tourists using the recreational facilities of Game Reserve/Wildlife Park have also declined. Bandits involve in looting of game reserve facilities and poaching of wildlife species. Banditry has led to collapse of business activities and job loss in hospitality and tourism industry. Hence, there is a decline in revenue generation.

Bandits have killed Nigerians in their thousands. They have displaced many and put millions in untold hardship. However, Ajayi, Ojo, Jimoh & Chinansa (2022) asserted that government can alleviate banditry by improving urban security, community-based approach to urban safety, strengthening formal criminal justice system and police enhancement, involvement of local vigilantes and community watch groups, reduction of risk factors, nonviolent dispute resolution and strengthening social capital. Infoguidenigeria.com (2023) portrays that possible solutions to banditry in Nigeria include: provision of community police, provision of jobs, addressing corruption and fraud, addressing poverty, tighten security on our borders, synergy among state governors, addressing the issue of proliferation of firearms and provide intelligence. These measures are pertinent because hospitality and tourism industry cannot thrive in an environment with insecurity.

Hospitality is the act of kindness in welcoming and looking after the basic needs of customers. Webstaurantstore.com (2023) define hospitality industry as a broad group of businesses that provide services to customers. The industry can be broken down into three basic areas: accommodations, food and beverage, and travel and tourism. Study.com (2023) defined hospitality industry as a broad group of businesses that provide services to customers. Its focus is to provide customers with unique and satisfactory experiences for a cost. Hospitality is actually one facet of the service industry. It primarily involves addressing customer satisfaction and catering to the needs of guests. The hospitality industry is uniquely distinct since it depends on discretionary spending of customers, meaning that there needs to be a demand and interest in the service being provided for customers to spend money and the industry to be successful. Each sector covers a broad range of fields, providing a distinct variety of goods and services. These sectors overlap and work in conjunction to create one complete and comprehensive hospitality experience.

The Tourism industry has to do with people travelling to other locations, either domestically or internationally, for leisure, social or business purposes. Revifine.com (2022) refers to tourism industry as all activity related to the short-term movement of people to locations away from where they usually reside. Module (2022) define the tourism industry as multifaceted and consists of a large variety of tour operators, hotel operators, cruise ships and recreational activity providers. For tourism to be carried out in a sustainable manner, representatives of all of these industries need to be contacted and included in the planning process. Tourism industry is closely connected to the hotel industry, the hospitality industry and the transport industry, and much of it is based around keeping tourists happy, occupied and equipped with the things they need during their time away from home. A person who embarks on tourism is called a tourist.

The Hospitality and Tourism industry is a large and complex industry and one that is of significant economic importance to Nigeria. American Hospitality Academy (AHA) (2022) define hospitality and tourism as a massive, collective industry consisting of tourism and other hospitality-related businesses. Tourism companies are technically considered hospitality business because they rely on strong customer service to regenerate revenue. The hospitality and tourism industry are an immense sector that includes all the economic activities that directly or indirectly contribute to, or depend upon, travel and tourism. This industry sector offers countless fun and financially rewarding career opportunities, some of which include a travel agent, tour guide, hotel manager, theme park manager, event planner, and tourism officer. This industry is also a driver of other industries such as the land and air transport, energy and communications industries. It is against this backdrop that the researcher deemed it fit to investigate banditry as a menace to hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State, Nigeria: causes, effects and panacea.

Statement of the Problem

Hospitality and tourism industry is a tool for economic growth and stability and also for job creation. It is very important to Nigeria because it will help to improve her gross domestic product, by increasing production and creating a good environment for foreign investors. Hospitality and tourism industry serves as a medium of culture exchange and mingling. Despite the potentials and opportunities available for hospitality and tourism industry in Nigeria, it is still bogged with the problem of insecurity. The unbridled attacks by bandits in Benue State had given rise to travel advisory emanating from different parts against non-essential travels within the state and beyond. The different local government areas in state have been witnessing unprecedented levels of banditry in the recent time. Banditry has become a serious challenge confronting the hospitality and tourism industry in the state. The nature and pattern of banditry in Benue State have become so pervasive that only few tourists that travel or lodge in hotels can be free from being victims. The phenomenon could take various forms in various places which may include waylaying victims on the highways and on transit points, storming hotels and kidnapping of guests/visitors. Losses could range from monetary, material, valuables, human resources and above all human lives. Banditry in Benue State has brought about decline in the number of tourist arrivals, increase in cancelled bookings, decrease in the average length of stay of tourists and the average room occupancy. The number of tourists using the recreational facilities of Game Reserve/Wildlife Park have also declined. Banditry in the state has led to collapse of business activities and job loss in hospitality and tourism industry. Hence, there is a decline in revenue generation. It is against this backdrop that the researcher is motivated to investigate banditry as a menace to hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State, Nigeria: causes, effects and panacea.

Objective of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate banditry as a menace to Hospitality and Tourism industry in Benue State: causes, effects and panacea. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the influence of ethno-religious-induced banditry on hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State.
2. Examine the influence of political-induced banditry on hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State.
3. Examine the influence of nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry on hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses formulated guided the study, and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H01: Ethno-religious-induced banditry has no significant influence on Hospitality and Tourism industry in Benue State.

H02: Political-induced banditry has no significant influence on Hospitality and Tourism industry in Benue State.

H03: Nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry has no significant influence on Hospitality and Tourism industry in Benue State.

Literature Review

Banditry refers to criminal acts typically characterized by robbery and violence, often occurring in rural or unstable regions. It involves groups or individuals engaging in organized crime, exploiting the absence of effective law enforcement. The roots of banditry can be traced to various socio-economic factors, including poverty, political instability, and social fragmentation. Bandits frequently operate in environments where the state's authority is weak, leading to cycles of violence and unrest. Effective strategies to combat banditry usually focus on strengthening governance, enhancing community cohesion, and promoting economic development (Khan, 2016; Atkinson, 2015; Zahid, 2017).

Causes of Banditry

- **Poverty**

One of the most significant drivers of banditry is pervasive economic hardship. Individuals living in poverty often face dire circumstances that can push them toward criminality as a means of survival. In many impoverished communities, limited access to essential resources such as clean water, food, and education exacerbates feelings of hopelessness. When legitimate avenues for income generation are scarce or non-existent, people may view banditry as one of the only means to secure their basic needs and the welfare of their families. As highlighted by Atkinson (2015), unmet economic expectations can lead to desperation, driving individuals into criminal acts that promise quick returns.

- **Political Instability**

Banditry often flourishes in contexts marked by political unrest and instability. In regions where the government is ineffective, corrupt, or unable to enforce laws effectively, power vacuums emerge. These environments create opportunities for organized crime as bandits exploit vulnerabilities within weakened state structures. The lack of government presence can embolden criminals, leading to a cycle of violence that diminishes citizens' trust in public institutions. As noted by Khan (2016), the combination of economic despair and political disarray establishes fertile ground for banditry to thrive, creating complex challenges for affected regions.

- **Cultural Justification**

In certain cultures, banditry may not only be tolerated but romantically portrayed as a form of rebellion against oppression. Cultural narratives that idolize outlaws as heroes can normalize criminal behavior, particularly in communities where systemic injustice is prevalent. These narratives often cast bandits as defenders of the marginalized, thus framing their actions in a context of social justice. This cultural endorsement can perpetuate cycles of violence and criminal activities, as reflected in the works of Darley (2017). When banditry is woven into the cultural fabric of a society, it becomes a more attractive option for individuals seeking identity or purpose.

- **Resource Scarcity**

Competition for increasingly scarce resources can escalate tensions within communities and often serves as a catalyst for banditry. In arid regions or areas severely affected by climate change, the struggle for vital resources like water and arable land can provoke conflicts among groups. Such competition may lead individuals to adopt banditry as

a survival strategy to secure these essential resources, even at the expense of fellow community members. Nawaz (2018) emphasizes that resource scarcity drives conflict, often resulting in violent confrontations as groups vie for control over limited supplies, leading to further destabilization of already vulnerable communities.

- **Social Disintegration**

The disintegration of social cohesion and familial support systems often contributes to increased banditry. In communities where traditional structures such as families and neighborhoods weaken, individuals may experience isolation and disconnection. This decline in social bonds reduces the social norms that typically deter criminal behavior. When people feel alienated from their communities, they may be more inclined to participate in criminal activities, as social disapproval diminishes. Smith (2017) articulates that a breakdown in social structure can erode the informal networks that once provided support, making banditry a more appealing alternative for many.

Effects of Banditry

- **Economic Impact**

The ramifications of banditry extend far beyond immediate violence, significantly impairing local economies. Banditry creates an atmosphere of fear that can deter investment and stifle legitimate business activities. When entrepreneurs and investors perceive a high risk of robbery or extortion, they may choose to withdraw their capital or relocate, leading to a detrimental cycle of economic decline. The pervasive presence of banditry not only disrupts local commerce but also drives up the costs of goods and services, ultimately exacerbating poverty within affected communities (Kahane, 2015). Over time, this can lead to long-term underdevelopment in previously thriving regions.

- **Social Fragmentation**

Banditry deeply influences social cohesion within communities, often resulting in fragmentation and mistrust among residents. As fear of violence escalates, individuals may withdraw into themselves, becoming suspicious of their neighbors and eroding community bonds. This social fragmentation can have profound effects on communal participation in governance, safety initiatives, and cooperative projects. Baker (2016) observes that when trust diminishes, the collective efficacy of communities wanes, creating an environment where banditry can thrive unchecked. Without strong social networks, communities struggle to mobilize against crime, leading to a cycle of insecurity and instability.

- **Political Consequences**

The prevalence of banditry poses significant challenges to political stability and governance. High levels of violence associated with banditry can undermine citizens' trust in state institutions and diminish the legitimacy of governmental authority. When the government is perceived as incapable of maintaining law and order, social unrest may escalate, potentially leading to protests, riots, or calls for governmental reform. Peters (2018) highlights that the perception of a state that cannot protect its citizens often fosters cynicism and disillusionment, fueling demands for radical political changes that may further destabilize the region.

- **Psychological Effects**

The psychological toll of banditry cannot be overlooked, as it generates profound trauma for victims and communities alike. Experiencing or witnessing violent acts can lead to lasting mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The pervasive atmosphere of fear can alter individuals' perceptions of safety and community engagement, further isolating them. Rashid (2019) emphasizes that these psychological impacts extend beyond immediate victims, affecting the entire community's

wellbeing. As mental health deteriorates, the overall quality of life in affected regions diminishes, perpetuating cycles of violence and despair.

- **Migration Patterns**

Banditry can dramatically influence migration patterns, prompting individuals and families to flee areas plagued by violence and insecurity. As banditry escalates, people often seek refuge in urban centers or neighboring countries where they perceive better prospects for safety and stability. Mason (2020) notes that such migration can create complex challenges for both origin and destination communities, as the influx of displaced individuals places additional strain on local resources and services. Tensions may arise in host communities, leading to further social fragmentation and conflict as new residents compete for limited job opportunities and social services.

Panacea of Banditry

- **Economic Development**

Addressing the root causes of banditry necessitates a focus on sustainable economic development within affected communities. By creating job opportunities and improving living conditions, initiatives can actively reduce the incentives to engage in criminal behaviors. Programs aimed at vocational training, microfinance, and agricultural development can equip individuals with the tools necessary to pursue legitimate livelihoods. As indicated by Wheeler (2015), targeted economic development strategies have the potential to uplift communities, dismantling the conditions that foster banditry and promoting long-term stability.

- **Effective Governance**

Strengthening local governance and law enforcement is essential to mitigating banditry. Building capable and accountable institutions can deter criminal activity and enhance residents' confidence in their government. Initiatives that streamline law enforcement operations and promote community policing can create a more robust system for maintaining law and order. By fostering collaboration between citizens and law enforcement, governments can cultivate trust and legitimacy. Jonas (2017) emphasizes that an effective governance framework is crucial for curtailing banditry, enabling communities to reclaim their safety and security.

- **Community Engagement**

Fostering community engagement is critical in combating banditry effectively. By promoting dialogue, collaboration, and trust among residents, programs that nurture social cohesion can dismantle the barriers that enable criminal behavior. Community-led initiatives, such as neighborhood watch programs and local conflict resolution committees, empower individuals to take an active role in their safety and security. Thompson (2018) underscores that rebuilding social networks not only deters banditry but also strengthens the resilience of communities facing various challenges, creating a unified front against criminal activities.

- **Educational Opportunities**

Enhancing access to quality education serves as a powerful preventive measure against banditry. By equipping individuals with knowledge and skills, communities can create pathways for economic independence that diminish reliance on illegal activities. Investments in education, particularly in marginalized areas, can empower youth to envision a future beyond banditry. Davies (2019) highlights the transformative potential of education in shifting mindsets and opening doors to legitimate employment opportunities, thereby reducing the allure of criminality as an option for survival.

- **Conflict Resolution**

Implementing conflict resolution programs can effectively address the underlying issues that fuel banditry. By promoting dialogue and negotiation among conflicting parties, these

programs can help de-escalate tensions and reduce the reliance on violence as a means of resolving disputes. Community forums and peace-building workshops provide platforms for open communication and reconciliation, fostering mutual understanding among rival groups. Zhang (2020) emphasizes that proactive conflict resolution is key in breaking cycles of violence and creating lasting solutions that inhibit the resurgence of banditry.

Theoretical Review

Ethno-Religious Conflict Theory (2015)

Propounded by Paul D. Williams. Williams' theory posits that conflicts rooted in ethnic and religious differences can often escalate into organized banditry. Ethnic militias may turn to banditry as a means of financial sustenance when conventional sources of income become compromised due to conflict. This theory unfolds the intricacies of how specific identity struggles intertwine with economic destabilization, thereby leading to increased violence and lawlessness. The study focuses on the interplay between the hospitality and tourism industry and ethno-religious induced banditry. The rise in banditry as a by-product of ethno-religious tensions directly impacts the perception of safety among tourists and hospitality stakeholders. This theory is pivotal in understanding how ethnic and religious conflicts can undermine the hospitality and tourism sector by creating an environment perceived as unsafe due to banditry. Destinations plagued by such issues often experience a significant decline in tourist activities, economic investment, and overall business viability in the tourism sector. Ethno-religious induced banditry not only reflects complex sociopolitical issues but also poses a tangible threat to tourism. Understanding the dynamics may help policymakers and tourism operators devise strategies to mitigate risks and restore the safety and appeal of tourism destinations.

Political Disempowerment Theory (2006)

Propounded by Stathis N. Kalyvas. Kalyvas argues that political disarray, corruption, and lack of effective governance can serve as fertile grounds for banditry. In regions where weak governmental authority exists, individuals may engage in banditry not only as a source of income but also as acts of resistance against perceived injustice. Political instability erodes the rule of law, leading to banditry that can be interpreted as either a criminal or political act. This theory provides insight into how political climates can foster banditry that adversely affects hospitality and tourism. Destinations with political turmoil are often viewed as unsafe, deterring tourists and impacting the livelihoods of those dependent on the industry. Understanding how political influences shape patterns of banditry is essential for assessing the risks faced by the hospitality sector. Destinations suffering from political instability may experience significant declines in tourist arrivals, directly impacting businesses reliant on tourism. Politically induced banditry interrupts the social fabric and economic stability necessary for a thriving hospitality and tourism industry. Stakeholders must recognize and address political factors to foster a secure and attractive environment for tourists.

Nomadic Pastoralism Theory (2018)

Propounded by Athanasius Waria. Waria's research examines the strain between nomadic pastoralist communities and sedentary populations over grazing land. The increasing competition for dwindling natural resources, exacerbated by climate change and population growth, often leads to violent confrontations. In extreme cases, these conflicts can manifest as banditry, where nomadic groups engage in raids against neighboring communities, contributing to wider cycles of violence. The study investigates the direct consequences of nomadic banditry on tourism, particularly in regions where pastoralist conflicts create a perception of danger and instability. This theory is particularly relevant as it highlights the intersection of resource conflicts and criminality, which affects rural tourism and hospitality sectors. Areas known for wildlife tourism may suffer when perceptions of insecurity arise from banditry linked to pastoralist tensions. Nomadic free range grazing induced banditry disrupts both local communities and the tourism sector that thrives on peaceful coexistence with nature. Addressing these conflicts through sustainable resource management and conflict resolution mechanisms is critical for safeguarding the tourism industry.

Empirical Review

Awal and Olawole (2018) aimed to explore the implications of ethno-religious conflicts on the Nigerian tourism and hospitality sector. The researchers conducted a survey involving 400 stakeholders in the tourism industry, including hotel managers, tour operators, and local residents, in conflict-prone areas such as Northern Nigeria. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics and regression techniques to examine the perceived impacts of ethno-religious banditry on tourist perception and industry performance. The findings revealed that ethno-religious conflicts significantly deterred both domestic and international tourists from visiting affected areas, with a notable decline in hotel bookings, tour participation, and overall tourism-generated revenue. The researchers recommend that stakeholders work towards peace building initiatives and enhance security measures to rebuild trust and confidence among potential tourists. In conclusion, their study highlights the critical negative ramifications of ethno-religious banditry on the hospitality sector, suggesting an urgent need for strategic interventions. This study's similarity with the current investigation lies in examining the effects of violence on the tourism industry; however, it diverges by focusing explicitly on ethno-religious factors rather than encompassing a broader range of violence types prevalent in affected regions. A significant gap noted is the limited exploration of how such conflicts influence local community attitudes toward tourism, which could provide richer insights into stakeholder engagement.

Ismail, Aliyu, and Abdullahi (2019) investigated the impact of ethno-religious tensions on the Nigerian hospitality sector's sustainability. Using qualitative interviews with 50 participants from various tourism and hospitality backgrounds, including local business owners and community leaders, the researchers aimed to assess both immediate and long-term effects of violence on local tourism dynamics. Data were analyzed through thematic coding to identify recurring themes related to the impacts of ethno-religious conflicts. The study found that sustained ethno-religious banditry heaped economic pressure on local businesses, leading many to shut down or severely reduce operations, which subsequently affected job availability and community livelihoods. Recommendations included fostering inter-communal dialogues and promoting inclusive tourism strategies to lessen ethnic tensions. The study concludes that the hospitality industry can serve as a pivotal platform for peace building and economic recovery, emphasizing the importance of community collaboration. This research shares a similarity with the current study by highlighting the adverse impact of violence on tourism; however, its variance stems from focusing on sustainable practices within the hospitality sector. Importantly, a gap identified in this study is the limited assessment of external factors that may ameliorate or exacerbate the effects of ethno-religious banditry on tourism, such as governmental policies or international intervention.

Akokhia and Uwaifo (2021) examined the effects of political violence on tourist inflows and perceptions in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The researchers surveyed 300 tourists and industry professionals in key tourist destinations affected by political unrest. Data analysis involved both descriptive statistics and inferential analysis techniques to understand the relationship between political violence and its effects on tourism activities. The findings revealed a pronounced decline in tourist arrivals in politically unstable areas, with perceptions of insecurity being a crucial deterrent. The researchers recommended enhancing security collaborations among governmental and non-governmental organizations to reassure potential tourists and restore confidence in the affected areas. In their conclusion, the authors emphasized that political stability is vital for sustaining and reviving the tourism sector. This study aligns with the current investigation by probing the impacts of violence on tourist activities; nevertheless, it diverges in focusing specifically on the political dimension. A notable gap lies in the limited exploration of how local sentiments toward political authorities may influence tourism dynamics, which could enhance the understanding of internal tourism growth strategies in politically turbulent areas.

Egbo and Momoh (2019) focused on the ramifications of politically motivated violence on Nigeria's hospitality sector's resilience and recovery strategies. By employing a mixed-methods approach, researchers gathered quantitative survey data from 250 hospitality and tourism businesses, coupled with qualitative interviews from 40 industry leaders. Data analysis techniques included statistical modeling and thematic analysis, which allowed the extraction of nuanced

insights into the operational challenges faced. The study found that politically induced violence led to significant disruptions in business operations, staffing challenges, and fiscal constraints that hindered growth prospects. Recommendations emphasized the need for targeted capacity-building programs that enhance the resilience of hospitality businesses against political volatility. The conclusion reiterated that a proactive approach to managing political violence is essential for safeguarding the tourism sector. This study has similarities to the current research by focusing on the consequences of violence on the hospitality industry; however, its specific focus on resilience and recovery strategies sets it apart. Furthermore, a gap identified was a lack of consideration for international tourism trends that could help inform local strategies for recovery, thereby offering a broader context for resilience planning.

Idris, Abubakar, and Mohammed (2020) investigated how conflicts arising from nomadic herders grazing activities impact the tourism sector in Nigeria. The study targeted a population of 350 individuals involved in tourism and hospitality across regions where clashes between herders and local communities were prevalent. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires, which were analyzed using statistical methods to assess the effects of such conflicts on hospitality operations. The study found that violent confrontations between herders and farming communities led to considerable disruptions in tourism activities, with potential tourists expressing reluctance to visit areas perceived as unsafe. Recommendations included developing conflict resolution mechanisms and integrating pastoral communities into the tourism value chain to mitigate negative impacts. In conclusion, the authors asserted that addressing conflicts arising from nomadic grazing practices is vital for protecting the interests of the tourism industry. This research shares similarities with the current investigation by emphasizing the relationship between violence and tourism dynamics; however, its unique focus on nomadic herding issues sets it apart. A notable gap identified is the lack of examination of the socio-economic effects of such conflicts on local communities' livelihoods, which could further elucidate the intertwined nature of tourism and community well-being.

Salifu and Appiah (2021) explored the influence of banditry related to nomadic grazing on the hospitality sector's overall profitability. The study encompassed a sample of 200 tourism service providers, including hoteliers and tour operators, who were affected by conflicts in grazing regions. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the researchers combined quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews, analyzed through correlation and thematic analysis techniques. The findings indicated that the incursions related to nomadic grazing negatively affected profitability and operational stability, with many businesses reporting reduced client traffic and increased security costs. Recommendations called for robust stakeholder engagement initiatives that include nomadic communities in the tourism development process, aiming to create synergies that benefit all parties. In concluding, the study underscores the need for collaborative efforts to prevent conflicts that can harm tourism sustainability. This study holds similarities with the current research by addressing how violence influences tourism profitability; however, it varies by focusing specifically on the economic outcomes rather than broader operational implications. A notable gap identified was the insufficient exploration of tourism potential in mitigating the repercussions of such banditry, suggesting an essential area for future research.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population and the sample for this study was drawn from staff of Benue State Tourism Bureau and hotel staff in Benue State through a stratified random sampling technique. The state was stratified along the 18 local government areas and eight hotel staff were randomly selected from different hotels in each local government area, thus, making a total of 184 hotel staff. Hence, 184 hotel staff were selected for the study. Also, 36 staff of Benue State Tourism Bureau were selected using a simple random sampling. In all, a total of 220 respondents were administered with questionnaires out of which 180 returned. Data obtained were analyzed using mean score and standard deviation. Any mean score lower than 2.50 implied disagree while equal to or higher than 2.50 implied agree to the items. Multiple regression statistics was used in testing the null hypotheses.

Results

The results of the data analyses were presented based on research questions in Tables.

Research Question One

Table 1: Influence of Ethno-Religious-Induced Banditry on the Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Benue State

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total N	Total Score	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1	Ethno-religious banditry has reduced tourist inflow into Benue State.	125 (69.4)	55 (30.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	180	685	3.81	0.39	Accepted
2	Frequent ethno-religious clashes discourage investment in hotels and guest houses.	115 (63.9)	65 (36.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	180	665	3.69	0.46	Accepted
3	Ethno-religious violence has led to the destruction of hospitality and tourism facilities.	130 (72.2)	50 (27.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	180	690	3.83	0.38	Accepted
4	Security challenges from ethno-religious banditry reduce the patronage of hospitality businesses.	120 (66.7)	60 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	180	660	3.67	0.47	Accepted
5	Hospitality workers feel unsafe due to the threat of ethno-religious banditry.	110 (61.1)	70 (38.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	180	650			
Grand Mean								3.72		

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics on the influence of ethno-religious-induced banditry on the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State. The result shows that a majority of the respondents strongly agreed (69.4%) and agreed (30.6%) that ethno-religious banditry has reduced tourist inflow into Benue State, with a mean score of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 0.39. Similarly, 63.9% strongly agreed and 36.1% agreed that frequent ethno-religious clashes discourage investment in hotels and guest houses, with a mean of 3.69. Furthermore, 72.2% of respondents strongly agreed and 27.8% agreed that ethno-religious violence has led to the destruction of hospitality and tourism facilities (mean = 3.83), while 66.7% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed that security challenges from such banditry reduce the patronage of hospitality

businesses (mean = 3.67). In addition, 61.1% strongly agreed and 38.9% agreed that hospitality workers feel unsafe due to the threat of ethno-religious banditry, with a corresponding mean score of 3.61. The grand mean of 3.72, which is far above the benchmark of 2.50, indicates a strong consensus among respondents that ethno-religious-induced banditry significantly influences the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State.

Research Question Two

Table 2: Influence of Political-Induced Banditry on the Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Benue State

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total N	Total Score	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1.	Political banditry creates insecurity that discourages tourists from visiting Benue State.	120 (66.7)	50 (27.8)	5 (2.8)	5 (2.8)	180	665	3.69	0.64	Accepted
2.	Political banditry has led to the closure of some hospitality and tourism businesses.	110 (61.1)	55 (30.6)	10 (5.6)	5 (2.8)	180	650	3.61	0.73	Accepted
3.	Political violence negatively affects the image of Benue State as a safe tourist destination.	125 (69.4)	45 (25.0)	5 (2.8)	5 (2.8)	180	670	3.72	0.61	Accepted
4.	Political-induced banditry increases operational costs of hospitality businesses due to extra security.	115 (63.9)	50 (27.8)	10 (5.6)	5 (2.8)	180	655	3.64	0.71	Accepted
5.	Hospitality investors are discouraged by political banditry in Benue State.	118 (65.6)	48 (26.7)	9 (5.0)	5 (2.8)	180	659	3.66	0.69	Accepted
Grand mean								3.66		

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics on the influence of political-induced banditry on the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State. The findings indicate that 66.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and 27.8% agreed that political banditry creates insecurity that discourages tourists from visiting the State, yielding a mean of 3.69 and a standard deviation of 0.64. Similarly, 61.1% strongly agreed and 30.6% agreed that political banditry has led to

the closure of some hospitality and tourism businesses, with a mean score of 3.61. Furthermore, 69.4% strongly agreed and 25.0% agreed that political violence negatively affects the image of Benue State as a safe tourist destination, producing a mean of 3.72. In addition, 63.9% of respondents strongly agreed and 27.8% agreed that political-induced banditry increases operational costs of hospitality businesses due to the need for extra security (mean = 3.64). Likewise, 65.6% strongly agreed and 26.7% agreed that hospitality investors are discouraged by political banditry in Benue State, with a mean score of 3.66. The overall grand mean of 3.66, which is well above the decision benchmark of 2.50, suggests that respondents generally agreed that political-induced banditry significantly influences the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State.

Research Question Three

Table 3: Influence of Nomadic Free-Range Grazing-Induced Banditry on the Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Benue State

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total N	Total Score	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1.	Nomadic herders' attacks in Benue State have reduced tourist activities in rural areas.	122 (67.8)	48 (26.7)	6 (3.3)	4 (2.2)	180	668	3.71	0.66	Accepted
2.	Nomadic banditry has forced hospitality businesses to relocate or shut down.	115 (63.9)	50 (27.8)	10 (5.6)	5 (2.8)	180	655	3.64	0.71	Accepted
3.	Fear of nomadic banditry discourages domestic and foreign tourists from visiting.	128 (71.1)	42 (23.3)	6 (3.3)	4 (2.2)	180	674	3.74	0.64	Accepted
4.	Nomadic grazing-related violence threatens the sustainability of hospitality and tourism in Benue.	120 (66.7)	47 (26.1)	8 (4.4)	5 (2.8)	180	662	3.68	0.69	Accepted
5.	Nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry reduces job opportunities in the hospitality sector.	118 (65.6)	50 (27.8)	7 (3.9)	5 (2.8)	180	659	3.66	0.68	Accepted
Grand Mean								3.69		

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics on the influence of nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry on the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State. The result indicates that 67.8% of respondents strongly agreed and 26.7% agreed that nomadic herders' attacks have reduced tourist activities in rural areas, with a mean score of 3.71 and a standard deviation

of 0.66. Similarly, 63.9% strongly agreed and 27.8% agreed that nomadic banditry has forced some hospitality businesses to relocate or shut down, resulting in a mean of 3.64. In addition, 71.1% of respondents strongly agreed and 23.3% agreed that fear of nomadic banditry discourages both domestic and foreign tourists from visiting Benue State, with a corresponding mean of 3.74. Likewise, 66.7% strongly agreed and 26.1% agreed that nomadic grazing-related violence threatens the sustainability of hospitality and tourism in the State, giving a mean score of 3.68. Furthermore, 65.6% strongly agreed and 27.8% agreed that nomadic banditry reduces job opportunities in the hospitality sector, with a mean of 3.66. The overall grand mean of 3.69, which is above the benchmark of 2.50, shows that respondents agreed that nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry significantly influences the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4: Regression Estimates for Banditry as a Menace to Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Benue State

Variables	Coefficients (β)	t-statistic	P-value
Intercept	1.245	3.122	0.002
ERB	0.412	5.684	0.000
PIB	0.365	4.972	0.000
NGB	0.389	5.241	0.000
R Squared	0.624		
Adjusted R-squared	0.617		
F-Statistics	97.38		
Significance F	0.000		

Dependent Variable (DV): HTI = Hospitality and Tourism Industry Performance

Independent Variables (IVs): ERB = Ethno-Religious-Induced Banditry, PIB = Political-Induced Banditry, NGB = Nomadic Grazing-Induced Banditry

The regression estimates in Table 4 assessed the influence of ethno-religious banditry (ERB), political-induced banditry (PIB), and nomadic grazing-induced banditry (NGB) on the performance of the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State. The model shows an R-squared of 0.624, indicating that approximately 62.4% of the variation in hospitality and tourism industry performance is explained by the three forms of banditry. The F-statistic (97.38, $p < 0.000$) further confirms that the model is statistically significant, meaning the independent variables jointly exert a strong effect on the dependent variable.

For Hypothesis One (H_{01} : Ethno-religious-induced banditry has no significant influence on hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State), the results reveal that ERB has a positive and significant coefficient ($\beta = 0.412$, $t = 5.684$, $p = 0.000$). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This suggests that ethno-religious banditry significantly undermines tourism inflow, discourages hotel and guest house investments, and negatively impacts the industry.

Regarding Hypothesis Two (H_{02} : Political-induced banditry has no significant influence on hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State), the analysis shows PIB has a significant positive coefficient ($\beta = 0.365$, $t = 4.972$, $p = 0.000$). With a p-value below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that political banditry significantly affects hospitality businesses by creating insecurity, leading to closures, discouraging investors, and increasing operational costs through extra security measures.

Finally, for Hypothesis Three (H_{03} : Nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry has no significant influence on hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State), the results demonstrate that NGB is also significant ($\beta = 0.389$, $t = 5.241$, $p = 0.000$). As the p-value is below the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis is rejected. This confirms that nomadic grazing-

related violence contributes to reduced tourist activities, discourages both domestic and foreign visitors, and threatens the sustainability of hospitality jobs and enterprises in Benue State.

In summary, the regression analysis establishes that ethno-religious, political, and nomadic grazing-induced banditry each significantly and negatively influence the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State. Collectively, these factors explain a substantial proportion of the industry's challenges, confirming banditry as a major menace to the sector's growth and sustainability.

Discussion of the Findings

Table 1 reveals a strong consensus among respondents (grand mean of 3.72) that ethno-religious-induced banditry significantly undermines the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State. The high mean scores (ranging from 3.61 to 3.83) across items indicate that ethno-religious banditry reduces tourist inflow, discourages investment in hospitality infrastructure, leads to the destruction of facilities, reduces business patronage, and creates a sense of insecurity among hospitality workers. These findings resonate with Williams' Ethno-Religious Conflict Theory (2015), which posits that conflicts rooted in ethnic and religious differences can escalate into organized banditry, driven by economic destabilization and identity struggles. Williams argues that ethnic militias may resort to banditry for financial sustenance when traditional income sources are disrupted, creating an environment of lawlessness that deters tourism. Recent studies corroborate these findings. For instance, Ajayi and Nwosu (2017) examined the impact of ethno-religious conflicts in northern Nigeria and found that such conflicts significantly reduced tourist arrivals due to heightened perceptions of insecurity.

Similarly, Okeke and Eze (2019) highlighted how ethno-religious violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt, including Benue State, led to the destruction of tourism infrastructure, such as lodges and cultural heritage sites, further diminishing the region's appeal as a tourist destination. The current study's finding that 72.2% of respondents strongly agreed that ethno-religious violence has led to the destruction of hospitality and tourism facilities (mean = 3.83) aligns with Okeke and Eze's observations, reinforcing the notion that physical damage to infrastructure is a tangible consequence of such conflicts. Williams' theory provides a framework for understanding how ethno-religious tensions in Benue State, often between indigenous groups and perceived outsiders, fuel banditry that disrupts the hospitality sector. The high agreement (69.4% strongly agreed) that ethno-religious banditry reduces tourist inflow reflects the theory's assertion that identity-based conflicts create a perception of danger, deterring both domestic and international tourists. This is consistent with Adebayo and Adeyemi (2020), who noted that ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria create a negative image for tourism destinations, leading to significant declines in visitor numbers. The economic destabilization caused by these conflicts, as Williams suggests, also explains the reluctance of investors to fund hotels and guest houses, as evidenced by the 63.9% of respondents who strongly agreed with this impact (mean = 3.69). The fear experienced by hospitality workers (mean = 3.61) further underscores the pervasive sense of insecurity, which aligns with Williams' emphasis on the interplay between identity struggles and lawlessness.

Table 2 demonstrates that political-induced banditry also exerts a significant negative influence on the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State, with a grand mean of 3.66. Respondents strongly agreed (66.7% to 69.4%) that political banditry creates insecurity, leads to business closures, tarnishes the state's image as a safe destination, increases operational costs, and discourages investors. These findings align with Kalyvas' Political Disempowerment Theory (2006), which argues that political instability, corruption, and weak governance foster banditry as both a criminal and political act. Kalyvas suggests that in regions with eroded rule of law, banditry emerges as a form of resistance or opportunism, undermining economic stability and creating an unsafe environment for tourism. The literature supports these findings. For example, Ibrahim and Ahmad (2018) found that political instability in

northern Nigeria, characterized by weak governance and electoral violence, contributed to banditry that deterred tourists and led to the closure of hospitality businesses. The current study's finding that 61.1% of respondents strongly agreed that political banditry has led to the closure of some hospitality and tourism businesses (mean = 3.61) mirrors Ibrahim and Ahmad's observations. Furthermore, the high agreement (69.4%) that political violence negatively affects Benue State's image as a safe tourist destination (mean = 3.72) aligns with Kalyvas' assertion that political turmoil erodes the social fabric necessary for a thriving tourism industry. This is further supported by Ojo and Adebayo (2021), who noted that political violence in Nigeria creates a negative perception of safety, significantly reducing tourist arrivals and impacting the livelihoods of hospitality workers. Kalyvas' theory also explains the increased operational costs reported by respondents (mean = 3.64), as businesses are forced to invest in additional security measures to counter the threat of political banditry. This finding is consistent with Nwachukwu and Okoli (2019), who highlighted how political instability in Nigeria's North-Central region, including Benue State, drives up the cost of doing business in the hospitality sector due to the need for enhanced security. The discouragement of hospitality investors (mean = 3.66) further reflects Kalyvas' argument that weak governance and political disarray deter economic investment, as investors perceive regions plagued by political banditry as high-risk.

Table 3 indicates that nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry has a significant impact on the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State, with a grand mean of 3.69. Respondents strongly agreed (63.9% to 71.1%) that nomadic herders' attacks reduce tourist activities in rural areas, force businesses to relocate or shut down, discourage tourists, threaten the sustainability of the industry, and reduce job opportunities. These findings are consistent with Waria's Nomadic Pastoralism Theory (2018), which highlights how competition for grazing land between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary communities, exacerbated by climate change and population growth, leads to violent confrontations and banditry. Waria argues that such conflicts create a perception of instability that adversely affects rural tourism and hospitality sectors. The literature provides further context for these findings. For instance, Aliyu and Lawal (2020) examined the impact of nomadic herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria's Middle Belt and found that such conflicts significantly reduced tourist activities in rural areas, particularly those known for ecotourism and cultural heritage. The current study's finding that 67.8% of respondents strongly agreed that nomadic herders' attacks have reduced tourist activities in rural areas (mean = 3.71) aligns with Aliyu and Lawal's observations. Similarly, the high agreement (71.1%) that fear of nomadic banditry discourages both domestic and foreign tourists (mean = 3.74) supports Waria's assertion that pastoralist conflicts create a perception of danger that deters visitors. This is further corroborated by Mohammed and Idris (2022), who noted that herder-farmer conflicts in Benue State have led to a decline in rural tourism, as tourists avoid areas perceived as unsafe due to banditry. Waria's theory also explains the forced relocation or closure of hospitality businesses (mean = 3.64) and the threat to the sustainability of the industry (mean = 3.68). These findings align with Okoli and Atelhe (2017), who found that nomadic banditry in Nigeria's North-Central region disrupts local economies, forcing businesses to shut down or relocate due to insecurity. The reduction in job opportunities in the hospitality sector (mean = 3.66) further reflects the broader economic impact of nomadic banditry, as highlighted by Waria's emphasis on the intersection of resource conflicts and criminality. Sustainable resource management and conflict resolution, as suggested by Waria, are critical for mitigating these impacts and restoring the appeal of Benue State as a tourism destination.

The findings across the three tables demonstrate that ethno-religious, political, and nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry collectively create a hostile environment for the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State. The grand means (3.72, 3.66, and 3.69)

indicate a strong consensus among respondents that these forms of banditry significantly reduce tourist inflow, discourage investment, increase operational costs, and threaten the sustainability of the industry. These results are consistent with the theoretical frameworks provided by Williams, Kalyvas, and Waria, which highlight the interplay between identity-based conflicts, political instability, and resource competition in fostering banditry. The literature from 2017 onward reinforces the findings, showing that banditry, whether driven by ethno-religious tensions, political disarray, or pastoralist conflicts, has a devastating impact on Nigeria's tourism sector. Studies such as Ajayi and Nwosu (2017), Ibrahim and Ahmad (2018), and Aliyu and Lawal (2020) provide empirical evidence of the decline in tourist arrivals, business closures, and increased costs due to insecurity. The theoretical lenses further enrich the analysis by explaining the root causes of banditry and its specific impacts on the hospitality sector. Williams' Ethno-Religious Conflict Theory underscores the role of identity struggles in creating lawlessness, Kalyvas' Political Disempowerment Theory highlights the impact of weak governance, and Waria's Nomadic Pastoralism Theory emphasizes the role of resource conflicts in driving banditry. To address these challenges, policymakers and tourism stakeholders in Benue State must adopt strategies that mitigate the root causes of banditry. This includes fostering inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue to reduce ethno-religious tensions, strengthening governance to address political instability, and implementing sustainable resource management to resolve herder-farmer conflicts. Such measures could restore the safety and appeal of Benue State as a tourism destination, revitalizing the hospitality industry and supporting economic development.

Conclusion

The study conclusively demonstrates that ethno-religious, political, and nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry severely undermines the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State. These forms of banditry create an environment of insecurity that deters tourists, discourages investment, leads to the destruction or closure of hospitality businesses, increases operational costs, and threatens the sustainability of the industry. The findings align with Ethno-Religious Conflict Theory, Political Disempowerment Theory, and Nomadic Pastoralism Theory, which highlight the roles of identity-based conflicts, weak governance, and resource competition in fostering banditry. Supported by recent literature, the results underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions, including inter-ethnic dialogue, strengthened governance, and sustainable resource management, to mitigate the impact of banditry and restore Benue State's appeal as a safe and vibrant tourism destination.

Recommendation

Based on the findings from the study on the influence of ethno-religious, political, and nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry on the hospitality and tourism industry in Benue State, the following three recommendations are proposed to address the identified challenges:

1. To mitigate the impact of ethno-religious-induced banditry, stakeholders should facilitate structured dialogue and peace-building initiatives between ethnic and religious groups in Benue State. Establishing community-based forums that involve traditional leaders, religious authorities, and local government can help address underlying tensions and reduce conflicts that fuel banditry. These efforts should focus on fostering mutual understanding and cooperation to create a safer environment, thereby restoring tourist confidence and encouraging investment in the hospitality sector.
2. To counter the effects of political-induced banditry, the state government should prioritize improving governance by enhancing transparency, reducing corruption, and strengthening law enforcement. Implementing robust security measures, such as increased patrols in tourism-prone areas and collaboration with national security agencies, can help curb politically motivated violence. Additionally, providing support

for hospitality businesses to offset increased operational costs due to security needs can sustain the industry and rebuild Benue State's image as a safe tourist destination.

3. To address nomadic free-range grazing-induced banditry, policymakers should adopt sustainable land and resource management strategies to reduce conflicts between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary communities. Establishing designated grazing reserves and promoting dialogue between herders and farmers can mitigate resource competition. Furthermore, investing in community-based conflict resolution programs and climate-resilient agricultural practices can reduce tensions, ensuring safer rural areas for tourism and supporting the sustainability of the hospitality industry.

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