

## **The Nigerian Industrial Standard for Tourism and Related Services as a Tool for Curbing the Spread of Coronavirus**

Felicia Monye\* and Ndubuisi Nwafor\*\*

### **Abstract**

The coronavirus has necessitated a paradigm shift since it broke out in China more than two years ago, thereby affecting every facet of life, halting progress in every human endeavour and birthing breakthroughs in science, technology and art as well. The Covid-19 safety measures like total lockdowns, social distancing, wearing of facemasks and other measures taken to mitigate its spread have impacted negatively on all sectors of global economy with some suffering devastating blows. One of the worst affected sectors is tourism, which used to be a vibrant sector that rakes in billions of naira annually. This article strives to doctrinally investigate the impact of the Nigerian Industrial Standard for Tourism in the mitigation of the fallout of Covid-19 and the spread of it in the Nigerian tourism sector, and more specifically from the hotel business perspective. The article will answer the question of what the contributions and challenges of the Nigeria Industrial Standard for Tourism and Related Services is, as a tool for tackling the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, the research advocates Covid-19 measures that would be constructed from both the public health and social-contract governance perspectives, rather than from the point of view of mere government patronage.

**Keywords:** Nigerian Tourism Standards, Tourism, Hospitality, Coronavirus, Health and Safety

### **1. Introduction**

The Nigerian Industrial Standard for Health and Safety Measures for Tourism and Related Services during Coronavirus (COVID 19), NIS 1160: 2020, specifies minimum requirements for tourism and related establishments to enable them to comply with COVID -19 Pandemic guidelines issued by relevant authorities. This standard was approved by the Governing Council of the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), the country's national standards-making body, on 16 December 2020.<sup>1</sup>

The Standards Organisation of Nigeria came into being in 1971 under the Standards Organisation of Nigeria Act 1971, which was repealed and replaced by the Standards Organisation of Nigeria Act 2015. Under the expanded powers conferred by the new Act, the Organisation has made many contemporary standards to take care of emerging situations, the standard under consideration being one of such efforts. In making this standard, SON referred to ISO 45001-

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\* Professor, Department of Commercial and Corporate Law, and Former Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus.

\*\* Senior Lecturer, Department of Jurisprudence and Legal Theory and Associate Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus.

<sup>1</sup> SI Ocheni, AMO Agba, MS Agba, and FO Eteng 'Covid-19 and the Tourism Industry: Critical Overview, Lessons and Policy Options' (2020) 9(6) *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 114 <<https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2020-0116>>.

Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems — Requirements with Guidance for Use, other international standards on travels and tourism, as well as the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control guidelines on COVID 19 related issues.

Like the position in many other countries, the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has had a devastating negative impact on many businesses in Nigeria, particularly the tourism and hospitality industry. The first Covid-19 case was confirmed in Nigeria on 27 February, 2020.<sup>2</sup> Sequel to this discovery, the Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Health, quickly instituted some measures to curtail the spread of the disease. An immediate measure was the establishment of a Multi-Sectoral Coronavirus Preparedness Group led by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), which was mandated to work closely with the Lagos State Health authorities to implement the control measures.<sup>3</sup> Other measures put in place at different times were the establishment of the Presidential Task Force on COVID 19; a state task force in each of the 36 states of Nigeria; a multi-sectoral National Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) activated at Level 3 to coordinate the national response activities; and provision of palliatives for the less privileged and vulnerable persons. Some other measures include the Central Bank of Nigeria Intervention Fund for different sectors, notably the small and medium enterprises and the pharmaceutical sectors; provision of health care facilities to hospitals and other health care centres; imposition of intra-state and inter-state lockdowns at different times; curfew and closure of many public places including tourism facilities. Although these measures and the efforts of dedicated medical personnel handling the pandemic have recorded remarkable successes as witnessed in the number of cases successfully treated and discharged, the situation still needs sustained efforts. As of 27 August, 2020, Nigeria had recorded 53,317 confirmed cases, 40,726 discharged, 1011 deaths and 11,580 active cases at various treatment centres.<sup>4</sup> The figures have been growing at an alarming rate and as of 17 April, 2021, there were 164,147 confirmed cases with 154,304 discharged, 2,061 deaths, and 7,782 active cases.<sup>5</sup> As at February 21, 2022, the records were aggressively in ascent and stood at 254,243 active cases with 3,142 deaths and 230,587 recovered.<sup>6</sup> The policy implication of this record is that Nigeria needs to do more in order to stop the spread of Covid-19 and gain the confidence of stakeholders in the tourism sector.

It is believed that the travel and tourism sector contribute about 34 per cent to the GDP and generates 20 per cent of employment.<sup>7</sup> Research is needed to ascertain the current figures amidst the coronavirus, but there is no doubt that the pandemic created a serious apathy and low patronage

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<sup>2</sup> Nigeria Centre for Disease Control ‘First Case of Coronavirus Disease Confirmed in Nigeria’ <<https://ncdc.gov.ng/news/227/first-case-of-corona-virus-disease-confirmed-in-nigeria>> accessed 09 January 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Nigeria Centre for Disease Control ‘COVID-19 Nigeria’ <<https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/>> accessed 28 August 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, accessed 17 April, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Worldometer ‘Nigeria: Coronavirus Cases’ <<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/nigeria/>> accessed 21 February, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> THISDAYLive ‘Shebanjo: COVID 19 Will Enhance Domestic Tourism in Nigeria’ *THISDAY* (Abuja, 5 June 2020) <<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/06/05/shebanjo-covid-19-will-enhance-domestic-tourism-in-nigeria/>> accessed 27 August, 2020.

of tourism and hospitality businesses. Thus, the situation has necessitated measures that would restore confidence in the industry and mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic. The standard under consideration is intended to help operators mitigate and/or eliminate possible contamination of their premises and ensure the safety of consumers. Operators are required to obtain a Clean and Safe Compliance Certificate as evidence of compliance with this standard prior to taking off business post-lockdown. This paper examines the guidelines stated in the standard and argues that effective application by operators will help to achieve safety of the workplace and restore customers' confidence and patronage of tourism and related businesses.

## **2. State of Tourism and Related Services in Nigeria**

Nigeria attracts quite a few tourists from within and outside of the country. In a survey carried out by the World Bank, Nigeria and Senegal contributed 78 per cent of tourism in West Africa. Most of these tourists are from France, the UK, the USA, Portugal, and Germany.<sup>8</sup> Even though in Nigeria, tourism contributes a small percentage to the GDP, Nigeria, together with Ghana, are the top tourism earners in West Africa, accounting for 60 percent of total tourists in the region.<sup>9</sup> Two tourist sites have already been designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as World Heritage sites. A study carried out by Amalu, Phil-Eze, and Ajake, discovered that 72% of tourists visited cultural events in some selected locations while 28% visited natural sites, and 70% of these visits were done in the southern part of Nigeria.<sup>10</sup>

UNESCO World Heritage sites in Nigeria are the Sukur cultural landscape located in the Mandara Mountains in the Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State and the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove.<sup>11</sup> Other tourist centres as listed by Amalu, Phil-Eze, and Ajake are the Obudu Mountain resort, Marina Resort, Alok Ikom monoliths, Tinapa Free Trade Zone and Resort, Oban Hills in Cross River State; Ngwo Pine Forest, Awhum Waterfall, Ogbunike Cave in Anambra State, Shere Hills, Wase Rock, Assop and Kurra Waterfalls, Jos Wildlife Park and Zoological Garden in Plateau State, and the Yankari National Park in Bauchi State".<sup>12</sup> Aside from these natural tourist attractions, there are a variety of traditional and cultural activities held across the country that draw many tourists to communities.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, tourism in Nigeria was already threatened by many challenges, the most being insecurity. For instance, in 2017, the Daily Times of Nigeria reported that Sukur World Cultural Heritage was destroyed by Boko Haram terrorists in 2014, necessitating

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<sup>8</sup> Iain Christie et al, *Tourism in Africa: Harnessing Tourism for Growth and Improved Livelihoods* (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2014) 43 – 45.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, 47 – 48.

<sup>10</sup> Titus Amalu, Philip Phil-Eze, and Anim Ajake, 'Assessing the Impact of Economic and Cultural Diversity on Tourism Development in Nigeria' (2020) 85 *GeoJournal* 1457.

<sup>11</sup> Ngozi Ezenagu, 'Heritage resources as a driver for cultural tourism in Nigeria' (2020) 7(1) *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 1, 7 – 9.

<sup>12</sup> Amalu, Phil-Eze, and Ajake (n 10) 1460.

the site's closure.<sup>13</sup> In the midst of all these challenges, tourism in Nigeria was progressing, even though slowly, and attracted some benefits to Nigeria and the communities where these sites are located. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has threatened, even more, to impact the tourism sector in Nigeria negatively.<sup>14</sup> The tourism industry in Nigeria lost 770,000 jobs as a result of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect across the country.<sup>15</sup> It disclosed this through the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), adding that about \$4.5tn was lost by the industry globally due to the impact of the deadly virus.<sup>16</sup> Regional Director, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), Andrew Brown stated that before the outbreak of COVID-19, travel and tourism accounted for 330 million jobs worldwide and that the figure was projected to grow to 440 million by 2030<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, about \$4.5tn was lost by the tourism and hospitality sectors as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide and over 770,000 jobs were lost in the sector in Nigeria alone. With this staggering loss in the tourism industry, operators are encouraged to adopt safe travel steps and implement protocols that would help travelers feel safe when they travel.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Existing Efforts at Tourism Regulation in Nigeria

Efforts at regulating and promoting tourism and hospitality in Nigeria started in the 1960s. The Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) started as the Nigerian Tourist Association in 1962 before it was changed to NTDC in 1992 as a Federal Government Corporation under the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and National Orientation.<sup>19</sup> The NTDC was established by the NTDC Act 1992, which repealed and replaced the Nigerian Tourist Board Act.<sup>20</sup>

The NTDC is mandated to encourage people living in Nigeria to take their holidays within the country and people from abroad to visit Nigeria. The Corporation is also responsible for providing and improving tourism amenities and facilities in Nigeria, including the development of hotels and ancillary facilities. It is charged with the responsibility of promoting and developing the tourism industry. Specifically, the Corporation is to facilitate the development of museums and historic sites, parks, game reserves, beaches, natural beauty spots, holiday resorts and souvenir

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<sup>13</sup> Daily Times, 'UNESCO: Sukur Kingdom was destroyed by Boko Haram- Official' *Daily Times* (Lagos, 6 March 2017) <<https://dailytimes.ng/unesco-sukur-kingdom-destroyed-boko-haram-official/>> accessed 19 April 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Amine 'Reviving Nigeria's tourism fortunes after COVID-19' (Abuja, 31 March 2021) <<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/452345-reviving-nigerias-tourism-fortunes-after-covid-19.html>> accessed 02 April 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Okechukwu Nnodim 'Nigeria's tourism industry lost 770,000 jobs to COVID-19 – WTTC' PUNCH (Lagos, 24 August 2021) <<https://punchng.com/nigerias-tourism-industry-lost-770000-jobs-to-covid-19-wttc/>> accessed 21 February 2022.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation, 'About Us' <<https://tournigeria.gov.ng/about.us.php>> accessed 27 August 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Cap 330, LFN 1990.

industries. In addition, the Corporation is to advise appropriate authorities on ways of improving tourist facilities, and also publicise tourism.<sup>21</sup>

State Tourism Boards established in each state of the Federation perform similar functions in collaboration with the NTDC. Similar functions are also performed by Local Government Tourism Committees under the supervision of State Tourism Boards. The NTDC Act confers powers on the Corporation to make regulations for the implementation of the Act.<sup>22</sup> Contravention of a provision of the Act attracts specified penalties.<sup>23</sup>

#### **4. Guidelines by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control**

Since the onset of the coronavirus, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has issued several guidelines aimed at containing the spread of the disease. The most relevant to this paper is the Guidelines for Employers and Businesses in Nigeria, which has been reviewed several times.<sup>24</sup> This provides specific guidelines on different sectors and businesses in Nigeria, including government establishments, air travel, inter-state travel, banks, and other financial services. Other areas included are personalised services, supermarkets, secondary and tertiary institutions, churches and mosques, day-care and primary schools, agriculture and the National Youth Service Corp. Specific guidelines are made for hotels and allied businesses. Under the current version of the Guidelines, for instance, hotels are to remain open but must observe all mandatory non-pharmaceutical interventions, and restaurants are to maintain the take-away/delivery system until further notice. Bars, gyms, cinemas, event centres and night clubs are to remain closed until further evaluation. Earlier versions stipulated stricter measures.<sup>25</sup>

#### **5. The Nigerian Industrial Standard for Health and Safety Measures for Tourism and Related Services during Coronavirus (COVID-19) - NIS 1160: 2020**

This standard is part of the efforts of the Standards Organisation of Nigeria to assist the tourism and services sector to achieve safe resumption and protect their customers from the risk of possible infection. The standard specifies the health and safety system expected to be in place within the tourism sector and related establishments prior to take-off and in the course of business during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>26</sup> Vital provisions of the standard are highlighted below.

##### **5.1 Scope and application of the Standard**

The standard applies to hotels, restaurants, fast food/foodservice providers, conference/meeting/event centres, tour operators/travel agents/tourist information centres, airlines,

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<sup>21</sup> Section 4.

<sup>22</sup> Section 21.

<sup>23</sup> Section 16.

<sup>24</sup> Other versions were published in March, May, June and July with an update in August 2020. See Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 'Guidelines for Employers and Businesses in Nigeria' <<https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/media/files/COVID19GuideforBusinessesAugust2020-2.pdf>> accessed 28 August 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 'Guideline' <<https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/guideline/>> accessed 28 August 2020.

<sup>26</sup> Section 1.

beaches, pleasure/amusement parks, art exhibition centres, museums/monuments/zoological gardens, transport (buses, tricycles, cabs, boats and ferries, trains and airlines), the creative industry (film production, theatre art, cinema/viewing centre, theatre and performing arts establishments), and other related tourism services.<sup>27</sup>

Although the COVID 19 pandemic constitutes the trigger for the standard, the document covers other pandemic diseases that afflict mankind. Thus, the standard applies to other similar pandemics caused by zoonotic infections such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), Avian (bird) Flu, Hepatitis A virus and Norovirus. These are infections that require similar health and precautionary safety measures as Covid-19.<sup>28</sup>

The above-explained scope is justified because Nigeria has experienced bouts of pandemics in the past, resulting in a similar negative impact on tourism and related services. Examples of infectious diseases experienced in the country in the past are avian influenza, cholera, ebola, lassa fever, monkey pox and yellow fever.<sup>29</sup> The current standard will thus serve as a ready tool for operators of tourism and related services to package their businesses in a way that restores the confidence of their customers.

## **5.2 Documentation**

Establishments in tourism and related services are required to maintain documentation regarding:

- (a) the scope of Covid-19 certification;
- (b) procedures established at their service areas; and
- (c) safety and hygiene procedures or references to them.<sup>30</sup>

It is required that records generated during the pandemic shall be maintained and protected to prevent loss. The records shall be legible and easily retrievable. In addition, a logbook should be provided to record the movement of staff, clients and visitors entering their premises. The records shall include name, contact details, and screening results, and shall be retained for at least 28 days to facilitate contact tracing if the need arises.<sup>31</sup> As part of the documentation obligation, an establishment shall put in place occupational standards for different work activities, and documented standard work procedures for managing suspected cases of coronavirus.<sup>32</sup>

## **5.3 Management Responsibility**

The management of tourism and related business are enjoined to demonstrate leadership and commitment in the post-Covid-19 lockdown resumption of business activities by putting certain measures in place. The required measures include pandemic resumption policy and objectives;

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Section 1.

<sup>29</sup> See the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control 'Disease Information' <<https://ncdc.gov.ng/diseases/a-z>> accessed 15 January 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Section 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

resources for the provision of adequate health and safety equipment; a Covid-19 Task Force Team with responsibilities clearly communicated to avoid conflicts; and necessary procedures in the event of a suspected case, including accompanying the person to the isolation area/centre while maintaining physical distancing. Other measures include obtaining operating/reopening licence as required by legal authorities; communication between management and staff to ensure rapid and effective implementation of the action plan; effective communication to guests on available precautionary measures against the pandemic; and informative/pictorial signs relating to the prevention of the disease and pandemic policy displayed at strategic locations. Finally, management of tourism and related businesses must observe the following measures: bi-weekly management review meetings to analyse the level to which policies and objectives are achieved; support working from home to reduce density in the workplace where possible; and fixed shifts for the staff to minimise risk. Every establishment is also enjoined to make an adequate arrangement with a hospital to make available an ambulance to convey suspected Covid-19 patients to an isolation centre/hospital whenever the need arises.<sup>33</sup>

## **5.4 Resources**

The standard requires tourism and related establishments to employ adequate resources for effective pandemic resumption. The required resources are summarised below.

### **5.4.1 Competent Workforce**

Competent workers must be engaged to avoid errors that can either jeopardise services or cause illness or injury to the workers, other employees, or guests. The establishment shall have a nurse on duty or a retainer with a hospital or health facility within a two-kilometre radius from the establishment.<sup>34</sup>

### **5.4.2 Training of Employees**

Operators are required to give comprehensive training to all employees. Specific areas that must be covered in the training include Infection Prevention and Control measures (IPC); signs and symptoms of the coronavirus disease; and biohazard waste management by staff/cleaners. Also, to be included are basic precautions to prevent and mitigate the spread of the disease; hand hygiene procedures; respiratory etiquette; self-assessment procedures; use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for housekeeping and cleaning staff; and the guidelines issued by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control NCDC and other relevant agencies.<sup>35</sup> The training also extends to etiquettes on guest communication. Employees shall inform guests on how to comply with basic precautions for preventing and controlling infection.<sup>36</sup>

Additional requirements are specified for the safety of laundry workers. It is provided that workers offering laundry services should avoid touching guest clothes without wearing hand

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<sup>33</sup> Section 5.

<sup>34</sup> Section 6.1.

<sup>35</sup> Section 6.1.1

<sup>36</sup> Section 6.1.2.

gloves, ensure thorough washing of hands with soap and water, and should use hand sanitizer at regular intervals while performing their duties and after work. It is further required that all laundry machines be thoroughly cleaned after every instance of use; staff should ensure regular top-up of sanitizer to avoid running out of supply; workers in this unit should be well-kitted in relevant PPEs to avoid physical contact with guests' clothes and materials.<sup>37</sup>

#### **5.4.3 Adequate Equipment**

Among other things, each establishment shall provide adequate equipment for all employees and guests. The specified equipment includes Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in sufficient numbers for all employees as appropriate; single-use cleaning materials in stock proportional to the requirements of the establishment, including disinfectant wipes, bleach and 70% alcohol; alcohol-based antiseptic or alcohol-based solution dispensers at each floor near entrances/exits, bars and shared toilet facilities; non-manual waste collection bin; and liquid soap and paper towels in the toilets. A further requirement is making available a room to isolate people suspected or infected, preferably with natural ventilation or a mechanical ventilation system, with washable outer coverings, bathroom, stocked with cleaning materials, cleaning materials, face masks/surgical masks and disposable gloves, infra-red thermometer, hands-free waste bin, bin bags, bags for used clothing, a supply of water and non-perishable food.<sup>38</sup>

#### **5.5 Measurement of Compliance**

Every establishment is required to conduct internal audits at planned intervals to provide information on whether the Health and Safety System conforms to the establishment's own Covid health and safety policy and objectives and whether the requirements of this standard are effectively implemented and maintained.<sup>39</sup>

#### **5.6 Operating Requirements**

The standard specifies general operating requirements that must be adhered to by all tourism and related establishments prior to the resumption of operations during the Covid-19 pandemic. Further requirements are also specified for specific businesses.

##### **5.6.1 General Requirements**

The standard mandates all tourism and related establishments to institute the specified protocols prior to resumption of operations during the pandemic. It is required that guests and employees not wearing masks shall not be allowed inside establishments. Health check procedures - screening and monitoring of guests - shall be conducted prior to entrance into establishments. Hand washing shall commence from the security post/entrance to the premises and all guest areas. It is further provided that all surfaces where guests, employees and suppliers have contact are washed and disinfected according to legal guidelines to ensure that biological contaminants are controlled and

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<sup>37</sup> Section 6.1.1.

<sup>38</sup> Section 6.2.

<sup>39</sup> Section 8.

prevented from causing infections. Enclosed offices and spaces are required to be aired regularly. A member of the Covid-19 Task Force Team shall be on duty at all times to activate the procedure in the event of suspected infection.<sup>40</sup>

### **5.6.2 Requirements Relating to Specific Establishments**

Further specifications are laid down for specific establishments covered by the standard. As noted above, the standard extends to hotels, fast food centres, restaurants, tour operators/travel agents/tourist information offices, cinema, art exhibition centres, convention, meeting and event centres; beaches, transport (buses, tricycles, cabs, boat, ferry, train and airlines), buses and tricycles, cabs, boats and ferries, railway and airline.<sup>41</sup> Specific requirements are stated for each service.

## **6. Requirements for hotels**

By the nature of services offered, all the general requirements considered above apply to hotels. In addition, section 7.1.1 of the standard lays down specific procedures that must be adhered to prior to and during each day's operations. These procedures relate mainly to high contact surfaces and objects, shared spaces such as bars, restaurants, and spas, the lodging facilities and persons such as hotel staffers, cleaners, as well as other workers and guests. The logic behind the standards seems to be founded on perceptions about the common modes of transmitting COVID-19, namely; mediated transmission through contact with contaminated places and person-to-person transmission. Thus, the rules stipulate, for example, that surfaces and objects shall be cleaned regularly, that there should be facilities for the isolation of contaminated persons, and areas visited or inhabited by confirmed cases for extended periods should be sealed off for some time. Waste generated by suspected and confirmed cases must also be contained in sealed plastic bags with bio-hazardous waste held in red bags and all handed over to experts licensed and experienced in the management of hospital bio-hazardous waste. Hand washing is also compulsory. The use of chipped and cracked utensils as well as direct contact with food is prohibited. Physical distancing and shielding (table cubicles are to be equipped with acrylic screens) and personal protective equipment by cleaning staff are also required.

## **7. Critique of some of the provisions**

Certain provisions of the standards give cause for concern not because these provisions are inherently absurd but because of prevailing socio-economic and institutional contexts. For example, there is a stipulation mandating transfer of waste generated by suspected or confirmed Covid cases to experts experienced in the handling of hospital bio-hazardous material, but one wonders how effective that stipulation can be in the general atmosphere of infrastructure deficit and absence of strict adherence to safety standards? Can the few personnel and facilities that exist cater to the increased need for application of safety protocols occasioned by Covid-19?

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<sup>40</sup> Section 7.1.

<sup>41</sup> Section 7.1.1 - 7.12.

Again, there is the provision that when guests checkout of a room, the room should not be given out to other guests until after twenty-fours, post-cleaning and sanitation. This provision clearly increases the operating cost of industry actors. There are certain costs that are fixed and would be incurred whether rooms are fully occupied or not. Requiring that rooms should be left unoccupied for twenty-four hours after a guest's departure deprives hotels the opportunity of utilizing their facilities optimally. This is further worsened by the fact that there are no adequate palliatives directed at the hospitality industry in general and hotels in particular. COVID-19 palliatives in Nigeria have taken the form of hand-outs of essential items such as food, most of which were also siphoned by corrupt government officials. Other palliatives such as the so-called survival fund are targeted at micro, small and medium-scale enterprises (MSMEs), a threshold which falls below that at which most hotels operate.<sup>42</sup>

### **8. Comparison of the Standard with Similar International Standards**

When it comes to the issue of safety, regulations usually take one of two broad perspectives; those that are inward-looking and those that concern the general public. Inward-looking regulations deal more frequently with occupational health and safety with the protection of workers being the primary goal. Regulations with a public outlook view health and safety issues from the angle of the desire to protect the general public. There is a however a link between the two as occupational health and safety affects the quality of output whether in form of goods or services and consequently public health and safety. Industry-specific COVID-19 health and safety standards are built in the broad mould, covering both occupational as well as public health and safety. This is different, for example, from the International Standardization Organization (ISO) Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems ISO 45001. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), there are currently more than 2.78 million deaths a year as a result of occupational accidents or work-related diseases, in addition to 374 million non-fatal injuries and illnesses. Aside from the enormous impact on families and communities, the cost to business and economies is significant. ISO 45001 – Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems – Requirements with guidance for use, is the world's first International Standard for occupational health and safety. It provides a framework to increase safety, reduce workplace risks and enhance health and well-being at work, enabling an organization to proactively improve its occupational health and safety performance.<sup>43</sup> The scope of ISO 45001 is thus relatively limited, even though it is referenced in the Nigerian Industrial Standard NIS 1160:2020 (Nigerian Health and Safety Measures for Tourism and Related Services during (Covid-19) Pandemic). An example of a standard that is similarly broad as NIS 1160:2020 is the European Union Guidance for the Progressive Resumption of Tourism Services and for Health Protocols in Hospitality Establishments. It is however not binding but voluntary.

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<sup>42</sup> Lawrence Njoku, Kelvin Ebiri, Seye Olumide, Njadvara Musa and Rotimi Agboluaje 'Why Controversy over FG's COVID-19 palliatives Persists' *The Guardian* (Lagos, 26 April 2020) <<https://guardian.ng/news/why-controversy-over-fgs-covid-19-palliatives-persists>> accessed March 2022.

<sup>43</sup> International Standards Organisation 'Occupational Health & Safety ISO 45001' <<https://www.iso.org/files/live/sites/isoorg/files/store/en/PUB100427.pdf>> accessed 21 February 2022.

## **Conclusion**

It can be deduced from the foregoing discourse that the tourism industry is an embodiment of all companies and organisations which provide the services and products used by tourists at different stages of their travelling and touring. It encompasses all entities equipped to provide services, products and infrastructure that facilitate travelling for leisure, business and other purposes. The industry provides necessary and remarkable assets to tourists during their travelling.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, the tourism industry comprises of four main units – accommodation, transportation, sales and distribution, as well as ancillary services – , and all these must be held in mind while crafting policies and enacting legislation that would help to alleviate the impact of Covid-19 in the Nigeria tourism industry.

It is good that Nigerian authorities have sought to put measures in place to curb and ultimately eradicate the coronavirus. However, as already mentioned, these measures cannot be effective in the absence of an effective broader public health system. Covid-19 measures must therefore be situated within a broader public health framework, and if there is no effective public health system in place, then this is the right time to get things fixed. Concerning palliatives, it is necessary to shed the patron disposition which sees citizens as beggars and views palliatives as benevolence rather than a social-contractual obligation of government and a strategic economic tool. In this same vein, there should be business-oriented palliatives targeting the hospitality industry as opposed to the hand-outs that were procured by government, and again, mostly stolen by corrupt officials.

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<sup>44</sup> SI Ocheni, AMO Agba, MS Agba, and FO Eteng, 'Covid-19 and the Tourism Industry: Critical Overview, Lessons and Policy Options' (2020) 9(6) *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 114 <<https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2020-0116>>.