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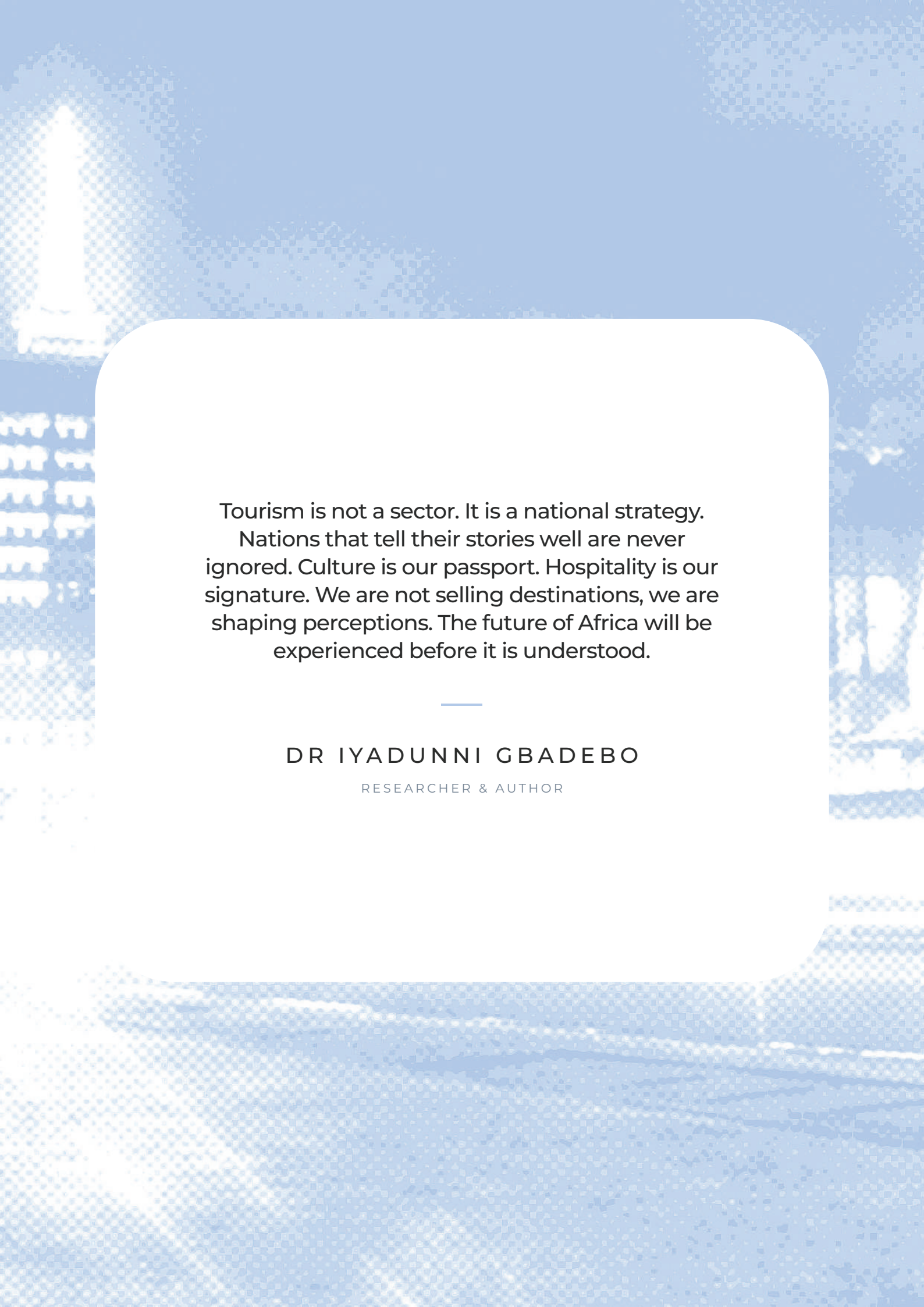


# LAGOS SMART TOURISM INDEX

2025

MEASURING PROGRESS.  
INSPIRING ACTION.





Tourism is not a sector. It is a national strategy.  
Nations that tell their stories well are never  
ignored. Culture is our passport. Hospitality is our  
signature. We are not selling destinations, we are  
shaping perceptions. The future of Africa will be  
experienced before it is understood.

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Lagos State is on a journey to becoming one of Africa's premier smart tourism destinations. After years of building the necessary foundational infrastructure, the state is now witnessing the tangible results of sustained investment in transport, digital services, and cultural programming.

**In 2024, Lagos welcomed 18,273 international tourists, marking steady growth from 14,357 in 2022, while the December 2024 "Detty December" phenomenon generated \$71.6 million in tourism revenue within a single month.**

These numbers tell a story of swift recovery from pandemic disruptions and a genuine momentum in positioning Lagos as Africa's entertainment and cultural capital. This progress unfolds against a backdrop of persistent challenges that cannot be glossed over. The city grapples with safety perception issues that continue to deter potential visitors, infrastructure projects that progress more slowly than hoped, and a digital ecosystem that shows promise but lacks consistent execution.

The Lagos Smart Tourism Index for 2025 measures performance across five interconnected pillars: Infrastructure, Security, Digital Engagement, Hospitality and Visitor Experience, and Destination Marketing. The findings reveal a city making genuine strides in hospitality and digital innovation while confronting harder truths about security perceptions and the uneven pace of infrastructure delivery. Looking toward 2025 and beyond, Lagos possesses the fundamental ingredients for tourism success: world-class entertainment, growing infrastructure, improving digital services, and strong hospitality provision. For clarity, there is vision and ambition. However, the challenge lies in execution and in addressing the persistent gaps in safety perception, infrastructure completion, and consistent service delivery that separate potential from achievement. This Index measures those gaps honestly while recognizing the genuine progress being made.

This report synthesizes information collected from publicly available tourism data originating from multiple sources including Lagos State Government agencies, federal agencies such as the National Bureau of Statistics, hospitality industry reports and sector stakeholders, international tourism organizations, and independent research. The analytical framework, scoring methodology, and recommendations were developed specifically for this Index.

Lagos international tourists in 2022

14,257

Lagos international tourists in 2024

18,273

2024 Detty December tourism

\$71.6m



# Four Key Findings

## 1. Lagos has successfully established itself as West Africa's undisputed entertainment powerhouse.

The Lagos State's government's investment of over ₦8.4 billion in 143 cultural events throughout 2024 has created a year-round calendar of activities that gives visitors genuine reasons to choose Lagos over competing destinations. This amount was invested through the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture between May 2024 and May 2025 to support various cultural festivals and creative programs. Beyond hosting events, this is equally about building an ecosystem where culture becomes economy. The Lagos State Government and independent reports indicate the city welcomed an estimated 1.2 million visitors during the December 2024 period, which translated into generated revenues that exceeded many full-year tourism targets for comparable African cities.

While some may disagree and arrive at lesser estimates, it is important to state that any discrepancy in Lagos's visitor figures arises from a difference in counting methodologies rather than conflicting data. The reported 1.2 million visitors refers to the total number of people - a mix of domestic tourists, international attendees, and a significant portion of returning Nigerians in the diaspora - who arrived at Murtala Muhammed International Airport and engaged in the entertainment ecosystem during the peak "Detty December" festive season. This figure represents high foot traffic and massive economic activity over a short, specific period. In contrast, the official figures of approximately 18,000 international arrivals for the full year 2024 provided by the Ministry of Tourism use a stricter, globally recognized statistical definition of "international tourist arrivals" (overnight visitors for leisure or business, typically excluding returning residents). Both sets of data are factually correct but measure different metrics, collectively highlighting the immense seasonal impact of Lagos's entertainment sector while its formal year-round international tourism numbers remain modest.

**₦8.4b**

Invested BY Lagos State's government in 143 cultural events between May 2024 and May 2025

**1.2m**

visitors during the December 2024 was estimated



## **2. The Red and Blue Line rail systems represent the most important infrastructure transformation Lagos has undertaken in decades.**

The Blue Line officially opened for commercial passenger operations on September 4, 2023, and runs from Marina to Mile 2 and is the first electric-powered intra-city rail in West Africa. The Red Line launched full commercial passenger operations on October 15, 2024. This 27km first phase connects Agbado to Oyingbo and shares tracks with the Lagos-Kano Standard Gauge Railway. By February 2025, the Red Line expanded its service frequency to nine daily trips to accommodate high demand. These developments are central to Lagos' transformation into a smart tourism destination, essentially offering alternatives to Lagos' notorious road congestion. However, with only thirteen operational stations between both lines and incomplete routes to major destinations like the international airport, the rail network serves more as proof of concept than comprehensive solution. The infrastructure exists but remains insufficient for the scale of demand it must eventually meet.



## **3. Safety perception remains Lagos' most stubborn obstacle to tourism growth.**

International travel advisories from major source markets including the United States, Canada, Australia, and European nations continue to classify Lagos as high-risk, with specific warnings about violent crime, kidnapping, and armed robbery. While many experienced travelers and residents report feeling reasonably safe when taking proper precautions, particularly in areas like Victoria Island, Lekki, and Ikoyi, the gap between perception and reality continues to cost Lagos countless potential visitors who never make it past reading government travel warnings.

## **4. The Lagos hospitality sector has recovered from pandemic lows and is experiencing growth.**

With major international brands including Marriott, Radisson, and Mövenpick either operating or developing properties in the city, first-half 2022 occupancy rates reached approximately seventy percent across the sector, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. However, this growth remains concentrated in business tourism and year-end festivities rather than distributed across all seasons. This highlights the need for more diverse attractions that can sustain visitor interest throughout the calendar year.

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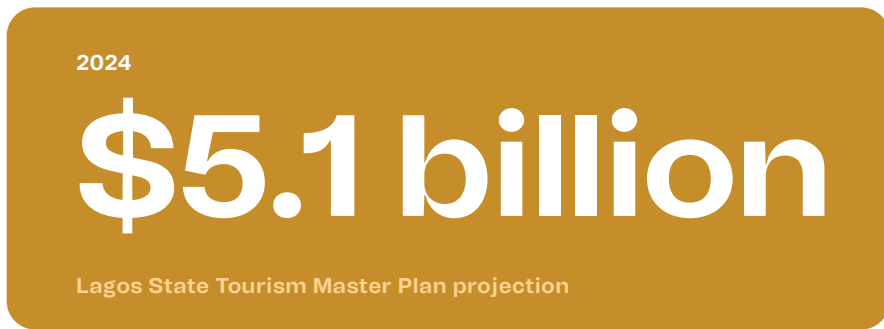
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## Introduction



The Lagos Smart Tourism Index 2025 exists to provide government officials, tourism stakeholders, investors, and industry professionals with an evidence-based assessment of Lagos' progress toward becoming a world-class smart tourism destination. Unlike promotional materials that emphasize only achievements or critical reports that focus solely on failures, this Index aims for balanced evaluation grounded in verifiable data, honest observation, and comparative analysis with competing African tourism destinations

Tourism represents far more than leisure activity or cultural exchange for Lagos. The Lagos State Tourism Master Plan projects that by 2040, the sector should contribute \$5.1 billion to the state economy and generate 1.1 million direct jobs. Former Governor Babatunde Fashola and current tourism experts estimate that tourism already contributes approximately four percent to Nigeria's GDP, with potential for substantial expansion. These numbers matter because they translate to employment for young Lagosians, investment in local businesses, preservation of cultural heritage, and improved infrastructure that benefits residents and visitors alike. Understanding where Lagos truly stands in this journey enables better planning, more effective resource allocation, and clearer accountability for outcomes



**4%**

Current tourism contribution to Nigeria's GDP



This report also serves as baseline documentation for tracking progress year over year. Tourism development does not happen suddenly but unfolds through accumulated improvements across multiple domains simultaneously. Infrastructure projects take years to complete. Safety perceptions shift gradually. Digital systems require sustained maintenance and improvement. Hospitality standards evolve through consistent training and investment. By measuring current performance across all five pillars, we establish clear benchmarks against which future progress can be assessed. The goal is not only to celebrate what Lagos has achieved but to identify precisely where focused effort will yield the greatest returns.

The Lagos Smart Tourism Index will be updated annually, with each subsequent edition building on the baseline established here. This creates accountability through transparency and enables stakeholders to track whether specific initiatives are delivering promised results. Annual updates will incorporate new data on visitor arrivals, tourism revenue, infrastructure completions, safety incidents, digital service adoption, and hospitality sector performance. Equally important, these updates will document qualitative changes: shifts in visitor perceptions, improvements in service standards, emergence of new tourism products, and effectiveness of destination marketing efforts.

The timing of annual updates will align with the Lagos State Government's budget cycle and the release of official tourism statistics, typically occurring in the second quarter of each year. This allows each Index edition to incorporate full-year data from the previous calendar year while informing planning and resource allocation for the current year. The process will include stakeholder consultations with hotel operators, tour guides, event organizers, transport providers, security agencies, and tourists themselves to capture perspectives beyond what official statistics reveal.

Importantly, this Index will evolve its methodology as Lagos' tourism sector matures. While this edition may focus heavily on basic infrastructure completion and establishment of foundational services, future editions will likely shift emphasis toward quality metrics, visitor satisfaction scores, economic impact per visitor, sustainability indicators, and comparative performance against benchmark cities. The goal is measurement that reflects not just growth in absolute numbers but genuine progress toward the vision of Lagos as a sophisticated, sustainable, and inclusive tourism destination.

## The Five Pillars Framework

This Index evaluates Lagos' tourism development across five interconnected pillars that together determine whether a city can deliver the comprehensive experience modern travelers expect. These pillars are not independent categories but elements of an integrated system where strength in one area enables progress in others while weakness in any single pillar constrains overall performance. For obvious reasons, performance in these five pillars is not uniformly strong across Lagos. The city excels in certain areas while struggling in others.

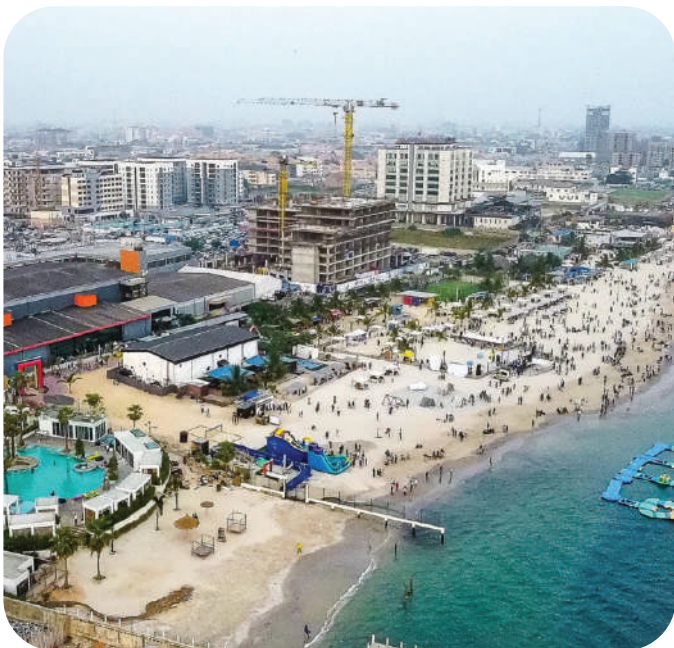
Infrastructure encompasses the physical systems that enable visitor mobility and comfort: transportation networks, airport facilities, road quality, power reliability, and public amenities. Without functioning infrastructure, even the most compelling cultural attractions remain inaccessible to most visitors.

Security addresses both actual safety conditions and visitor perception of safety, recognising that perception often matters more than reality in tourism decisions. This pillar examines crime rates affecting tourists, emergency response capabilities, surveillance systems, and how Lagos is portrayed in international travel advisories.

Digital Engagement measures the technology-enabled services that define smart tourism: Wi-Fi coverage, mobile connectivity, tourism apps, online booking systems, digital payments, and social media presence. Modern travelers expect seamless digital experiences, and cities that fail to provide them lose competitive advantage.

Hospitality and Visitor Experience evaluates the accommodation sector, food services, tour offerings, event programming, and service quality standards that determine whether visitors have positive experiences worth recommending to others. This pillar extends beyond hotel star ratings to encompass the entire ecosystem of services supporting tourism.

Destination Marketing and Storytelling examines how effectively Lagos communicates its value proposition to potential visitors, crafts compelling narratives about its culture and attractions, and builds emotional connections that convert interest into bookings. The most beautiful city in the world attracts few tourists if nobody knows about it or understands why they should visit.



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## The Five Pillars Of Lagos Smart Tourism

Here, each pillar is examined in detail, presenting data, highlighting progress, acknowledging challenges, and recommending specific actions for improvement.

## Pillar 1: Infrastructure

Infrastructure represents perhaps the most visible dimension of Lagos' tourism transformation, with billions of naira invested in rail networks, airport improvements, and road systems designed to make the city navigable for residents and visitors alike. Yet infrastructure also tests patience more than any other pillar because projects take years to complete, frequently exceed budgets, and deliver benefits only when entire systems become operational rather than individual components.

The opening of the Blue Line in September 2023 and the Red Line in October 2024 marks genuinely historic moments in Lagos' development. For decades, the city has suffered from a transport system almost entirely dependent on roads that simply cannot accommodate the volume of vehicles attempting to use them. The resulting gridlock is a terrible inconvenience to commuters, while actively deterring tourism by making simple journeys unpredictably long and exhausting. A visitor trying to reach a business meeting or cultural event faces the very real possibility of spending hours in traffic for a trip that should take thirty minutes. This is not the kind of experience that encourages return visits or positive recommendations.



The Blue Line currently operates five stations connecting Marina to Mile 2, covering approximately thirteen kilometres. The Red Line Phase I runs from Agbado to Oyingbo across eight stations and about twenty-seven kilometres, sharing track with the existing Nigerian Railway Corporation Lagos-Ibadan line. Together, these lines move thousands of commuters daily and have begun demonstrating to skeptical Lagosians that rail transit can actually work in their city. Fares are comparably modest and depend on distance, making the service affordable for most residents while remaining accessible to tourists. The trains themselves feature modern rolling stock, including Talgo VIII trains acquired from the United States and Intercity 125 High-Speed Train coaches sourced from the United Kingdom, all refurbished for Lagos conditions.

However, honest assessment requires acknowledging that what currently exists represents only the beginning of what Lagos needs. The Red Line does not yet connect to Murtala Muhammed International Airport despite plans for an airport branch, meaning international arrivals still face the notorious airport road journey into the city. The Blue Line terminates far short of the growing Lekki corridor where much tourism and entertainment activity occurs. Extension to Mile 12 and eventually to Okokomaiko remains under construction, with completion dates that have historically proven unreliable. The planned Green Line, which would run sixty-eight kilometres from Marina to the Lekki Free Trade Zone and connect to the future Lekki International Airport, exists primarily on paper with construction only recently beginning after a September 2024 memorandum of understanding with China Harbour Engineering Company.



Beyond rail, Murtala Muhammed International Airport continues functioning as Nigeria's primary gateway despite facilities that have aged beyond their original design life. The Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria has initiated a \$38 million rehabilitation project for the older international terminal, but this work proceeds while maintaining operations, leading to construction disruptions alongside the usual challenges of processing international arrivals. Passenger experience at MMIA ranges from adequate to frustrating depending on flight timing, terminal congestion, and efficiency of immigration and customs processing on any given day. For many tourists, their first Lagos impression forms during a prolonged airport exit process that does not suggest the efficiency of a smart city.

Road infrastructure presents the most complex infrastructure challenge because Lagos inherited a street network designed for a city of perhaps two million people when the current metropolitan population exceeds twenty-two million with approximately two thousand new residents arriving daily. Major arteries like the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, the Lagos-Abeokuta Expressway, and the Third Mainland Bridge carry volumes far exceeding their design capacity. The state government has implemented Bus Rapid Transit lanes and traffic management systems that have improved conditions marginally, but fundamental constraints remain. Road quality varies dramatically, with excellent highways in certain corridors adjacent to potholed local roads that can damage vehicles and deter exploration beyond main routes.

Power supply, though not directly tourism infrastructure, affects visitor experience substantially. Hotels and major establishments maintain generator backup systems that ensure uninterrupted service, but the need for such systems reflects underlying infrastructure limitations. Tourists notice when air conditioning cuts out during meals, when elevators stop functioning, and when street lighting fails after dark. Lagos cannot claim smart city status while power supply remains unreliable enough to require "visible" backup generators.

The infrastructure picture, therefore, shows progress alongside persistent gaps. The rail lines represent transformation. Airport improvements are underway though not yet complete. Road networks function but remain severely congested. Power supply works for those who can afford backup systems. For tourism purposes, this means Lagos can now credibly claim improving infrastructure while acknowledging that many fundamental improvements remain years from completion. It can then be said that the city has begun piecing together the bones of modern urban mobility, but the skeleton remains incomplete.

Current Assessment: Infrastructure scores five out of ten, reflecting progress on rail transit partially offset by incomplete networks, aging airport facilities, road congestion, and power supply limitations. The trajectory is positive, but visitors seeking smooth, reliable transportation throughout the city will still encounter some frustrations.

# \$38 million

rehabilitation project for the older international terminal, initiated by FEDERAL AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF NIGERIA

**2025 - 2027 Target: Seven out of ten would require Red Line extension to the international airport, Blue Line extension toward Lekki, completion of at least initial Green Line segments, visible airport terminal improvements, and demonstrable reduction in average travel times for key tourism routes. This target is ambitious but achievable with sustained political will and funding.**

## Pillar 2: Security - Confronting Perception and Reality



Security presents the most uncomfortable subject in any honest assessment of Lagos tourism because it forces confrontation with how international markets perceive the city versus how most residents and experienced visitors actually experience it. The gap between these realities costs Lagos tens of thousands of potential visitors annually who make decisions based on travel advisories warning of violent crime, kidnapping, and armed robbery rather than on balanced risk assessment or firsthand accounts.

Let us begin with what the data shows. The United States State Department maintains a Level 3 travel advisory for Nigeria, recommending Americans reconsider travel to the country due to crime, terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, and armed gangs. Canada's travel advice for Nigeria warns that crime levels are high in Lagos, with violent crime including assaults and armed attacks committed against foreign nationals in areas they frequent. Australia's travel advisory similarly warns of remarkably high kidnapping risk throughout Nigeria including Lagos and Abuja. These advisories matter enormously because they influence not just individual travelers but corporate travel policies, insurance coverage, and tour operator decisions about whether to offer Lagos as a destination.

The advisories are not entirely without foundation. Crime exists in Lagos, as it does in any major city worldwide. Petty theft, particularly pickpocketing and bag snatching in crowded markets and public spaces, occurs regularly. Armed robbery happens, though tourists represent relatively rare targets compared to residents. Kidnapping for ransom, while more common in Nigeria's oil-producing states and northern regions, has occurred in Lagos, particularly targeting perceived wealthy individuals including some foreigners. Traffic stops by police seeking bribes remain common enough that experienced residents budget for such encounters as routine cost of mobility.

However, the lived experience of most tourists who actually visit Lagos diverges substantially from what travel advisories suggest. Visitors staying in areas like Victoria Island, Ikoyi, or Lekki, using reputable transportation services, and following basic urban safety precautions typically report feeling reasonably secure. Hotels maintain robust security protocols with vehicle screening, metal detectors, and armed guards that effectively create secure environments even if their necessity reflects underlying concerns. Tourist attractions, restaurants, and entertainment venues in affluent areas operate with security measures that generally prove effective. The overwhelming majority of the international tourists who visited Lagos in 2024 completed their trips without experiencing violent crime.



The perception gap, therefore, stems from several factors working simultaneously:

Travel advisories tend toward extreme caution when any major risk exists because governments face liability for under-warning their citizens.

The most dramatic incidents receive disproportionate media coverage compared to the thousands of uneventful visits.

Lagos competes for tourists against destinations like Cape Town, Nairobi, and Marrakech that face similar or even higher actual crime rates but benefit from more established tourism industries that have developed effective security protocols and better reputation management.

Nigeria's broader security challenges in regions far from Lagos often colour perceptions of the entire country despite different risk profiles across states.

Nevertheless, dismissing security concerns as purely perceptual would be mistaken. Lagos does face genuine security challenges that affect quality of life for residents and visitors alike. The Nigeria Police remains understaffed relative to population size and struggles with corruption that undermines effectiveness. Emergency response times vary depending on location and circumstances. Surveillance camera coverage exists in some areas but remains dotted rather than comprehensive. Coordination between multiple security agencies can be regarded as poor. Road travel after dark carries elevated risks in certain areas. Visitors are told to exercise genuine caution, avoid ostentatious displays of wealth, use trusted transportation, remain alert in crowds, and limit movement in unfamiliar areas after sunset.

The Lagos State Government has implemented several initiatives aimed at improving actual security and security perception. It uses a collaborative security framework and strategic partnerships to protect tourists and major attractions, largely through the integration of multiple agencies such as the Lagos State Ministry of Tourism, the Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Agency (LSNSA), the Nigeria Police (Lagos Command), and the Lagos State Safety Commission (LSSC). The state has a command and control centre where surveillance technologies such as CCTV cameras are used to monitor traffic and security incidents. The emergency response system accessible through 112 and 767 hotlines provides rapid assistance when properly utilised. Regular stakeholder meetings between security agencies, hotels, and tour operators enable information sharing about threats and best practices.

Progress in this pillar will ultimately depend on two parallel tracks: continuing to improve actual security conditions while simultaneously changing international perception through sustained positive experiences that gradually outweigh negative stereotypes. The first track requires persistent police reform, expanded surveillance, better emergency response, visible security presence at tourist sites, and effective prosecution of crimes against visitors. The second track demands proactive engagement with travel media, influencer visits that generate positive coverage, accumulation of successful tourism experiences that visitors share through social media, and diplomatic efforts to encourage more balanced risk assessment in official travel advisories.

**Current Assessment:** Security scores five out of ten, reflecting safety conditions for prepared visitors taking reasonable precautions but severely constrained by perception problems that deter many potential tourists from even considering Lagos as a destination. The gap between reality and perception costs the city enormously.

**2025 – 2027**

**Target: 5.5 out of ten requires measurable reduction in tourist-affecting crime rates, expansion of visible security presence at major attractions, improved emergency response times, launch of comprehensive tourist safety program, and documented positive shifts in how travel media and influencers characterize Lagos security environment. Changing decades of negative perception will not happen in a single year, but meaningful progress is possible.**



### Pillar 3: Digital Engagement



Digital infrastructure represents an area where Lagos shows ambition even as implementation remains uneven. The launch of MyLagosApp attempts to position the city alongside global cities like Dubai, New York, London, and Singapore that have deployed comprehensive smart city platforms integrating transportation, government services, tourism information, and business directories into unified digital experiences. The MyLagos App was officially unveiled on March 13, 2025, at the MTN Plaza in Ikoyi as a joint venture between the Lagos State Government and MTN Nigeria, serving as an "all-in-one" city guide designed to enhance urban living through integrated tourism, transportation, and emergency services. However, the app has suffered the same fate destined for shiny innovations that do not have sustainability built into them. The question is whether Lagos can sustain the maintenance, continuous improvement, and widespread adoption necessary to realize the platform's potential rather than watching it degrade into an underutilized app that tourists download once before abandoning.



MyLagosApp arrived after years of digital false starts in Lagos. Google's ambitious Project Link and Google Station, launched in 2018 to provide free public Wi-Fi at high-traffic locations, shut down globally in 2020 after failing to establish sustainable business models. Most Google Station sites in Lagos had already gone offline by late 2019. The experience demonstrated that public Wi-Fi cannot succeed through purely private sector initiative without government backing and sustainable funding mechanisms. Low mobile data prices eliminated much of the demand for free Wi-Fi while infrastructure maintenance costs remained high. Operators could not attract the hundred thousand monthly active users typically needed to generate meaningful advertising revenue.

Despite this Wi-Fi failure, mobile connectivity in Lagos has improved substantially through private sector investment by major carriers. MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9Mobile (now T2) have expanded 4G LTE coverage throughout Lagos, enabling visitors to maintain connectivity through SIM cards or data plans purchased upon arrival. However, coverage quality has been reported to often vary between affluent areas where service is generally reliable and informal settlements where connectivity is not without periodic issues. Bandwidth congestion during peak hours slows speeds even in well-served areas.

Beyond basic connectivity, Lagos has developed several tourism-relevant digital services. The state government's official tourism website provides information about attractions, events, accommodations, and practical visitor guidance, though the user experience lags behind international best practices and content updates sometimes occur irregularly. Several private sector apps including TravelStart, Hotels.ng, and Wakanow enable hotel bookings and travel arrangements within Nigeria. Uber, LagRide, InDrive and Bolt operate throughout Lagos, providing tourists with transportation options that are generally safer and more reliable than random taxis while eliminating language barriers and fare negotiation stress through app-based pricing.

Mobile payment adoption in Lagos has accelerated tremendously, making cashless transactions increasingly viable for tourists. Point-of-sale terminals accepting Mastercard, Visa, and Verve cards function at most hotels, restaurants, and formal retail establishments in tourism areas. Local payment systems including Quickteller, Paga, Flutterwave, and Paystack enable merchant payments while platforms like Opay and Palmpay facilitate peer-to-peer transfers. However, cash remains king in markets, small shops, street food stalls, and informal sector businesses where most authentic Lagos culture lives. Tourists still need substantial cash reserves despite digital payment growth.



Social media presence represents perhaps Lagos' strongest digital dimension. The Detty December phenomenon exists as much through Instagram posts, Twitter (now X) conversations, and TikTok videos as through physical events. Afrobeats artists with tens of millions of social media followers regularly promote Lagos events, effectively marketing the city to global audiences. Tourism stakeholders have learned to leverage influencer partnerships and user-generated content rather than relying solely on traditional advertising. The challenge is converting social media visibility into actual bookings and arrivals, a gap where Lagos still needs improvement.

For tourists planning Lagos visits, digital information ecosystem remains frustratingly incomplete. Comprehensive, regularly updated online guides covering attractions, practical logistics, safety advice, and authentic experiences are scarce compared to established destinations. TripAdvisor contains some Lagos content but far less than comparable cities. Google Maps coverage within Lagos is decent for major roads and landmarks but not targeted enough for specific attractions and restaurants. Online booking options for tours, attractions, and experiences lag behind international norms where visitors expect to research, compare, and book complete itineraries before arrival.

Digital engagement, therefore, shows promising foundations through improved mobile connectivity, growing mobile payment adoption, and strong social media presence. However, these strengths coexist with gaps in public Wi-Fi, incomplete tourism information resources, limited online booking infrastructure, and inconsistent data systems. Lagos performs better digitally than most African cities but remains behind Asian and Middle Eastern smart city leaders.

A quick-win would be to immediately deploy a comprehensive, state-led data governance initiative aimed at systematically collecting and analysing tourism statistics (and indicators such as visitor arrivals, tourism revenues, occupancy rates) that can inform planning and measure progress. Typically, this should fall under the policy analysis, monitoring and evaluation units of the relevant government agencies. The foreseeable challenge herein would be the quality of data, timeliness, and inter-agency coordination.



**Current Assessment:** Digital Engagement scores five out of ten, reflecting slow progress on smart city platforms, increased mobile connectivity, digital payments, and social media presence, in addition to public Wi-Fi failures, incomplete online tourism resources, and data coordination challenges. The trajectory is net positive..

**2025 – 2027 Target: Seven out of ten requires sustained MyLagosApp adoption with monthly active user growth, launch of functional public Wi-Fi network in key tourism zones, comprehensive online tourism information portal meeting international standards, significant expansion of online booking options for Lagos experiences, and demonstrated improvement in tourism data collection and analysis capabilities. This target is achievable with focus and resources.**



## Pillar 4: Hospitality & Visitor Experience

Hospitality represents Lagos' strongest pillar, the dimension where the city's natural advantages in culture, entertainment, and human warmth most clearly manifest. The hotel sector has recovered from the pandemic-induced disruption, with occupancy rates reaching approximately seventy percent in the first half of 2022 and major international brands competing to establish or expand Lagos presence. More importantly, Lagos has developed a visitor experience ecosystem extending far beyond accommodation to encompass world-class entertainment, diverse culinary offerings, vibrant nightlife, and authentic cultural experiences that give the city genuine competitive advantages over other African destinations.

The accommodation sector spans the full spectrum from international luxury brands to budget guesthouses, providing options for every traveller type and budget. Radisson Blu Anchorage Hotel on Victoria Island, Eko Hotel and Suites, The Wheatbaker, Lagos Continental Hotel, and Movenpick Hotel (formerly Southern Sun Ikoyi) represent the upper tier, offering facilities and service standards comparable to international five-star properties. Mid-range options including Marriott Lagos Ikeja (opened 2021), various Protea Hotels, and numerous three and four-star independent properties provide comfortable accommodation at more accessible price points. The short-let apartment sector has exploded, with platforms facilitating bookings for apartments that generated approximately \$13 million during December 2024 alone, offering visitors more space and flexibility than traditional hotels.

Importantly, Lagos enjoys continuing hotel development momentum despite macroeconomic issues. Nigeria ranked second in Africa's 2024 hotel development pipeline with fifty properties comprising 7,622 rooms in various stages of planning and construction according to W Hospitality Group data. Lagos claims the largest share of this pipeline, with major projects including the Transcorp Hilton Lagos in Ikoyi (a 315-room flagship property) expected to open in 2027, continued expansion by Marriott group properties, and various boutique hotel developments. The Mövenpick Hotel Ikoyi rebranding from Southern Sun represents a trend of value-add acquisitions where investors purchase existing assets and upgrade them to international brand standards.

Hotel performance metrics indicate healthy sector performance. Average Daily Rates in Lagos' luxury segment can exceed \$200, generating Revenue Per Available Room figures of \$140 or more during peak periods. Mid-range properties typically achieve ADRs in the \$60 to \$120 range with varying occupancy levels. Notably, upscale hotels have gained disproportionate RevPAR (Revenue Per Available Room) growth post-pandemic as corporate clients returned with ability to pay higher rates, widening the performance gap between luxury and budget tiers. Occupancy patterns show strong business travel demand during weekdays, increasing leisure travel on weekends, and explosive growth during December when Lagos hotels can achieve occupancies exceeding ninety percent.

2024 December  
Revenue Generated  
By Hotels and Visitors



Beyond accommodation, Lagos excels in entertainment and nightlife, the dimensions that truly differentiate the city from competitors. The Detty December phenomenon has transformed from informal year-end partying into a structured tourism season attracting over a million visitors and generating \$71.6 million in revenue during December 2024 alone. Hotels contributed \$44 million of this total while short-lets added \$13 million. Events numbered fifty-eight music festivals in Lagos alone during the season, featuring performances by Afrobeats superstars including Burna Boy, Wizkid, Davido, Tiwa Savage, Rema, and Ayra Starr whose combined social media followings exceed one hundred million people globally.

The Greater Lagos Countdown (a series of events usually heralding the New Year) has exemplified the scale Lagos can achieve, with Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu describing the event's electric atmosphere as celebration like no other. The cinema business saw December 2024 emerge as highest-grossing month of the year with N2.8 billion in revenues, largely driven by Funke Akindele's "Everybody Loves Jenifa." Theatre productions including Bolanle Austen-Peters' "Dear Kaffy" at Terra Kulture and "Once Upon Four Robbers" at MUSON Centre attracted enthusiastic audiences. Tourist attractions including beaches, conservation centres, art galleries, and recreational parks witnessed substantial attendance surges. Lagos essentially becomes a citywide festival for four weeks annually, generating economic activity and tourism revenues that many African destinations cannot match in full years.

Up to

**\$200**

Daily Hotel Average Rates for Luxury Hotels

**\$60-\$120**

Daily Hotel Average Rates for Mid-range Hotels

In 2024, Nigeria rank second in Africa's hotel development with 50 properties comprising

**7,600** rooms

The city's culinary scene has evolved and moved beyond traditional Nigerian restaurants to encompass diverse international cuisines alongside innovative fusion concepts. Upscale dining establishments including NOK by Alara, Nkoyo, Shiro, and Rele Gallery restaurant offer refined Nigerian and African cuisines in elegant settings that attract both residents and visitors. Mid-range restaurants span Italian, Chinese, Lebanese, Indian, Japanese, and American cuisines alongside traditional eateries serving classics like jollof rice, suya, and pounded yam. Street food culture provides authentic, budget-friendly experiences though visitors often need guidance navigating informal food vendors safely.

Tour operators have begun developing more sophisticated experience offerings beyond generic city tours. However, the organized tour market remains relatively underdeveloped compared to established destinations, with many excellent experiences available only to visitors who know where to look rather than easily discoverable through online booking platforms. Cultural attractions have grown more visitor-ready. The Nike Art Centre in Lekki houses over 7,000 art pieces across four floors, celebrating Nigerian artistic talent through diverse mediums. Lekki Conservation Centre provides nature experiences within the urban environment. The National Museum Lagos and various private galleries showcase Nigerian art and history. Freedom Park in Lagos Island transforms a former colonial prison into cultural venue hosting events and exhibitions. However, many of Lagos' most interesting cultural sites remain under-promoted, poorly maintained, or difficult for visitors to access independently without local guidance.

**The Nike Art Centre in Lekki houses over 7,000 art pieces across four floors, celebrating Nigerian artistic talent through diverse mediums.**

Service quality varies considerably across the hospitality ecosystem. International brand hotels generally maintain reliable standards through corporate training programs and quality assurance systems. Independent properties range from excellent to mediocre depending on ownership commitment and management competence. Restaurant service can be outstanding or frustratingly slow and inattentive on different nights at the same establishment. Tour guide quality spans from knowledgeable professionals to opportunistic operators with limited expertise. The challenge is establishing baseline standards and certification systems that give visitors confidence in service quality regardless of specific provider chosen

The hospitality sector's greatest strength lies in the genuine warmth of Lagosians who take pride in their city and enjoy sharing it with visitors. This natural hospitality cannot be taught or manufactured. When combined with world-class entertainment, improving accommodation options, growing culinary diversity, and emerging cultural experiences, Lagos possesses the fundamental ingredients for compelling tourism despite infrastructure and security challenges. The city must now formalize, package, and market these experiences to convert Lagos' organic appeal into sustainable tourism growth.

**2025 - 2027 Target: Seven out of ten would require Red Line extension to the international airport, Blue Line extension toward Lekki, completion of at least initial Green Line segments, visible airport terminal improvements, and demonstrable reduction in average travel times for key tourism routes. This target is ambitious but achievable with sustained political will and funding.**

**Current Assessment:** Hospitality and Visitor Experience scores seven out of ten, reflecting a boost in accommodation quality, entertainment programming, and cultural authenticity partially offset by uneven service standards, underdeveloped tour offerings, and limited visitor-ready cultural attractions.

## Pillar 2: Security - Confronting Perception and Reality

Destination marketing represents the area where Lagos shows great improvement potential because the city possesses extraordinary stories to tell but has not yet mastered the art of telling them effectively to global audiences who might choose Lagos over competing destinations. The challenge is not lack of content but rather fragmentation of storytelling, inconsistent messaging, limited international reach, and failure to convert cultural visibility into actual tourism demand. Lagos is famous through Afrobeats music and social media but not yet established as a must-visit tourism destination in the minds of travelers planning African adventures.

The Lagos State Government has made genuine efforts to build destination marketing capabilities. As earlier mentioned, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture under Commissioner Toke Benson-Awoyinka, disbursed over ₦8.4 billion supporting 143 festivals, events, and programs throughout 2024, creating year-round calendar of activities that gives Lagos substance to market beyond Detti December. Events supported include the Lagos Shopping Festival, various cultural festivals celebrating Brazilian-descended communities and traditional celebrations like Sango World Festival, food festivals, fashion shows, and music concerts.

This investment recognizes that destinations need continuous programming to maintain visitor interest and justify repeat visits.

The Q4-Lagos initiative which was officially launched by the Lagos State Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture in late 2022 and remains active in 2025 specifically aims to establish Lagos as prime destination for all seasons by creating data-driven calendar of activities generating reliable tourism statistics for each quarter. The concept emerged from recognition that visitor numbers were not being systematically captured, making effective planning and marketing impossible. based on evidence rather than assumptions.



By organizing programming and data collection around quarterly cycles, Lagos can identify seasonal patterns, measure marketing effectiveness, and adjust strategies organizing programming and data collection around quarterly cycles, Lagos can identify seasonal patterns, measure marketing effectiveness, and adjust strategies based on evidence rather than assumptions. However, its implementation has been uneven, with strong programming during certain quarters while others remain comparatively quiet. On the positive side, large-scale seasonal events, such as the 2025 Lagos Tourism NBC Trade Fair, have already surpassed 2024 income records, demonstrating the initiative's success in driving economic growth.

The Lagos Cultural Mission Initiative launched at Nike Arts Gallery in October 2024 represents strategic effort to build international partnerships and strengthen diplomatic ties through cultural exchange. Representatives from over twenty embassies attended the launch, witnessing art exhibitions, cultural performances, and traditional cuisine displays. Special Adviser on Tourism Idris Aregbe articulated the vision of making Lagos Africa's cultural powerhouse through joint festivals, educational exchanges, and tourism promotions with countries worldwide. The initiative creates year-round engagement framework rather than episodic events, positioning Lagos as serious cultural diplomacy player.

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Monthly city tours launched in January 2025 demonstrate government commitment to giving visitors regular opportunities to experience Lagos comprehensively. The "Lagos Tourism is Rising" roadshow took diaspora Nigerians and international visitors on double-decker bus and motorcycle tours showcasing the city's cultural heritage, tourist sites, and transformation. Aregbe announced these tours would occur monthly on both land and water, providing structured experiences for visitors who might otherwise struggle to navigate Lagos independently. Success depends on sustained execution rather than initial burst of enthusiasm that fades over months.

The Akwaaba African Travel Market, celebrating its twentieth edition in 2024, brings together over twenty countries for premier travel and tourism showcase at Eko Hotels Convention Centre. This annual event positions Lagos as Africa's tourism industry gathering place, attracting global hotel chains, tour operators, government officials, and industry buyers. The 2024 edition featured first-time participation by Mövenpick Hotel Nairobi, Memorial Healthcare Group from Turkey, and Costa Cruises from Italy, indicating growing international recognition of Lagos as tourism market worth engaging.

Social media represents Lagos' most powerful marketing channel, though largely organic rather than strategically managed by government. Afrobeats artists function as unpaid Lagos brand ambassadors, posting content from the city to tens of millions of followers globally. Burna Boy, Wizkid, Davido, and other superstars regularly showcase Lagos nightlife, restaurants, fashion, and culture through Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, generating excitement that traditional advertising cannot match. The challenge is converting this cultural visibility into tourism arrivals. Millions follow Lagos culture online without considering actually visiting, often because they perceive the city as unsafe, difficult to navigate, or lacking the convenient tourism infrastructure they expect.

Travel influencers and content creators represent partially untapped marketing resource. While some Nigerian and international influencers produce Lagos content, the city has not systematically courted major travel influencers with hosted familiarization trips designed to generate positive coverage across their platforms.

Competitors like Cape Town, Marrakech, and Nairobi have mastered influencer partnerships, understanding that a single positive video reaching millions of viewers by trusted travel creator can shift perceptions more effectively than dozens of traditional advertisements.

Print and digital media coverage of Lagos remains mixed, with entertainment and culture regularly featured while tourism as destination concept receives limited attention from major international travel publications. When Condé Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure, Lonely Planet, and other influential media do cover Lagos, content often focuses on challenges and security concerns rather than compelling reasons to visit. Changing this narrative requires proactive media relations, including hosted press trips, regular story pitching, and provision of high-quality photography and video assets that make editors' jobs easier.

To the discerning, it would appear that the "Lagos brand" lacks coherent visual identity and messaging that unifies marketing across platforms and audiences, when compared to "Amazing Thailand," "Incredible India," or "Visit Dubai" campaigns that maintain consistent visual language and messaging across all touchpoints globally. In Lagos, different government agencies, hotel properties, tour operators, and event organizers each communicate about Lagos using different imagery, slogans, and value propositions without coordination. Lagos needs similar brand consistency where potential visitors encounter the same compelling story whether researching online, seeing social media content, or reading travel guides.

Website usability for tourism information remains problematic. The official Lagos tourism website provides basic information but lacks the comprehensive, regularly updated content, easy navigation, inspiring photography, and online booking integration that international travelers expect. Visitors researching Lagos often resort to piecing together information from multiple sources rather than finding everything needed on single authoritative platform. This friction reduces conversion from interest to booking.

Data-driven marketing remains underdeveloped. Lagos does not appear to systematically track where potential visitors learn about the city, which marketing channels drive most bookings, what messages resonate with different audience segments, or how marketing investment correlates with arrival trends. Without this analytical foundation, marketing becomes guesswork rather than strategic investment optimized through continuous testing and refinement.

**Current Assessment:** Destination Marketing and Storytelling scores five out of ten, reflecting growing event programming, improving international partnerships, strong organic social media presence, and increasing government investment partially offset by fragmented messaging, limited international media reach, inconsistent brand identity, weak digital presence, and absence of data-driven marketing optimization. Substantial improvement potential exists.

**2025 – 2027 Target: Six out of ten requires launch of cohesive Lagos tourism brand with consistent visual identity and messaging, comprehensive website meeting international standards with integrated booking, systematic influencer and press outreach program generating regular international coverage, adoption of marketing analytics platform measuring campaign effectiveness, and demonstrable improvement in key metrics including website traffic, social media engagement, and search volume for "Visit Lagos" terms. This target is achievable with focused marketing investment and strategy.**

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## Spotlight Stories- The Faces Behind Lagos Tourism

# Nike Okundaye -Davies

## and the Nike Art Centre

CULTURAL PRESERVATION  
AS TOURISM ASSET



Nike Okundaye-Davies, the founder of Nike Art Centre in Lekki, embodies the intersection of cultural preservation, artistic excellence, and tourism development. Her four-story gallery housing over 7,000 art pieces across diverse mediums did not emerge from tourism master planning or government initiative but from decades of commitment to celebrating and preserving Nigerian artistic traditions. Yet in doing so, she created one of Lagos' most compelling tourist attractions, demonstrating how authentic cultural institutions naturally become tourism assets when properly supported and promoted.

The Nike Art Centre stands out because it offers what international visitors seek: authentic cultural experiences that cannot be replicated elsewhere, presented professionally in a comfortable environment that feels accessible rather than intimidating. Visitors can spend hours exploring paintings, sculptures, textiles, and mixed media works by both established and emerging artists. The gallery contextualizes Nigerian culture through multiple artistic lenses. It also offers insights into diverse ethnic traditions, historical narratives, and contemporary creative movements. This depth of cultural engagement exceeds what most hotels or generic city tours can provide.

Okundaye-Davies understands that cultural institutions must balance preservation mission with visitor experience considerations. The centre maintains gallery standards that protect artwork while welcoming tourists regardless of art expertise. Trained guides provide context and answer questions without condescension. The space includes planned coffee shop addition, recognizing that tourists appreciate amenities that make extended visits comfortable. Exhibition scheduling and workshop programming create reasons for repeat visits rather than single tourist checkbox experience.

At the Lagos Cultural Mission Initiative launch held at her gallery in October 2024, Okundaye-Davies used her platform to advocate for policy changes affecting tourism: specifically, visa accessibility. Her appeal for easier entry visas reflects understanding that cultural institutions can be world-class but attract few international visitors if visa processes remain prohibitively difficult and expensive. A gallery owner cannot control visa policy, but she can use her credibility to advocate for changes that benefit the entire tourism sector.



The Nike Art Centre demonstrates that Lagos tourism need not wait for government to complete infrastructure megaprojects before offering compelling visitor experiences. Cultural entrepreneurs who invest in excellence, maintain standards, and welcome visitors create tourism value immediately. The challenge is ensuring such institutions receive the marketing support, infrastructure access, security environment, and policy frameworks that enable them to reach potential audiences rather than remaining hidden gems known only to Lagos insiders.

Government support for cultural institutions like Nike Art Centre need not mean direct financial subsidy but rather recognition of their tourism value through inclusion in official tourism materials, coordination of transport access, integration into city tour itineraries, facilitation of international partnerships, and policy advocacy on issues like visa reform that affect visitor flows. When government and cultural entrepreneurs work as partners rather than separate spheres, tourism development accelerates.

**Okundaye-Davies  
understands  
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*The scale of Detty December 2024 reveals how important this organic tourism development has become*

The scale of Detty December 2024 reveals how important this organic tourism development has become. Fifty-eight major music events happened in Lagos alone during the season. Hotels generated \$44 million in revenue while short-let apartments added \$13 million. Total tourism and entertainment sectors produced \$71.6 million during the single month. Cinema attendance set records with NGN2.8 billion in December revenues. Tourist attractions from beaches to conservation centers to art galleries witnessed attendance surges. The Greater Lagos Countdown drew massive crowds to hear performances by Nigeria's biggest Afrobeats stars.

# The Detty December Entrepreneurs- Building Lagos' Signature Tourism Season

December in Lagos has become its own phenomenon, driven less by government planning and more by creative entrepreneurs who recognized opportunity to build unique tourism season around diaspora homecoming, entertainment, and celebration. The network of event organizers, venue operators, hospitality providers, and service entrepreneurs who have collectively created "Detty December" demonstrate how bottom-up innovation can accomplish what top-down planning struggles to achieve: building authentic, compelling tourism product that people genuinely want to experience.

This was not by accident. Years of accumulated effort by entrepreneurs building complementary pieces of the ecosystem made it so. Event organizers learned to coordinate schedules reducing direct competition while creating perception that Lagos offers continuous programming throughout December. Venue operators invested in sound systems, lighting, security, and capacity expansion that enable quality experiences. Hotels developed package deals combining accommodation with event access. Short-let apartment operators integrated booking systems and property management systems which enabled quick transactions. Transportation services scaled up driver availability. Restaurants extended hours and expanded capacity. Marketing coordination improved so international audiences learned about opportunities months in advance rather than discovering them too late to plan travel.

Government's role has been supportive rather than directive. The Lagos State Ministry of Tourism's ₦8.4 billion investment in events includes Detty December programming but does not control the season. Instead, government provides security coordination, traffic management, public safety oversight, promotion through official channels, and convening power that brings stakeholders together to solve collective problems. This partnership model between entrepreneurial initiative and government facilitation often proves more effective than either pure private sector or government-led approaches.

Several specific entrepreneurs deserve recognition for their contributions. The organizers behind events like Joeboy Lavidia Experience, Splash Out, Mainland Block Party, Island Block Party, and Bonfire Experience have built sustainable event brands attracting both residents and visitors. The Rush Festival, launched as new-generation cultural event combining music, film, lifestyle sports, food culture, and visual spectacle in single curated environment, represents evolution toward more comprehensive visitor experiences beyond isolated concerts. Theatre producers including Bolanle Austen-Peters and Dire Badejo have added cultural depth to the entertainment-heavy season through their excellent productions.

The challenge now is extending lessons from Detty December into other months. December's success demonstrates that when programming quality is high, marketing reaches target audiences effectively, infrastructure functions adequately, and safety concerns are managed, people will choose Lagos. The same entrepreneurs who have made December extraordinary possess capability to create compelling experiences in February, June, or October. The constraint is not their ability but rather business viability outside the concentrated demand of year-end when diaspora homecoming and holiday timing align.

Government and tourism stakeholders must ask what support would enable year-round viability for these entrepreneurs. Would guaranteed promotion through official channels reduce marketing risk? Would infrastructure improvements make non-December events more accessible? Would safety initiatives improve perception making visitors willing to come in August as readily as December? Would international marketing expand awareness beyond diaspora to general tourism markets? The answers likely involve combination of all these factors, but the key insight is that Lagos already possesses entrepreneurial talent to build world-class tourism experiences. The task is creating conditions where this talent can flourish twelve months annually rather than concentrating in single season.

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## Conclusion & Recommendations



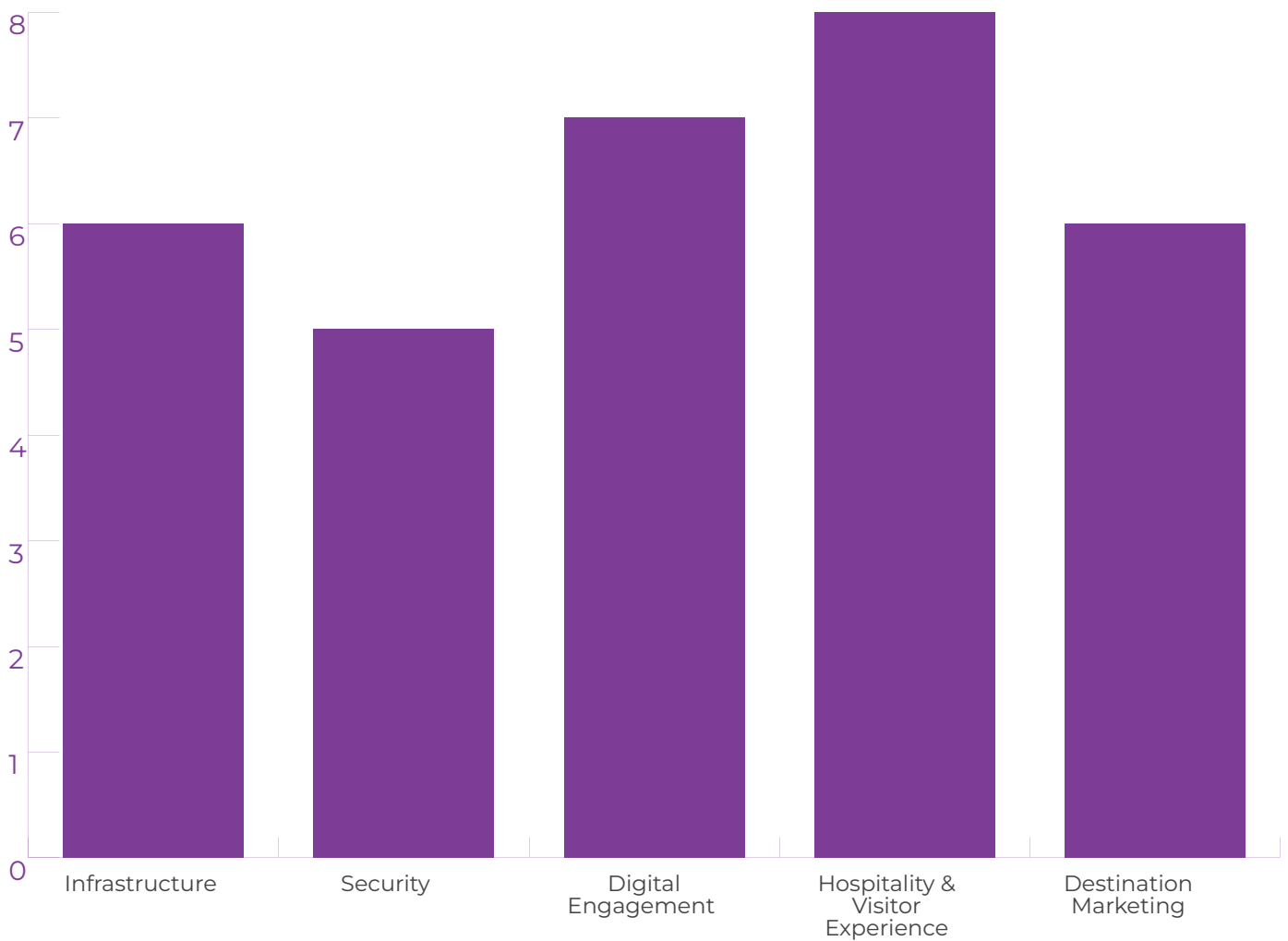
Lagos' tourism development journey has the fundamental ingredients for success: world-class entertainment capabilities, growing infrastructure, improving digital services, strong hospitality sector, extraordinary cultural assets, and natural warmth that makes visitors feel welcomed despite challenges. International tourist arrivals are growing steadily even with minimal professional marketing. December tourism revenues approach levels that would satisfy many African capitals for full years. Major hotel brands are investing billions in Lagos properties. Rail transit is finally operating after decades of failed promises. A smart city app now integrates essential services. These represent genuine achievements worthy of recognition.

Yet honest assessment requires acknowledging that Lagos remains far from the world-class smart tourism destination articulated in official visions and master plans. Security perception problems continue costing the city tens of thousands of potential visitors annually. Infrastructure projects proceed slower than needed and often incomplete. Digital services show promise but lack consistent execution. Tourism programming remains heavily concentrated in December rather than distributed across seasons. Marketing efforts are fragmented and underfunded. Data collection remains inadequate for evidence-based decision making. The gaps between what Lagos could be and what currently exists are substantial.

# Lagos' tourism development journey has the fundamental ingredients for success



The Lagos Smart Tourism Index  
2025 baseline performance  
across five critical pillars:



These scores reflect current reality rather than aspiration. They provide measurement against which future progress can be assessed annually. They identify where Lagos is strong and where urgent attention is required. Most importantly, they shift conversation from vague declarations about tourism potential toward specific, measurable indicators of actual performance.

## Strategic Recommendations for 2025 – 2027

### Infrastructure

Complete the Red Line extension to Murtala Muhammed International Airport within 2025 - 2026 timeframe as single highest-impact infrastructure project for tourism. International arrivals experiencing smooth rail connection from airport to Victoria Island within thirty minutes will transform first impressions and reduce the stress of Lagos arrival that currently deters many visitors.

Simultaneously, extend Blue Line toward Lekki to serve growing entertainment and hospitality corridor. These two extensions matter more for tourism than new line construction because they directly address current mobility pain points.

### Security

Launch comprehensive "Safe Tourist Lagos" program combining increased police presence at

major attractions, rapid response protocols for incidents involving visitors, regular stakeholder coordination meetings between security agencies and tourism operators, systematic incident tracking enabling early threat identification, and proactive international media engagement.

Commission independent security assessment by international tourism security consultants to provide objective recommendations for improvement.

Accumulate and publicize positive visitor experiences through systematic guest satisfaction measurement and testimonial collection that can gradually counter negative stereotypes.

### Digital Acceleration

Sustain MyLagosApp through dedicated team responsible for continuous improvement, user feedback response, feature enhancement, and marketing to drive adoption.

Launch functional public Wi-Fi network in defined tourism zones including Victoria Island, Ikoyi, Lekki, airport, and major attractions, learning from previous failures by ensuring sustainable funding models and private sector partnerships.

Complete comprehensive online tourism portal meeting international standards with integrated booking capabilities for hotels, tours, experiences, and events.

### Hospitality Enhancement

Establish Lagos Tourism Service Standards program with voluntary certification for hotels, restaurants, tour operators, and attractions that meet defined quality benchmarks.

Create professional tour guide training and certification program ensuring visitors encounter knowledgeable, safe, reliable guides regardless of which operator they choose.

**The Lagos Smart Tourism Index 2025 baseline performance across five critical pillars:**

Expand professionally operated tour offerings covering diverse interests including food, art, music, history, nature, and photography, making these bookable online through centralized platform.

Support entrepreneurs developing unique experiences that showcase authentic Lagos culture beyond generic sightseeing.

### Marketing Transformation

Develop cohesive Lagos tourism brand with consistent visual identity, compelling tagline, and clear value proposition unified across all government and stakeholder communications.

Commission professional brand strategy firm with international tourism experience.

Rebuild official tourism website to international standards with inspiring photography, comprehensive information, easy navigation, integrated booking, and multiple language options.

Launch systematic influencer outreach program hosting 20+ major travel influencers annually for familiarization visits designed to generate positive coverage across their platforms.

Implement marketing analytics measuring which channels drive bookings, which messages resonate with different audience segments, and what return on investment marketing spending generates.

### Event Calendar Rebalancing

Work with Detty December entrepreneurs to extend programming into other months through financial incentives, guaranteed promotion, infrastructure support, and international marketing that builds demand outside December.

Create signature events for Q1, Q2, and Q3 that can become annual traditions attracting visitors: consider Lagos Food Festival in March, Lagos Cultural Festival in June, and Lagos Film Festival in September.

Support existing events in underserved months through enhanced promotion and coordination.

### Visa and Entry Reform Advocacy

Lagos State Government cannot directly control federal visa policy but can use convening power to advocate for reforms essential to tourism growth. Work with federal authorities to expand visa-on-arrival eligibility, create simplified e-visa systems for tourism purposes, reduce processing times and costs, and consider regional visa policies enabling visitors to tour multiple West African countries without separate applications.

Document lost tourism revenue from restrictive visa policies using specific examples and economic modelling to strengthen reform advocacy.

## Partnership Development

Formalize partnerships with source markets showing highest tourism potential including United Kingdom, United States, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, and diaspora communities worldwide. These partnerships should encompass joint marketing campaigns, cultural exchange programs, simplified visa arrangements where possible, direct air service development incentives, and business-to-business connections between tourism operators.

Establish Lagos Tourism Board as independent agency with private sector participation ensuring sustained focus beyond political cycles.

## Sustainability Integration

Begin integrating sustainability considerations into tourism development now rather than waiting until environmental problems become crises. This includes waste management systems for tourist areas, water conservation programs for hotels, support for eco-tourism enterprises, protection of beaches and natural attractions from degradation, and promotion of cultural tourism that benefits local communities rather than extractive tourism that provides few local benefits. Sustainable tourism proves increasingly important to international travelers, particularly younger demographics who represent future demand.

## Measuring Success: Key Performance

Success in tourism development requires clear metrics tracked consistently. The following Key Performance Indicators should be measured quarterly and reported annually for the 2025 – 2027 window

### INTERNATIONAL TOURIST ARRIVALS

TARGET

**25,000+**

in 2025

**37%**

growth from 2024)

### DOMESTIC LEISURE VISITOR ARRIVALS

TARGET

**100,000+**

in 2025

### DIASPORA HOMECOMING VISITORS

TARGET

**150,000+**

in 2025

**Visitor  
Arrivals**

Measuring Success: Key Performance

TOTAL TOURISM REVENUE

TARGET

**₦150 billion+**

AVERAGE VISITOR SPENDING PER TRIP

TARGET

**₦500,000+**

TOURISM'S CONTRIBUTION  
TO LAGOS GDP TARGET

**5%+**

DIRECT TOURISM  
EMPLOYMENT

**75,000+**  
Jobs

**Economic  
Impact**

## Measuring Success: Key Performance

AVERAGE TRAVEL TIME AIRPORT TO

TARGET

**¥150 billion+**

or less via rail

RED AND BLUE LINE DAILY RIDERSHIP

TARGET

**200,000+**

passengers

hotel occupancy rates  
across all segments  
TARGET

**65%+**

annual  
average

airport passenger  
satisfaction scores  
TARGET

**70%+**

rating service  
good or excellent

**Infrastructure  
Performance**

## Measuring Success: Key Performance



Tourist-affecting crime incidents per 10,000 visitors TARGET

**below 5** reduction

Tourist satisfaction with safety perceptions TARGET

**70%+** feel safe or very safe

Tourist satisfaction with safety perceptions TARGET

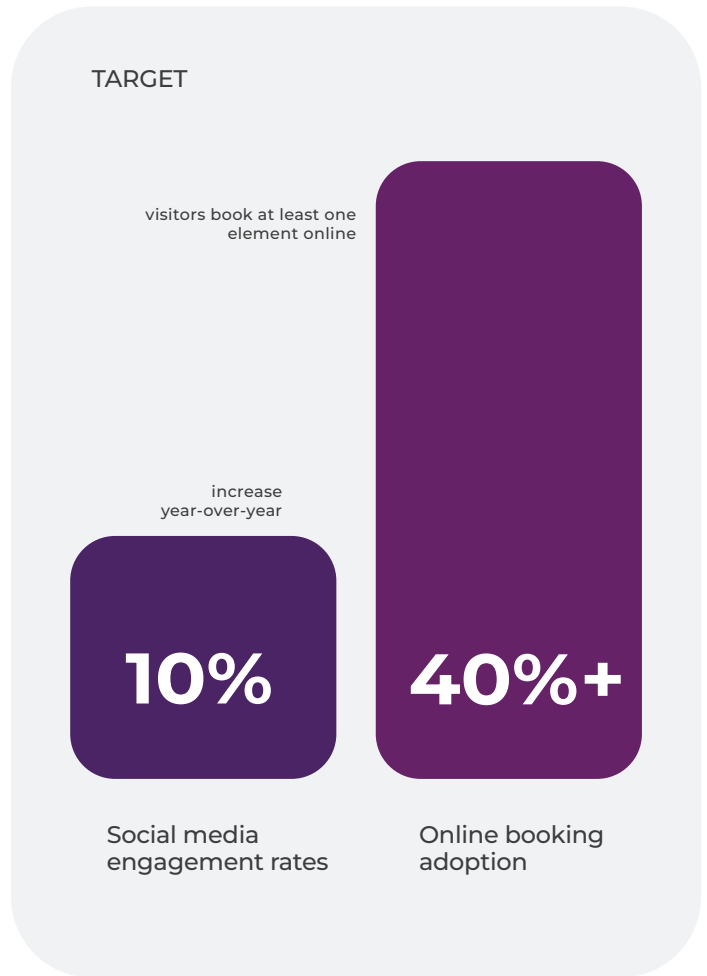
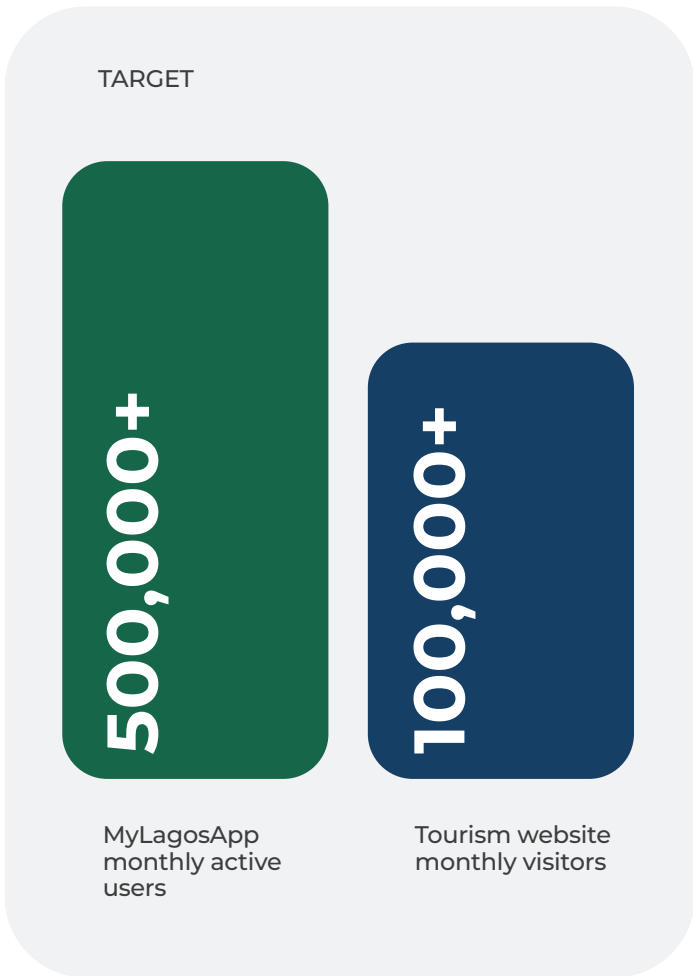
**10 minutes** feel safe or very safe

Positive shifts in international travel advisory language

**qualitative assessment**

**Security Indicators**

## Measuring Success: Key Performance



**Digital Metrics**

## Measuring Success: Key Performance

Guest satisfaction scores on TripAdvisor and Google Reviews



Service complaint resolution rates



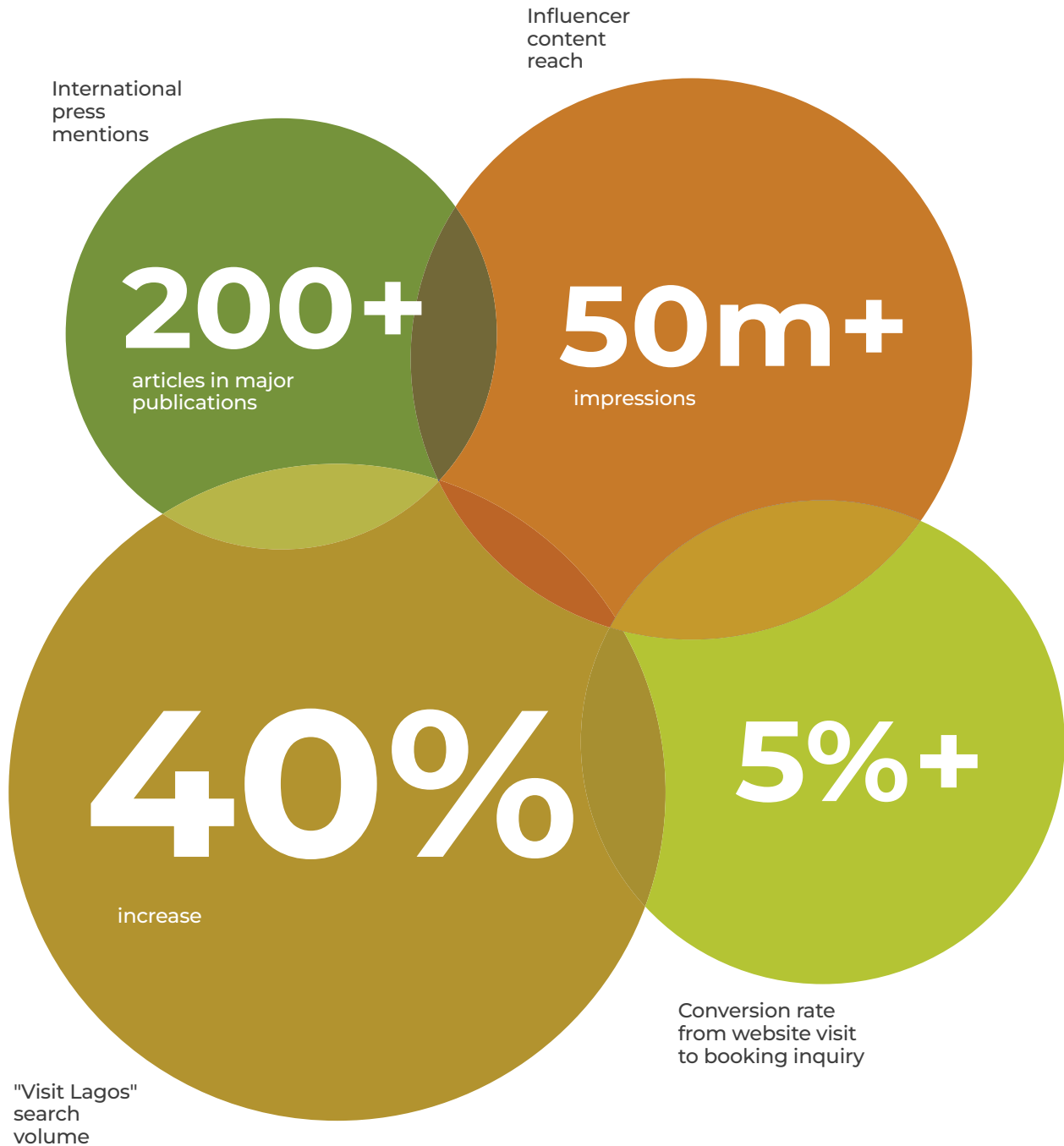
Certified tour operators and guides



Hotel development pipeline



## Measuring Success: Key Performance



## Final Thoughts

Tourism development tests patience because results accumulate slowly rather than arriving suddenly. Infrastructure projects take years. Perception changes gradually. Capacity builds incrementally. Marketing impact compounds over time. The temptation exists to seek quick wins through spectacular but unsustainable initiatives rather than persistent work on fundamentals that deliver lasting transformation. Lagos must resist this temptation.

The city possesses what most destinations cannot manufacture: authentic culture, natural energy, creative dynamism, and human warmth that make visitors feel they have experienced something genuinely special rather than sanitized tourism product. This authenticity represents Lagos' greatest asset and primary competitive advantage. The infrastructure, security, digital systems, and marketing are simply means to enable more people to experience what makes Lagos tick.

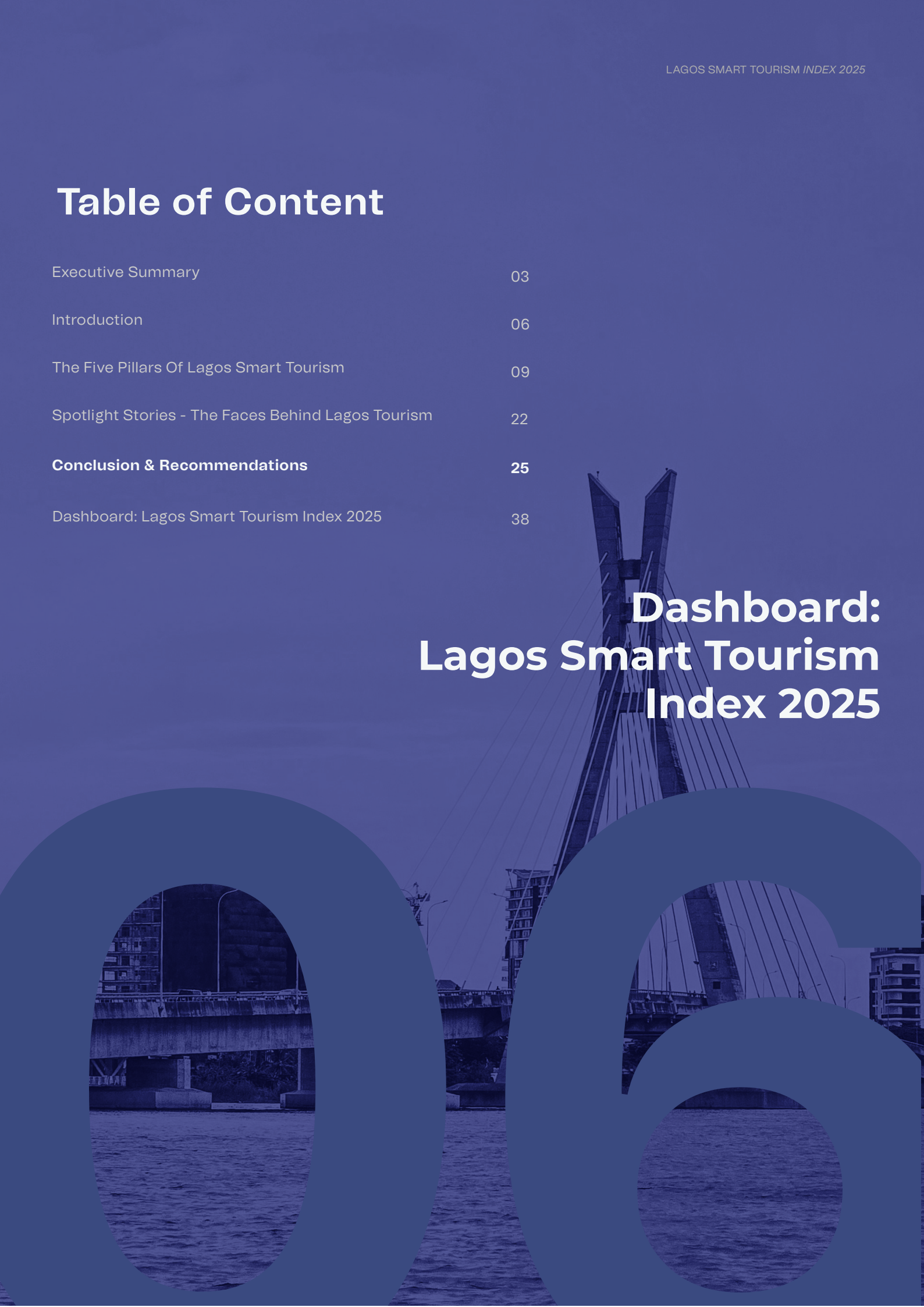
Success will require sustained commitment across multiple administrations, coordination between government and private sector, willingness to acknowledge failures and adjust strategies, investment in data collection enabling evidence-based decisions, and patience to implement long-term solutions rather than expecting immediate results. Tourism development is marathon, not sprint.

The Lagos Smart Tourism Index 2025 establishes the starting line for this marathon. Annual editions will measure progress, celebrate achievements, identify persistent challenges, adjust strategies based on evidence, and maintain accountability for delivering on vision of Lagos as Africa's premier smart tourism destination. The journey has genuinely begun. The destination, while still distant, becomes more reachable with each year of focused, honest, sustained effort toward measurable goals. Lagos can become what it aspires to be. The question is whether political will, resource allocation, stakeholder coordination, and persistent execution will match the ambition of the vision. This Index will measure the answer year by year.

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## Dashboard: Lagos Smart Tourism Index 2025

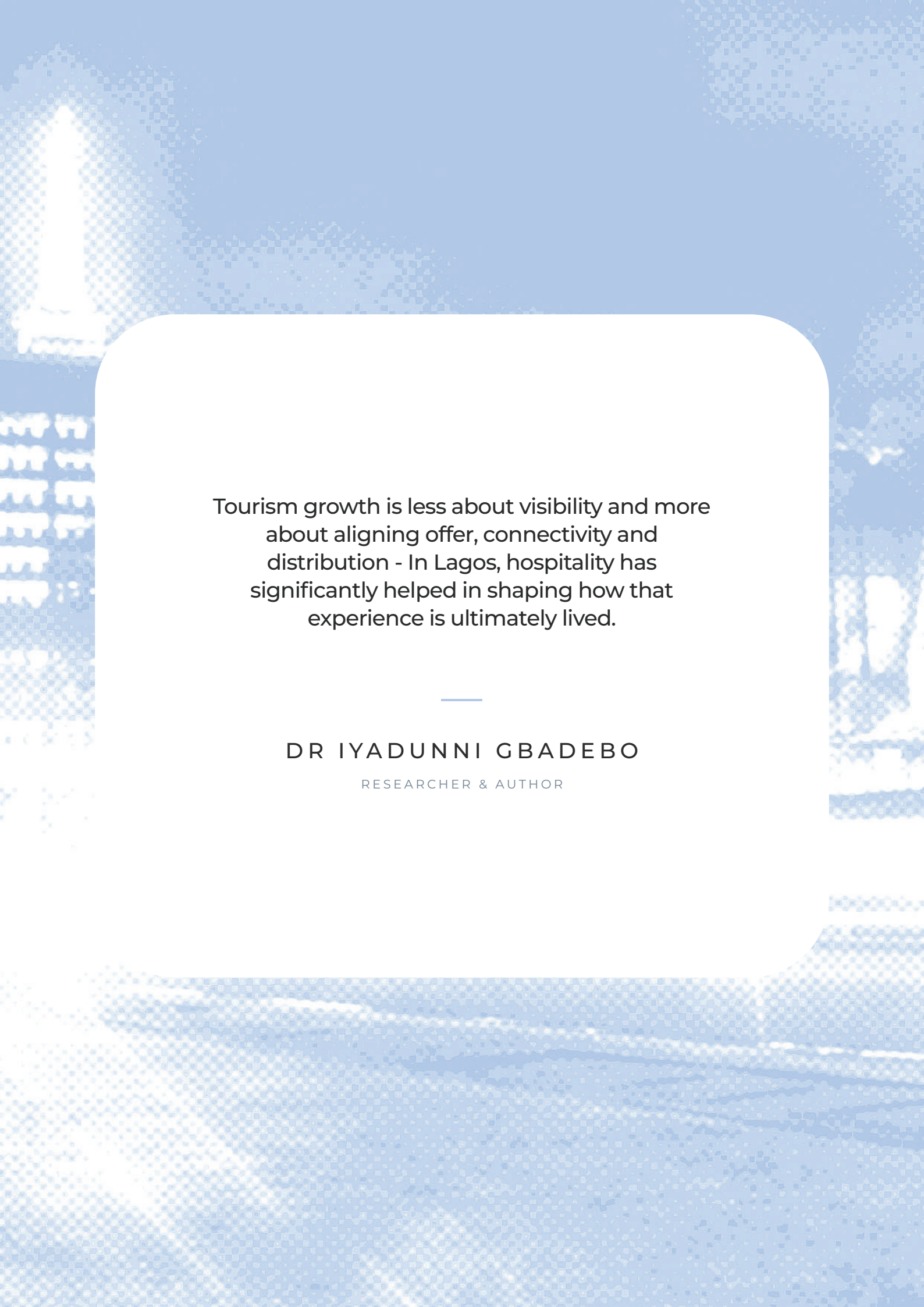
The background of the page features a blue-tinted photograph of a modern cable-stayed bridge spanning a body of water. The bridge's two tall, dark pylons are prominent, with numerous stay cables fanning out to support the deck. In the foreground, there are two large, semi-transparent circular cutouts that reveal the bridge's structure and the water below. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional, with a focus on the bridge as a key landmark.

## Dashboard: Lagos Smart Tourism Index 2025 (WEF/UNWTO Style)

Pillar	Score (10)	Status	Global Interpretation
Infrastructure	6.0	Moderate Progress	Foundational systems operational; network incomplete
Security	5.5	Constrained	Risk-managed but perception-limited
Digital Engagement	6.0	Emerging	Core platforms live; adoption uneven
Hospitality & Visitor Experience	8.0	Strong	Competitive with leading African cities
Destination Marketing	6.5	Improving	Cultural visibility high; conversion weak

## Global Comparator Snapshot (African Urban Tourism Peers)

City	Infrastructure	Security	Digital	Hospitality	Marketing
 Lagos	6.0	5.5	6.0	8.0	6.5
 Cape Town	8.0	6.5	7.5	8.5	8.0
 Marrakech	7.5	7.0	6.5	8.0	8.5
 Nairobi	6.5	6.0	6.5	7.0	6.5



Tourism growth is less about visibility and more about aligning offer, connectivity and distribution - In Lagos, hospitality has significantly helped in shaping how that experience is ultimately lived.

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**DR IYADUNNI GBADEBO**

RESEARCHER & AUTHOR





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