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EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF PROBLEMS OF INBOUND TOURISM IN SOUTH-EASTERN NIGERIA: CATALYST FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By

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Abstract

An empirical investigation of the problems of tourism development in South-Eastern Nigeria is the focal point of this study. Related literatures were reviewed to establish the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. However, data for this study were gathered using a 20-point structured questionnaire. Inferential statistics was elicited to analyze responses and Z-test statistical techniques was used to test hypotheses. As a result, there is a significant relationship between tourism infrastructures, superstructures; secured environment, sustainable marketing strategies and tourism development. Also, poor funding impacts negatively on tourism development. The study concludes that poor implementation of tourism policies and lack of political will were among the factors that hinder tourism development; while promotion and sustainable marketing strategy has a positive impact on tourism development. It is recommended that opportunities should be created on tourism manpower development by generally enhancing educational curriculum to include tourism studies in order to further inculcate tourism habits on the populace

Keywords: *tourism development, regional development, conducive environment, tourism policies, infrastructure, inbound tourism.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has many connotations as it has different connections to different people. Pearce, in Sigh (2008), defined tourism “as the relationship and phenomena arising out of the journey and temporary stay of people traveling primarily for leisure or recreation purpose”. Pileus Project Glossary (2012) defined tourism as a composite of activities, services, and industries that deliver a travel experience to individuals and groups traveling fifty miles or more from their homes for purpose of pleasure. The business sectors comprising the tourism industry include transportation, accommodations, eating and drinking establishments, shops, entertainment venues, activity facilities, and a variety of hospitality service providers who cater for individuals or groups traveling away from home. For Long (2012), tourism is identified as an effective way to revitalize the economy of any destination, and widely acknowledged as one of the fastest growing industry globally (Raymond, 2001; Jennie, 2012; Ganesh, 2010). The continuous and rapid growth of tourism is not in isolation of the stable economic growth experienced in the global economy. This growth has facilitated increased global disposable income, demand for leisure, and this is combined with the global economic restructures in response to globalization that ensured competition in global tourism industry and

drastic reductions in travel costs. Thus, tourism has become a major source of economic growth, employment, earnings, and foreign exchange for many countries and regions (Vaugeois, 2002; Basu, 2003) and considered by developing countries as a main source of development and growth for local economies (Hodur, Lustrate & Wolfe, 2005). Indeed, Basu (2003), acknowledged that the tourism industry has grown into a major component of the global economy and has become highly developed.

It is in this vain that Nigeria is looking towards tourism as a possible alternative income earner (Uduma-Olugu & Onukwube, 2012) and it is believed, as averred by Ajao (2012) that if Nigeria gets its tourism sector right, tourism will serve as a major employer of labour besides agriculture.

Nigeria as an African emerging market economy has correctly identified the fact that tourism has the potential to catapult it to the first rank of emerging global market economies and is making giant strides towards the achievement of its goals and objectives. The Nigeria tourism industry boasts of potentials capable of generating significant investments toward economic development. However, these potentials are underdeveloped as general factors militate against them (Umeh, 2012).

Tourism, as we know it, has become the noblest instrument of this century for achieving international understanding. It enables contacts among people from distant parts of the globe, people of various languages, races, creeds, political beliefs and social standings – tourism brings them together. It leads to personal contact in which people can understand attitudes and beliefs which were incomprehensible to them because they were different, hence it is the greatest relater of culture (Yahaya, 2011). While being a major economic force and the key driver for development, tourism is also an important mechanism for social exchange and identity building at both the individual and regional/national levels. Yahaya stated that, the rate of tourism development has increased substantively as multinational investments in hotels, resort complexes and infrastructure, together with major heritage conservation projects are catalyzing significant social changes and environmental relationships. In the drive to develop tourism, culture(s) and heritage are being mobilized, landscape and wild lives are being transformed, and traditions renegotiated. Considering the aforementioned points, tourism can thus be defined as the new economic driver that can simply not be ignored.

Statement of the Problem

Specifically, inbound tourism, which is the influx of tourists from foreign destinations to another destination outside their country of origin, has the potentials of opening a wide range of social, political and economic opportunities for both the host nation and that of the visiting tourists. Recently, the Nigerian Government asserts that inbound tourism is one of the priority sectors of the economy. Since the Nigerian Government has boldly stated an irrevocable commitment to tourism development, it is imperative to explore the numerous challenges at this crucial stage of the development of the sector. Policies to make the tourism sector an important source of foreign exchange, development of tourism based enterprises, promotion of tourism based rural enterprises, generation of employment, acceleration of rural-urban integration and enhanced socio-cultural unity among the various group in the country through domestic tourism and encouragement of active private sector participation can be described as a colossal failure as these noble objectives are not realized due to critical developmental problems.

Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to investigate impeding factors for inbound tourism development in South-Eastern Nigeria, while the specific objectives were to:

- a. Examine if religious interference constitute a problem to tourism development
- b. Examine if inadequate infrastructural development constitutes an impediment to inbound tourism
- c. Examine if unsafe environment constitute a barrier to inbound tourism.

Research Hypotheses

H₁: Religious interference does not constitute a problem to tourism development.

H₂: Inadequate infrastructural development does not constitute a hindrance to inbound tourism.

H₃: Unsafe environment does not pose a problem to inbound tourism.

LITERATURE SURVEY

Before the year 2010, tourism is one concept that did not really invoke the desired passion and attraction among Nigerians. The reason for this was the high level of poverty prevalent in a country where the people live from hand to mouth and have little left for other secondary activities. As it were, this heralded the heightened neglect on tourism development and the political will of tourism stakeholders to embrace tourism as a major catalyst for economic and socio-cultural integration of rural societies. Andah (1990) wrote that tourism connotes the mobilization of a people's cultural and natural resources, especially those aspects which make people unique from others. In essence, the mobilization and packaging of the uniqueness of a people for others to appreciate and admire represents tourism. The socio-cultural reawakening in Southeastern Nigeria in the last six years prefigured the attention of inbound tourists to that area of Nigeria in search of new tourism experience. Despite the neglect suffered by tourism over the years, its uniqueness has always presented it as a force to reckon with for the development of society in many ramifications. Tourism is educative, informative, entertaining and is as well as an economic venture.

Theoretical Orientation

The study considered the theory of Diffusionist Paradigm and Butler's Model of Tourism Life Cycle. A prerequisite of diffusion is the process of innovation, which does not have to be something new, but may exist in other areas, and it can refer to tangible objects, like machines, or less tangible phenomena, like tourism (Sarre, 1977; Potter, 1999).

Mioassic (1977) developed a diffusionist model of tourism space, depicting the structural evolution of a destination through time and space and noted changes in the provision of resort and transport

facilities and subsequent behavioural and attitudinal changes amongst tourists, decision-makers and the host population. He argued that diffusion happens in five phases (0, 1, 2, 3 and 4) from isolation, with no development, to the creation of a pioneer resort together with the necessary transportation means for the accessibility of the resort (or attraction), to a multiplication of resorts (or attraction) and further transportation links, and to saturation through an even distribution of resorts across the country. Through these phases, changes in local attitudes occur that may lead to the complete acceptance of tourism, the adoption of planning controls or even the rejection of tourism (Pearce, 1989).

On the other hand, Butler proposed that most tourist resorts go through a six stage model referred to as Tourism Life Cycle model (Butler, 2011). The argument whether local tourist destinations have gone through the stages still lingers. The model states that most tourist attractions start on a very small scale and get bigger and bigger until stagnation occurs. Within the six stages the following happens:

1. **Exploration** – A few hardy and adventurous people looking for something different in a holiday find a place that is special in terms of its culture, natural beauty, history or landscape. There may be no tourist services available and local people will not be involved in tourist money making activities.
2. **Involvement** – local people start to notice that there are increasing numbers of people coming to their local area. They start businesses to provide accommodation, food, guides, and transport.
3. **Development** – Big companies start to see the emerging potential of the area as a tourist destination and therefore start to invest money in the region. They build large hotel complexes and sell package holidays (a package might include travel, accommodation, food and excursions). This makes the numbers of inbound tourists increase dramatically and massively expands the number of job opportunities for people in the local region, both in tourist related jobs and in construction and services.
4. **Consolidation** – The local economy is probably dominated by tourism at this stage, and many local people will make their money from this type of industry.
5. **Stagnation** – Competition from other attractions, rowdiness and a loss of the original features (e.g. if it had a great festival, or resort that is now crowded, generating lots of tourist litter) can cause

the attraction to stop growing. The number of visitors then starts to decline, threatening local businesses and services.

6. **Decline or Rejuvenation** – From the stagnation point onwards there are two basic possibilities: Decline in various forms or rejuvenation (re-growth of the resort). Decline can be slow or rapid, and regular visitors are replaced by people seeking a cheap break or day trippers. Rejuvenation involves a cash injection from either the private sector or the government, to create a new attraction within the original resort to boost its popularity.

Butler developed this model to show that any tourist attraction can grow. An attraction may start off from being a small, low key, destination. He suggests that all attractions go through the same sort of process.

Challenges and Prospects of Inbound Visitations

Various challenges have been identified in literature that impede maximum realization of the potentials of inbound tourism. The challenges are at various levels in different destinations in that while some are policy and marketing related issues at destination management level, others are more to do with socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects within destinations. A litany of these challenges include; natural disasters, local travel safety, health risks and political situation (Breda and Costa, 2005); terrorism and local security threats (Nwokorie, Everest & Ojo, 2014); food safety, ease of language, destination creativity, partnership issues, quality assurance, innovation of routes, environmental degradation, payment channels and service guarantee (Tan, 2016).

Morupisi and Mokgalo (2017) wrote that there has been deliberate efforts to prioritize international tourism promotion over domestic tourists by destinations especially in the developing regions. However the facilities and infrastructure intended for international travelers have benefited the domestic market and led to its growth. The authors cited that a resort in China was ultimately marketed to the domestic market after efforts to attract foreign visitors failed. Even where initiatives were aimed at the domestic market, they are reactive mainly as a result of declining international arrivals or increasing outbound travel by citizens. These meant authorities were led to promote domestic tourism to curb diminishing foreign exchanges and employment due to outbound travel and low foreign visitation.

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out on attractions, festivals, events, and locations – tourism resources,

in the six states of South-Eastern Nigeria (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo) over a period of two years. The study elicited survey method to investigate the thoughts, opinions and feeling of respondents through a 20-point structured questionnaire in a four-point Likert rating scale. Items in the questionnaire were based on various implications on previous studies in relation to the theoretical framework for this study. The target population is drawn from 177 tourism stakeholders (Table 1) who had made contacts with several inbound tourists, through their period of service experience within the study area. Some of the tourism resources for the study include:

Abia: Azumini Blue River, National War Museum, Ojukwu Bunker, Long-Juju of Arochukwu.

Anambra: Igbo Ukwu Museum, Ogbunike Cave, Ijele Masquerade Festival from Aguleri, Ofala Festival, Regency Tourist Village, Omaba Festival, Mmanwu Festival, Imo-Awka Festival.

Ebonyi: Umuana Afikpo Golden Sand Beach, Uburu Salt Lakes, Akwette Textile Centre.

Enugu: Ezeagu Tourist Complex, Opi Lake Complex, Polo Amusement Park, Awhum Waterfall, Ugwune and Udi Hills, Sculptural Garden and Art Gillary.

Imo: Oguta Lake, Rolling Hills of Okigwe, Nekede Botanical and Zoological Gardens, Iwa-Akwa Festival, New Yam Festival, Egbe Nkwu, Mbomuzor, Okazi Emii.

3.3.2. Sample Size

A sample size (of 123) for the study was generated from the study population using the Taro Yamen formula, which is thus stated

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \text{ (Ugwuonah, Onodugo \& Ebinne, 2010).}$$

Table 1: Study Population

State	№ of Respondents	% of Respondents
Abia	26	14.7
Anambra	38	21.5
Ebonyi	20	11.3
Enugu	48	27.1
Imo	45	25.4
Total	177	100

Source: Survey, 2018.

The sample size was further broken down using Bowley's Population Allocation formula in Fredham and Wiggers (2012), to get the actual sample distribution by state (Table 2). The formula is stated thus:

$$Nh = \frac{n \times nh}{N}$$

Table 2: Sample Distribution by State

State	№ of Sample	% of Sample
Abia	18	14.6
Anambra	26	21.1
Ebonyi	15	12.2
Enugu	33	26.8
Imo	31	25.3
Total	123	100

Source: Survey, 2018.

Statistical Analysis of Data

A reliability analysis was carried out on the research instrument (Table 8) in Microsoft Excel with the Pearson Correlation Coefficient ($r = 0.976$) while Zscore for the hypotheses was calculated, assuming a 95% confidence interval and 5% level of significance (e) at $\alpha = 1.9$, and subsequent results presented. **Decision Rule is:** Accept H_0 if $\alpha > Zscore$.

Table 3: Questionnaires Return Rate

Option	Distributed	Returned	Return Rate	Effective Sample Size (%)
Sample from the Five States	123	120	97.5	120 (100)
Total	123	120		120 (100)

Source: Survey, 2018.

Table 4: Gender Category of Sample

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Male	67	55.8
Female	53	44.2
Total	120	100

Source: Survey, 2018.

Table 5: Age of Sample

Options	Frequency	Percentage
25-45years	79	65.8
46years and above	41	34.2
Total	120	100

Source: Survey, 2018.

Table 6: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Options	Frequency	Percentage
FSLC	3	2.5
WAEC	14	11.7
OND/NCE	43	35.8
B.Sc./HND and above	60	50.0
Total	120	100

Source: Survey, 2018.

Table 7: Mean Score and Standard Error of Responses

S/N	Statements	\bar{x}	$\sigma_{\bar{x}}$
1.	Abundance of natural resources	3.38	.711
2	Availability of tourism policies	2.53	.559
3.	Religious intolerance	3.22	.664
4.	Appreciable level of tourism development	2.47	.559
5.	Availability of infrastructural facilities	2.31	.567
6.	Proper management of tourism resources	2.08	.597
7.	Rational exploitation of community tourism resources	2.43	.560
8.	Shortage of trained personnel	3.16	.649
9.	Unsecured environment	2.87	.589
10.	Lack of political support	2.87	.589
11.	Poor supply chain for tourism resources	2.68	.566
12.	Inadequate promotional strategy for tourism products	2.69	.567
13.	Poor attitude of host communities	3.23	.668
14.	Improper coordination of tourism stakeholders	2.84	.584
15.	Lack of recreational attitude	2.81	.580
16.	Fear of diseases and epidemics (outbreak)	3.43	.727
17.	Poor transport system.	3.03	.619

Source: Survey, 2018.

Decision Rule: Respondents disagree if $\bar{x} \leq 2.49$
Respondents agree if $\bar{x} \geq 2.50$. Decision is based on effective sample size (≤ 150) (Aderounmu, 2009).

Table 8: Reliability Analysis of Research Instrument

Option	Test (X)	Test (Y)	Pearson's [r] Score
SA	11.8	14.53	
A	2.09	2.34	
SD	2	2	
D	2.09	1.94	0.976

Source: Data Analyses, 2018.

Table 9: Result of Hypotheses

	\bar{x}	$\sigma_{\bar{x}}$	(e)	Confidence Interval	α	Zscore	Decision
H ₁	3.22	.664	0.05	95%	1.96	3.04	Rejected
H ₂	2.53	.559	0.05	95%	1.96	3.00	Rejected
H ₃	2.31	.567	0.05	95%	1.96	8.80	Rejected

Source: Data Analyses, 2018.

Discussion of Findings

Responses analyzed from questionnaire were adopted for the test of the hypotheses stated for the study. Items 3, 5 and 9 in Table 7 were adopted for the hypotheses, respectively. The essence is to measure relationships, test assumptions and draw conclusions for the study as necessitated by the hypotheses.

At 0.05 level of significance and 95% confidence interval for the Z-test, the tabulated Z-score (α) for the hypotheses was 1.96, respectively. With a calculated Z-score of 3.04, 3.00 and 8.80 after test of hypotheses, the study concludes that:

- a. Religious interference is constituting a problem to tourism development in Southeast Nigeria.
- b. Inadequate infrastructural development is hindering tourism development in the Southeast region of Nigeria.
- c. Unsafe environment poses a problem to tourism development.

Reactions from respondents also confirms that inbound tourism is hindered, in Southeast Nigeria, by a number of factors including lack of funds for tourism development, inadequate infrastructures, poor management of tourism resources, shortage of trained personnel, security concerns, lack of political support, religious intolerance, inadequate promotion of tourism products, poor attitude of host communities, poor transport system, among others.

With particular attention to Rostow's theory (Rostow, 1990), these findings have been identified as challenges to inbound tourism development. The tenets of Rostow's theory is that there is a natural inertia that needs to be overcome before self-sustained development takes place, which include; build-up of required infrastructure, enhanced organization and increased capital investment. Similarly, Paige and Thorn (2002) indicated policy and programme co-ordination, as well as planning and promotion between national and local level tourism undertakings as conditions for inbound tourism development. A dearth of these conditions is highly implicated in this study to show that tourism development is at a low ebb in the study area.

The reality, however, is that the Southeast region of Nigeria is richly endowed with abundant tourism resources (natural and man-made) which have not been properly explored nor harnessed due to policy related factors including lack of provision of funds for tourism development, inadequate promotional strategy for tourism products and a neglected tourism policy framework.

There is also the argument of poor attitude of the host community to inbound tourists in terms of lack of structural adjustment to the social demand of visitors, language barrier and a weak accommodation of the diverse cultural backgrounds of visitors. In a particular case, an inbound tourist was met with aggressive behaviour in her effort to take a snapshot with a vicious masquerade in Umunoha (Imo State) – a situation, which was thereafter resolved, understandably.

Security concerns, fear of diseases and outbreak of epidemic were also indicated as impediments to inbound tourism during festivals and cultural events with the study area; no thanks to the negative local press. However, most rural communities in the study area are in dire need of hospitals and improved healthcare services. Religious institutions, like Pentecostal Churches, also take turns to dampen the morale of participants and providers of tourist products and services, causing most cultural events into extinction.

CONCLUSION

Tourism is, always, a veritable avenue to improve the economic wellbeing of any region, while inbound tourism has proven to be the cheapest way to inject new finance into the local economy. It is particularly potent in relation to job creation, investment attraction, foreign exchange earnings, poverty alleviation towards youth employment, community enrichment, gender equality and cultural preservation.

The inability to adequately exploit the tourism potentials of the country lies in the unending neglect of the tourism sector due, mainly, to the overdependence on the oil sector. With the continuous neglect on developing the social system that would open up numerous opportunities for tourism to thrive, tourism development has, hitherto, taken much too long to fit into the economic diversification agenda and government at all levels. In spite of the cultural revitalization of most traditional societies as a way of revamping their identity (for instance), the corresponding linkage between tourism and the social, economic and political segments of the society to engender rapid exploitation of the numerous inexhaustible benefits of tourism is still elusive.

Recommendations

1. Since inbound tourism has been identified as a veritable tool for economic empowerment, mostly at regional level, it is imperative to introduce tourism development studies in school curriculum at primary and post-primary levels as a means of inculcating the much needed tourism attitude and recreational culture among Nigerians. This will go a long way in enhancing the tourism social adjustment of citizens in terms of sustainability of

cultural heritage in the face of religious attack, and improved visitor accommodation for inbound tourists.

2. State governments should minimize excessive concentration of infrastructural development at the states' capital at the expense of rural development, causing massive urban drifts and subsequent neglect on rural job openings through tourism products development undertakings like cultural events, local arts and crafts, among others.
3. Government should provide and encourage active private sector participation to promote sustainable cultural heritage and a socially stable hygiene and sanitary safe environment. Partnership brings about more expansion and better service delivery.
4. Government should endeavour to provide adequate social infrastructures which will enable tourist to enjoy their stay in any center such as building roads, provide portable water, electricity, security, medical and healthcare services, while ensuring the establishment of good tourism communication and tourist information system like tourist map.
5. Tourism development entails manpower development. It is important to create ways of training capable individuals who will manage the tourism resources of the nation. Government should establish more training institutions in the country where tourism personnel could be retrained. The universities and polytechnics should evolve their curriculum to ensure that students offer tourism as general courses at point of entry.
6. The Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation has to live up to the responsibility of enlightening Nigerians on the benefits of tourism development, as Nigerian are still not disposed to participating in tourism activities, due to lack of conscious efforts being made to expose citizens to the merits of tourism development.

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