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**KEYNOTE SPEECH**

**BY**

**THE PRESIDENT / CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL**

**THE LAGOS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY,**

**MR GABRIEL IDAHOSA, FCA**

**AT**

**SECOND EDITION OF THE HOSPITALITY BUSINESS SUMMIT**

**BY**

**VERTILINE SYNERGY LTD**

**THEME**

**INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN NIGERIA'S HOSPITALITY SECTOR**

**Protocols,**

Good morning, distinguished guests, investors, industry leaders, and policymakers. It is an honour to stand before you today to discuss an exciting topic: Investment Opportunities in Nigeria’s Hospitality Industry.

**Introduction**

Nigeria, often called the "Giant of Africa," is the most populous country on the continent and one of its most dynamic and promising economies. With a burgeoning middle class, a youthful population, and a vibrant cultural scene, Nigeria presents an unparalleled opportunity for investors looking to make their mark in the hospitality sector.

**Economic Overview**

Before we delve into the specifics of the hospitality industry, let’s take a brief look at Nigeria’s economic landscape. The country’s economy is diversifying rapidly, with significant investments in technology, agriculture, transportation, and manufacturing. Despite the challenges posed by high inflation and huge debts, Nigeria’s GDP has shown resilience, and the government is committed to creating a business-friendly environment.

The current rate of our currency means cheaper costs for tourists coming from countries with stronger currencies above the Naira. We expect that foreign investors will take advantage of this situation and bring in superior capital to invest in Nigeria.

**Tourism and Hospitality Sector Growth**

Tourism in Nigeria is on an upward trajectory. From Lagos’s bustling city life to Calabar’s serene beauty, the ancient wonders of Kano, and the natural splendour of Yankari National Park, Nigeria boasts a rich tapestry of attractions. These diverse destinations draw an increasing number of domestic and international tourists annually.

The Nigerian government has recognized the potential of tourism and is actively working to improve infrastructure, streamline visa processes, and promote the country’s attractions globally. This commitment is creating a fertile ground for the hospitality industry to flourish.

Recent media reports revealed that “The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) is projecting a record-breaking year for travel and tourism in 2024, with the sector’s global economic contribution set to reach an all-time high of $11.1 trillion.” Currently, the travel sector supports nearly 348 million jobs globally, an increase of over 13.6 million jobs compared to 2019. According to the global tourism body’s 2024 Economic Impact Research (EIR), Travel & Tourism will contribute an additional $770 billion over its previous record, stamping its authority as a global economic powerhouse, generating one in every $10 worldwide.

Nigeria’s hospitality industry is well supported by other vibrant sectors like an advanced telecommunications system, a sophisticated financial sector, a thriving entertainment and creative industry, and a large market.

**Investment Opportunities**

* 1. Hotels and Resorts: With the rise in both business and leisure travel, there is a growing demand for high-quality accommodation. The investment potential is vast, from luxury hotels in urban centers to eco-resorts in choice locations.
  2. Boutique Hotels and B&Bs: There is a niche market for boutique hotels and bed-and-breakfast establishments that offer unique and personalized experiences. Investors can capitalize on Nigeria’s rich cultural heritage and stunning landscapes to create memorable stays for visitors.
  3. Event Centers and Conference Facilities: Nigeria is becoming a hub for conferences, conventions, and corporate events. Developing state-of-the-art event centers and conference facilities can cater to this growing demand and provide significant returns.
  4. Restaurants and Culinary Experiences: The Nigerian culinary scene is diverse and flavourful, attracting food enthusiasts worldwide. Investing in high-end restaurants, food festivals, and culinary tours can tap into this vibrant market.
  5. Just last year, a Nigerian chef and entrepreneur, Hilda Effiong Bassey, popularly known as Hilda Baci broke the Guinness World Record for the “longest cooking marathon by an individual”.
  6. Tour and Travel Services: There is a need for professional tour operators and travel agencies that offer curated experiences. This includes adventure tourism, cultural tours, and wildlife safaris.
  7. Technology Integration: Embracing technology can enhance the hospitality experience. Investments in online booking platforms, mobile apps, and digital marketing can streamline operations and attract tech-savvy travelers. Nigeria has an advanced technology sector that supports sophisticated operations and transactions.

**Challenges and Mitigation Strategies**

While the opportunities are immense, it is essential to acknowledge and address the challenges. These include infrastructure deficits, security concerns, and regulatory hurdles. However, in collaboration with private sector partners, the Nigerian government is making significant strides to overcome these obstacles. Investors are encouraged to engage with local stakeholders, conduct thorough market research, and adopt a long-term perspective to navigate these challenges successfully.

Under the auspices of this Summit today, I will urge the government to support the growth and development of Nigeria’s hotel and tourism sector by considering the recommendations below.

1. We call for more collaboration between the private and public sectors to improve our transportation, accommodation, and other infrastructure across the country.
2. Tourism thrives on solid security, where tourists can explore the hospitality landscape without fear of exposure to danger. With the spate of kidnapping, terrorism, and other forms of criminality, Nigeria is losing lots of investment opportunities to safer climes.
3. The relevant government agencies responsible for our cultural and natural sites must focus more on maintaining the originality of such sites so they can remain attractive to visitors.
4. We must engage local communities in tourism ventures to ensure sustainable practices and shared benefits. With more funds going to the Local Government Areas, we expect more investment to develop more tourist sites, attract tourists, and generate revenue from hospitality and tourism.
5. We must also simplify and automate our visa procedures to make travel easy for foreign tourists interested in visiting Nigeria.
6. The government needs robust publicity and campaigns to promote Nigeria’s tourist attractions.

In conclusion, Nigeria’s hospitality sector represents a dynamic and promising investment landscape. With its growing economy, increasing tourist arrivals, and rich cultural heritage, the country offers diverse opportunities for growth in hotels, resorts, and tourism infrastructure. While navigating the regulatory environment can be challenging, understanding the legal framework and working with local experts can facilitate successful investment ventures.

Nigeria’s hospitality sector is ripe for investment. With its diverse attractions, supportive government policies, and a growing market of travellers, the opportunities are boundless. I urge you to consider the potential within this vibrant country and seize the moment to be part of its growth story.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to seeing the remarkable contributions you will make to Nigeria’s hospitality industry. Let us embark on this exciting journey together and unlock the immense potential that Nigeria has to offer.

**Mr. Gabriel Idahosa, FCA**

**President**

**Lagos Chamber of Commerce & Industry**

**Friday 9th August 2024**