



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



A review of tourism impact in Cross River State

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Abstract

Impacts of tourism development have become more and more visible in the society, following the rapid growth of the tourism industry. This review is focused on the impacts and assessment procedures of tourism impacts on development in the context of sustainability in Cross River State. Although, it is commonly known that tourism can contribute significantly to economic growth, this is not without attendant negative impacts, particularly on the environment. River state tourism holds great potentials for socioeconomic development showcasing several fascinating tourism sites. However, poor budgetary allocation required to fund tourism activities and the development of the sector has impeded substantive progress. This is principally due in part to the ceding of the oil-rich Bakassi peninsular to Cameroon and later seventy-six oil wells to Akwa Ibom state. Other factors include: over taxation, security concerns, poor publicity, dilapidated facilities and infrastructure, inadequate involvement of private partners, poor motivation to locals and tourism workers, etc. Results of tourism impact assessment are veritable tools Environmental Impact Assessment, EIA which further helps developers identify possible growth patterns of the industry. The Tourism impacts on the citizenry model, TIC represents the simplest and direct approach to tourism impact assessment. Incorporation of extreme weather events are becoming important factors in tourism development.

Keywords: Tourism; Cross River State; Nigeria; Tourism development; Tourism industry

1. Introduction

Tourism means different things to different people because it is an abstraction of a wide range of consumption activities which demands products and services from a wide range of industries in the economy. Early tourism activities began by simply visiting natural areas of interest with local cultural attractions [1-4]. Tourism has long grown beyond that point. 'Tourism' may cover the tourists, or what the tourists do, or the agents which cater to them, and so on. Tourism is, generally a concept that depends on the context [5]. According to [6], tourism refers to the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for a period not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes", while at the same time, [7] states that "tourism is thus a rather general term, which can refer to the consumption of tourists, to the production units supplying goods and services particularly to tourists, or even to a set of legal units or of geographical areas related in a way or other to tourists."

Modern tourism is however associated with the industrial revolution in the United Kingdom – the first European country to promote leisure time for the increasing industrial population [8]. Most previous research on tourism impacts have predominantly focused on economic impacts [9-10]. Recent research efforts are however pointing to the importance looking beyond economic aspects to include other areas such as social, cultural, environmental and other impacts [11-16].

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Researchers are finding it increasingly necessary to examine the entire array of impacts beyond economic considerations which have been the norm before now. The need for sustainable tourist development has further confirmed the need to incorporate other factors such as sociocultural and environmental impacts. This is important because understanding tourism impacts will enable operators and tourism developers plan and take steps that will facilitate sustainable tourism development. This research review focuses on the impacts of tourism development in the context of sustainability in Cross River State of Nigeria.

2. Tourism development in cross river state

Cross River state of Nigeria was once identified as the tourism hub of the nation. It was awarded the status of the greenest and cleanest city in Nigeria between 2000 and 2006. Having the largest surviving rainforest and mangrove forest in Nigeria, the state is rich in both flora and fauna. Conservation efforts in this forest has preserved several endangered species including the drill Monkeys found no where else in the world.

Cross River State is blessed with several tourism sites such as the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Cross River National Park, Qua falls, Ikom Monoliths, Canopy walkway, Obudu cattle ranch, which features Africa mountain race, Agbokim water falls, Tinapa Business Resort, Calabar Marina, Calabar Residency Museum and the Calabar Slave Park, the Calabar Christmas Street party, among others [17]. The city of Calabar hosts the largest street party in Africa with visitors coming from all over the world. The state features several vegetation ranging from the Mangrove swamp forest in the far south, tropical rain forest in the southern and central part and Savannah in the northern part. The Obudu plateau has a unique climate similar to the temperate climate of the higher latitudes.

The tropical rainforest is made up of a three layered canopy of very tall trees where rainforest forms good habitats for wild animals and birds. The socio-economic activities of the people are predominantly farming, gathering and logging. Large and small scale farming are equally practiced at commercial (rubber and palm plantations) and subsistence levels. Food crops farmed included; plantain, cassava, banana, yam, cocoyam, maize and waterleaf which are processed and sold to generate revenue. A reasonable number of business men and women and civil servants also reside in the study area.

Featuring over 60 ethnic or language groups, the state has impressive tourist attractions and a rich cultural heritage. Popular dances include: Ekeladi, Obin, Moninkim, Giza, Aminakwol, Idang, Ot'bha and Ekombi. Cultural institutions such as Ekpe and Ibirambir are often used to maintain law and order [18]. It is often referred to as a miniature Nigeria because of its great diversity in ethnic composition as well as its natural endowments. The culture of the people is very romantic which is often expressed in the various language styles, dances and festivals [19-20].

The Cross River National Park has one of the oldest rainforests in Africa, and has been identified as a biodiversity hot spot. Sixteen primate species have been recorded in the park. Rare primates include common chimpanzees, drills and Cross River gorillas [21-22].

3. Procedures for evaluating tourism impacts

There are several methods researchers employ to assess the impact of tourism on the people. In this paper two procedures are examined namely: The Triple Bottom Line-model (TBL) and Tourism impacts on the citizenry model, TIC. [11] Used the Triple Bottom Line-model (TBL) framework in their analyses. Adapting and developing this framework they linked it with other theoretical concepts such as carrying capacities and Capital constructs. They also used the empirical results as a test of the framework as well as a contribution to the discussion on the sustainability of tourism development. The results show that TBL is a step forward when doing more holistic evaluations of tourism impacts, but more research is needed in order to find ways of comparing the results of the different impact dimensions.

A simple procedure for evaluating the impact of tourism is generally stratified sampling or simple random sampling which provides for effective representation. An appropriate instrument for the extraction of the direct impact of tourism on the people is Tourism impacts on the citizenry, TIC and the questionnaire model. The questionnaire is normally constructed in two parts; Sections A and B which seeks information on the demographic variables of the respondents and provide information on Tourism impact respectively. The reliability of the instrument which has to do with the degree of consistency which an instrument shows in measuring impact should be carried out to increase the level of agreement the results will have with actual situation.

Expected results are better presented in the form of statistical values of positive or negative effects on the sociocultural wellbeing of the people. It shall also be presented in the form of charts as a quick way of showing trends and predictable outcomes. Results of such a study are useful in Environmental Impact Assessment, EIA and further help developers identify possible growth patterns of the industry.

4. Challenges of tourism development in cross river state

After the sudden boost of tourism activities due to government deliberate effort to boost the sector by undertaking massive infrastructural development in 1999, successive administrations have paid lip service to the sector. The poor performance of this sector is linked to drop in annual budgetary allocation as a key factor. These of course will have an overall negative impact in development of tourism in the state. This brought about abandonment of tourist sites resulting in land degradation, loss of wildlife habitats and deterioration of scenery. The longest cable car in Africa could not be revived when it breakdown. There was a general deterioration of tourism facilities and infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, hotels, potable water, electricity, airports, etc.

There is also poor private participation in the industry, especially at sponsoring major tourism events [23]. The publicity was inadequate to keep both national and international tourists abreast of existing tourist destinations, which kept prospective tourists in the dark. Then comes the issues of security in the nation which overwhelmed the industry down to the state. Many jobs in the tourism industry are poorly remunerated and capable hands were lost and most tourism experts move to other areas in pursuit of greener pastures. There was also this heightened fear of infection by some tropical diseases such as malaria and sleeping sickness [23]. Climate change, global warming and increase extreme weather events have contributed adversely to the development of the tourism industry in recent times [24-30].

The last straw that broke the camel's back was over taxation. Government in search of revenues in the face of dwindling federal allocation, occasion by the loss of oil wells to the neighbouring the state, imposed a heavy tax regime on service providers. Most allied businesses and hotels closed down while others relocated to more favourable business climates. The Christmas Street has been suspended indefinitely from official pronouncements. This is the end of the beautiful story of a one time "destination - cross river" and the "people's paradise".

5. Conclusion

Tourism is the main stay of most the economies of some countries around the world. River state tourism holds great potentials for socioeconomic development showcasing several fascinating tourism sites. However, poor budgetary allocation required to fund tourism activities and the development of the sector has impeded substantive progress. This is principally due in part to the ceding of the oil-rich Bakassi peninsular to Cameroon and later seventy-six oil wells to Akwa Ibom state. Other factors include: over taxation, security concerns, poor publicity, dilapidated facilities and infrastructure, inadequate involvement of private partners, poor motivation to locals and tourism workers, etc.

Results of tourism impact assessment are veritable tools Environmental Impact Assessment, EIA which further helps developers identify possible growth patterns of the industry. The Tourism impacts on the citizenry model, TIC represents the simplest and direct approach to tourism impact assessment. Environmental factors such as rainfall, global warming and increase in other extreme weather events are becoming critical factors in tourism development.

Current International best practices require public private partnership as a veritable tool for enhancing sustainable development. This has further confirmed the need to incorporate other factors such as sociocultural and environmental impacts. Understanding tourism impacts will enable operators and tourism developers plan and take steps that will facilitate sustainable tourism development.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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