

Tourism: A Strategy for Sustainable Economic Development in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The main thrust of this paper is about adopting tourism as a strategy for sustainable Economic Development in Cross River State, Nigeria. Being a theoretical work, secondary sources of data were explored to enhance the accumulation of relevant data for this work. By so doing, visits were made to Cross River State Tourism Bureau Calabar, University of Calabar Library. Also, online (internet) materials were also used. The major findings made were; tourism is one of the cardinal employers of labour in Cross River State; tourism plays a significant role in sustainable economic development of the state; and that tourism could help in the attainment of millennium development goals. The recommendations made were; tourism plans should be prepared with specific objectives, development of micro and medium-scale enterprises should be encouraged in the state; and government should provide adequate security measures, reduce poverty as much as possible, improve upon the infrastructural facilities, and invest adequately in tourism promotion, to enhance local, national and international popularity of the state with regards to her tourism drive.

Keywords: Tourism, Strategy, State, Economic Development

1. Introduction

Man has unconsciously engaged in recreational activities right from the ancient age where he wandered through the dark virgin forest in search of light, shelter and food, to the renaissance via modern search for novelties and fun (Egbaiji, 2007). As time went on, development and discoveries came up in leaps and bounds therefore giving rise to the modern day planned fun-filled human activities. The development of these activities with western culture is what brought about tourism as it were today. Over the past decades, tourism has become the largest industry worldwide in terms of employment and share of global gross domestic products. The tourism industry has been very dynamic and fast growing over the past three decades. This sector has so far created opportunities in areas characterized by natural attractions, wildlife and wilderness habitats.

From the foregoing, it could be observed that a development of these natural and man made attraction centre serves as a strategy for the development of their surrounding environment. It is this understanding that informed the Cross River State government under Donald Duke's administration to promote tourism, to serve as a strategy for sustainable economic development of Cross River State (Cross River Tourism Bureau Act, 2003). The strength of this vision may not be far from the positive tourism-driven developments recorded by certain towns and cities in countries such as US, Britain, Indonesia, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Egypt, Dubai, to mention but a few. In recent times, there has been a stupendous effort by governments to surge up revenue generation, in order to meet the ever increasing need for improved standard of living, being an important indicator of economic development. Cross River State being one of the less developed states in Nigeria, faces the challenge of financing its developmental programmes and projects. Thus, the development of tourism by Cross River State government as a source of revenue and employment generation became imperative. This paper therefore, anchors on the exploration of the possibility of employing tourism strategically with a view to fostering economic growth in the state.

2. Theoretical framework

Mentose and Gupta (1980) in Egbaji (2007) see tourism as the science, art and business of attracting and transporting visitors, accommodating them and graciously catering for their needs and wants. Other authorities extend the scope of this definition, for example, Egbaji (2007) defines it as a curious minded service discipline with emphasis on traveling for the purpose of changing a routine. Agba, Ikoh, Bassey & Ushie (2010) view tourism as a business entity that provides places and events to occupy people while they are on holidays. In its original thought, tourism was seen as a source of relaxation and sight seeing. The fact that tourism enhances social relationship means that it could influence people's attitude and behaviour, and by extension could affect societal change.

Furthermore, Akpet (2005), in Eja, Otu, Ewa, Ndoma (2011) describes tourism as all embracing, involving the interaction of other components such as transportation, communication, accommodation and destination amongst others. Tourism connotes the process of traveling for leisure, business or recreational aims. The persons involved in this activity are referred to as the tourists. The world Tourism Organization (2009) simply defines tourists as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year, for leisure, business and other purposes".

Tourism in this era has become a popular global leisure activity. UNWTO (2011) in analyzing the popularity of this sector explains that in 2010, there were over 940 million international tourist arrivals; with a growth of 6.6% as compared to 2009. International tourism receipts grew to US\$919 billion (euro 693 billion) in 2010, corresponding to an increase in real terms of 4.7%. As a result of the late 2000 recession, international travel demand suffered a strong slow down beginning in June 2008, with growth in international tourism arrivals worldwide falling to 2% during the boreal summer months (Hong Kong Tourism board, 2010). The declining trend intensified in 2009, coupled with the outbreak of the HINI influenza virus, leading to a sharp global drop of 4% in 2009 to 880million in international tourists' arrivals and an estimated 6% decline in international tourism receipts. The magnitude of importance attached to tourism by many countries cannot be overstressed. In this contemporary time, tourism has been one of the gravely reliable sectors to countries such as United States, United Kingdom, South Africa, Egypt, Italy, Kenya, Spain, China, Thailand, Fiji, Bahamas, India, Nigeria and a lot more. Investment in tourism sector has yielded invaluable benefits to many countries and cities in the world.

2.1 Origin of the modern tourism industry

According to Chandra (2007), during the Middle Ages, the church in Europe was a patron of the arts and center of scholarly activities. The church, even though losing substantial power as a result of the Reformation movement, continued to be a patron of the arts, sponsoring famous Italian artists such as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael during the 1500s. Their legacies, represented by their famous works, inspired the Grand Tour, which reached its height of popularity in the 1700s. The artistic accomplishments of this period continue to form part of the European travel experience today.

The Grand Tour is English in Origin, and it was primarily a 'finishing school' for the sons of the British elite. The purpose of the Grand Tour which for some lasted over three years was exposure to the cultural attractions of the European Mainland. While the primary reason for travel during the Middle Ages were trade and religious pilgrimages, the focus now shifted to attaining cultural enrichment.

Tour participants were accompanied by a mentor and guardian. They were expected not only to observe the arts, literature, music, science and other cultural refinements of Europe, but were expected to return home with an increased ability to utilize the knowledge gained in their travels. The purpose of the Grand Tour eventually evolved from one of learning for the young to one of sensual pleasure for all ages. Some maintain that the Grand Tour continues to exist today as evidenced by the pilgrimage of North American travelers to the cultural centre of Europe.

The origins of a modern tourism industry – cultural tourism in particular – are believed to have begun with the Grand Tour. Many of the major cities of Europe (e.g. Paris, Milan and Rome) developed superior hotels and service for their guests. Stays in each capital were long by today's standard, as travel was still relatively risky and laborious.

Sri Lanka for example has a global competitive edge in ecotourism due to a high resource base of culture and nature.

As the number of tourist from England increased, reaching a peak in the 1700s, many companies renting carriages, bodyguards, and other travel services were formed.

The French revolution in 1789 and later the Napoleonic wars of the early 1800's effectively ended the Grand Tour for the English elite. Resurgence after the Napoleonic wars more closely resembled the tourism of today, with all ages and classes participating in shorter stays.

2.2 World tourism statistics and ranking

In 2010, there were 940 million international tourist arrivals, with a growth of 6.6% as compared to 2009. UNTWO(2011) reports that the ten countries shown below were the most visited with regards to the number of international travelers. This further highlights the desire to which tourism is deemed vital by these countries.

Rank	Country	UNWTO Regional Market	Tourist Arrivals (2008)	Tourist Arrivals (2009)	Tourist Arrivals (2010)	Change (2009 to 2010)
1	France	Europe	79.2 million	76.8 million	76.8 million	+0.0%
2	United States	Americans	57.2 million	55.0 million	59.7 million	+8.7%
3	China	Asia	53.0 million	50.9 million	55.7 million	+9.4%
4	Spain	Europe	57.9 million	52.2 million	52.7 million	+1.0%
5	Italy	Europe	42.7 million	43.2 million	43.6 million	+0.9%
6	United Kingdom	Europe	30.1 million	28.2 million	28.1 million	-0.2%
7	Turkey	Europe	25.0 million	25.5 million	27.0 million	+5.9%
8	Germany	Europe	24.9 million	24.2 million	26.9 million	+10.9%
9	Malaysia	Asia	22.1 Million	23.6 million	24.6 million	+3.9%
10	Mexico	Americans	22.6 Million	21.5 million	22.4 million	+4.4%

Source: UNWTO (2011).

2.3 Tourism in Nigeria

Tourism in Nigeria centers largely on cultural events, due to the country's ample amount of ethnic groups, but also includes rain forests, savannah, waterfalls and other natural attractions (Archibong, 2004). In recent times, governments at both federal and state tiers have made significant impact on tourism development, by solely or in certain cases partnering with the private sector in special resorts of international standard for tourist attractions.

Some major factors that tend to inhibit tourism development efforts of the country include poor electricity supply, deplorable condition of roads, religious intolerance, militancy, incessant bombings, and kidnappings.

Tourism destinations in Nigeria

Archibong (2004) delineated tourist sites in Nigeria to include festivals and cultural celebrations (such as Durbar festivals), national parks (as in old oyo, Yankari and Akamkpa), as well as other geographical sites (such as Aso Rock). Certain state governments are currently taking tremendous strides in the area of tourism development in order to attract foreign nationals, in order to boost foreign investments in the long run. Examples of tourism destinations established through state governments effort include Nike Lake resort in Enugu, Obudu Range Resort and Tinapa Resort in Cross River State, Ibom Meridian and Golf Resort in Akwa Ibom state, just to mention but a few.

Some state governors in Nigeria adopt tourism as a means of tapping the benefits of globalization, especially in the area of attracting foreign investors, to boost economic investments in their domain (Akpan, 2011).

2.4 Tourism industry in Cross River State, Nigeria

In the quest to begin the development of tourism industry in Cross River State, the state government established Tourism Bureau, charged with the responsibility of regulating and supervising the sector. Its duties specifically include the assessment of Tourism demand and supply in the state, provision of tourism infrastructure for investors through the investment of state government, advising governments on financing, and deregulation of the hospitality industry in the state (Agba, Ikoh, Bassey & Ushie, 2010).

According to Egbaji (2007), the entire state is rich and is disposable to various forms of tourist cynosures ranging from wildlife species, mountain, climate, alluring hills, waterfalls, green mangrove forest, historical caves, endangered species such as the lowland gorillas, amazing cultural dynamics, beautiful local craft, varieties of agricultural produce and warm hospitality.

Cross River State is rich both in cultural, sports and environmental tourism. It has several dialects and ethnic groups. It has about 45% of the total rainforest reserve in Nigeria and will soon benefit from the United Nation's carbon credit scheme.

In urban village (Obudu LGA), the men and women speak different languages but can communicate interchangeably. There are also variety of dances like Asha war dance, monikim dance of the Ejagham tribe and Abang/Ekombi of the Efiks, to name but a few.

2.5 Perspectives of tourism benefits

Tourism involves long term planning and long term benefits. The benefits or implications of tourism could be discussed under the following headings:

- i. Economic implication
- ii. Major employer of labour
- iii. Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG'S)
- iv. The Multiplier Effect

2.5.1 The economic implication

Globally, tourism contributes significantly to a nation's gross national products (GNP). The sector produces 4.4% of the total GDP, It can also contribute to the overall economic development through the provisions of roads, telephones, piped and treated water disposal and recycling, sewage treatment (WTO, 1999). Also, WTTC (2010) estimates show that in 2002, travel, tourism and related activities contributed 11% of the world's GDP, rising to 12% by 2010. Tourism equally promotes bilateral, multilateral and sub-regional cooperation amongst countries and states.

2.5.2 The major employer of labour

Tourism is said to be the world's number one employer of labour. Each year over 600 million people travel internationally. Hundreds of millions more people embark on journey within their home countries, doing so for both work and pleasure. As a result, the tourism industry – including hotels, resorts, airlines, travel agencies and other businesses that cater for travelers is described as “the world's number one employer of labor.

Jobs generated by travel and tourism are spread across the economy in retail, construction, manufacturing and telecommunications as well as directly in travel and tourism companies. These jobs employ a large proportion of women, minorities and young people, and predominantly in small and medium sized companies and offer good training and transferability (WTTOIHRA, 1999).

2.5.3 A strategy for attainment of millennium development goals

Sustainable tourism can be an effective instrument “strategy” for realizing the Millennium Development Goals (WTO, 2006). It could be a viable strategy for achieving poverty alleviation goal: providing sustainable development opportunities to isolated poor communities, even in the most remote rural areas (Makame & Boon, 2008).

Socially, tourism has a great influence on the host societies. Tourism can be both a source of international amity, peace and understanding (Mirbabayeu & Shagazatova, 1999).

Other multiplier effects according to them are listed below:

- Developing positive attitude towards each other

- Learning about each other's culture and customs
- Reducing negative perceptions and stereotypes
- Developing friendship
- Developing pride, appreciation, understanding, respect and tolerance for each other's culture.
- Increasing self esteem of host and tourist
- Psychological satisfaction with interaction.

3. Strategic impacts of tourism in Cross River State, Nigeria

The immense socio-economic impacts and benefits of tourism has in recent time been recognized by several states and the federal government of Nigeria. Contingent upon this, part of the effort towards diversifying the economy of the nation has been to harness and develop tourism – the untapped non oil sector. According to the former Nigerian Minister of Finance, Alhaji Adamu Ciroma, as cited in Ekwere (2010), there is great potential in the tourism sector which Nigeria is yet to key into.

In the case of Cross River State, some of the potential benefits derivable from tourism and capable of enhancing economic development are shown below.

- Tourism promotes domestic culture
- National Unity which could be fostered through annual carnival participation in Cross River State by other states of the federation
- Tourism drive in the state is often complemented with stupendous attention to urban renewal and sanitation, to make the state (environment) very beautiful and attractive.
- The attempt by the state government to promote tourism, in order to reap its attendant socio economic benefits has led to substantial improvement in the security and safety network of the state.
- There has been remarkable improvement in infrastructural facilities in the state by way of providing or improving upon such facilities as roads, electricity, water supply, and leisure parks etc, to make the state attractive.
- Tourism stride of the state has exposed the state beyond the national boundaries. The Esuene Sports stadium and Obudu Ranch Resort have often been selected for appropriate international sport competitions and that has been the brain-child of the state's tourism promotion effort.
- The serenity of the environment as well as the state government's tourism developmental stride has in recent time attracted foreign nationals and corporate organizations to the state. This development has resulted in some foreigners investing in the state.
- The increased foreign and domestic investments in the state have brought about increased utilization of both human and non human resources in the state.
- The utilization (or employment) of labour and other resources has reduced the poverty level, occasions capacity building and boosts standard of living.
- Tourism, especially during end of the year carnivals usually attracts so many visitors to the state, leading to increased commercial and transportation activities in the state, generates a lot of revenue to the government as well as individuals, especially in the hospitality sector.

4. Conclusion

Tourism is a social activity which involves travel by individual or group to stay outside their usual environment within a period not too long, for the purpose of satisfying leisure, business or other needs. Tourism has become a popular global activity. It brings in large amounts of income in payment for goods and services and creates opportunities for employment in the service industries associated with tourism (UNWTO, 2010). The case of Cross River State, Nigeria, in terms of income generation due to tourism is not different, except by degree or level of increase. Several other benefits of tourism development which have positive impact on economic development in the state include among others, the drastic improvement in the security system, uncommon urban renewal/beautification and infrastructural spread; improved per capita income level and standard of living due to employment generation as well as the added value to local resources; the state being exposed to the outside world, hence, attracting foreign investors and selected for international sports tournaments.

Therefore, the potency of tourism in stimulating economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria is not illusive, but real and requires further considerable attention from the government.

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