

THE ROLE OF CULTURAL TOURISM TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the Role of Cultural Tourism to Community Development in Cross River State, Nigeria. One research question and one hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for this study consisted of 5458 respondents (3928 tourism staff and 1530 community leaders) in the three senatorial zones in Cross River State. A sample of 357 respondents was used for this study. The instrument used for this study was a structured questionnaire titled “Role of Cultural Tourism to Community Development Questionnaire (RCTCDQ)” designed by the researchers. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistical tools in testing hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings from the study revealed among others that with products such as Calabar Festival and Carnival Calabar, Cross River State may already have started the process of economic diversification from oil driven economy to ecological/cultural tourism-driven economy of the future. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that government should champion national-re-orientation on the need to preserve our cultural and historical sites within our various communities in Cross River State.

Keywords: Role, Culture, Tourism, Community Development



Introduction

Globally, community development practice could be seen from a variety of sources or ways in which collective effort of well-meaning individuals, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), private and public sectors are put together towards community development. Community development is a way of strengthening civil society by prioritizing the actions of communities, and their perspectives in the development of social, economic and environmental policy (Ezimah, 2004). It seeks the empowerment of local communities, taken to mean both geographical communities, communities of interest or identity and communities organizing around specific themes or policy initiatives. Anyadike, et al. (2024) maintained that in community development the emphasis is on self-reliance and sensitizing the people of the community not just to see problem but actively through their own endeavour to be overcoming them by finding solutions to them. Community development is a structured intervention that gives communities greater control over the conditions that affect their lives hence, community development-means that a community itself engages in a process aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental situation of the community (Afuye, 2005).

Community development does not just take place rather it requires both conscious and conscientious efforts of different people in a given community coming together for the purpose of executing project(s) to improve the community. From the foregoing, community development could be operationally defined as positive changes in socio-cultural, socio-economic and political settings of a given geographical area which could be accessed through the innovations, civilization and advancement emanating from the above changes (Oboqua, et al. 2017).). In this regard, for effective community development to take place through tourism, the people in the community must contribute their individual or collective efforts to improve tourism activities for community development.

Tourism has been adjudged to have lofty benefit to host communities and the society in general to enhance the social standard of the people as well as contribute to community development of any given community. It can change both the environment and the lives of the members of that community. It enhances cultural, economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the people. Richards (2000) asserted that cultural tourism is the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs. It enhances the bringing together of people of different backgrounds from different countries through tourism, and improves people's educational, political, social and cultural ideology by making domestic and international tourists as well as host communities to have cross fertilization of philosophies and respect for other cultural beliefs. Additionally, Kung (2006) affirmed that cultural tourism is the subset of tourism that is concerned with a country's or region's culture, specifically the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas, the history of those people, their art, architecture, religion(s), and other elements that helped shape their way of life. Cultural tourism includes tourism in urban and rural areas, particularly historic or large cities and their cultural facilities such as museums and theatres (Oroka, et al. 2024).

Cultural tourism can also include rural areas showcasing the traditions of indigenous cultural communities (that is festivals, rituals), and their values and lifestyle, as well as niches like industrial tourism and creative tourism which could enhance community development. Other benefits of tourism include improvement of infrastructure, conservation of areas of outstanding natural beauty, conservation of archaeological and historic sites as well as improvement of environmental quality. Culture as a people way of life is tourism's main attraction. Without culture to make the difference, every place would seem bluntly the same. Without different cultural heritages, places around the world would have little to offer that would attract the purpose of tourism (Oboqua, et al. 2017). Therefore, cultural tourism seems to be important in tourism contribution to community development. It is generally agreed that cultural tourists spend substantially more than standard tourists do. World heritage sites are nothing but cultural sites, such as the Pyramids in Egypt, the Tower of London, the TajMahal of India, and the Great Wall of China, the long juju of Arochukwu in Abia State, Nigeria among others.

Furthermore, at the cultural level, members of the community learn the importance of cultural diversity and some of them may also realize that there is a big world outside their community, this could increase local pride and self-confidence and makes provision for social inclusion of other cultures and people (Eze-Uzomaka, 2006). Socially, people learn to relax and spend leisure time. However, through the interaction between people from different places and sharing of ideas, knowledge and experience could contribute to the improvement of cultural tourism and its related activities to community development which could as well boost the environmental sustainability of the community (Bessong, et al. 2024).

Cultural tourism is also seen as recreational activities requiring at least one night stay away from home following a recreational interest by foreign tourists. According to World Tourism Organization (2011), a foreign tourist is a person visiting a country other than that in

which he resides, for a period of at least 24 hours. Justifying the above assertion, (Oboqua, et al. 2018) stated that cultural tourism is influenced by tourism potentials which are those extraordinary cultural, art and other resources in a particular place, places or country serving as tourist sites or attraction, interesting and appealing to the sight and auditory organs of human beings. Stressing further, Akam and Basse (2014) stated that cultural tourism lies in the beauty of man-made (artificial) tourism potentials which indeed are instinctive to human beings to appreciate man-made tourism creativities such as extraordinary art works, architectural works, museum materials, archeological and cultural sites, the authors concluded.

A number of cultural activities exist in Nigeria, which create unique creative spaces for producers of the arts as well as conducive interactive spaces for tourists and connoisseurs. Many of these cultural activities have been in practice from time and have given the country an acclaim as being culturally super-active. The cultural activities in Cross River State are particularly outstanding from those in many other states of the federation as they showcase diverse creative packages. The state is renowned for its festivals of songs, dances and masquerades at coronation, marriage, burial, naming, planting and harvesting ceremonies (Acha, et al.2024). Cross River State is also popular for its hospitality and its culinary productivity – many Nigerians would want to have a taste of ‘Calabar’ food. Tourists also like to visit the numerous cultural and historical sites in Cross River State. While these ceremonies, tourism potentialities and locations have ever been present with the people of Cross River State in Nigeria, not much was done to formalize and organize their presentation to diverse international audiences until the year 1999 (Anipi, et al. 2023).

Implicitly, the administration of Donald Duke at the inception of Nigeria’s 4th democratic era evolved a dynamic policy to develop the tourism sub-sector as an area of alternative revenue for the state. Part of the plan was to develop a rich tourism calendar to accommodate more (existing) cultural events and in some cases rebrand and repackage them for better appeal. The plan was also to accommodate new events that would appeal to the emerging consumerist culture of the 21st century. So, in all parts of the state there are cultural festivals and artistic practices that appeal to diverse audiences. There is mountain tourism and recreation in the mountainous region of Obudu; there are new yam festivals in the agricultural belt; maiden outing ceremonies, water sports and other art-related events in many communities of the state (Itari, et al. 2016). Following the tourism calendar, the month of December is busy, deliberately packed with festive activities, most of which take place at the state capital. Two major activities – Calabar Festival and Carnival Calabar feature prominently in this season of festivities every year.

The Calabar Festival started ordinarily as Christmas festival and initially, celebrations at the festival were similar to Christmas celebrations elsewhere in the Christendom to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ, but with traditional African touch – a display of masquerades and traditional dances, and heavy consumption of food and drinks. The Christmas celebration climaxes on 24th, 25th and 26th of December (Bessong, et al. 2018). In Calabar, a variety of indigenous masquerades, including Ekpe, Nnabo, Tinkoriko, Okpo and dances such as Abang and Ekombi display around the Basse Duke Effigy close to Watt Market, at Eleven-Eleven and many other locations within the town. But in 1999, the celebration took a dramatic form. It was the turn of a new millennium and the new civilian administration in the state, led by Governor Donald Duke who decided to make Christmas celebration an international festival sponsored by the state and other concerned entities. Fireworks heralded the beginning of a new millennium in the city of Calabar and across the state. A tradition of celebrating Christmas with pomp and pageantry had begun and was to get better every passing year.

By the year 2005, the period of Christmas festival was extended to 32 days, beginning from the first day of December to the first day of January. This particular year, public and civil servants in the state were granted a leave from work to enable them enjoy the holidays. There was no work in public offices throughout Cross River State for 32 days. Olofu, et al. (2024) revealed that every day was filled with a major celebration or recreation activity that would appeal to all classes of people - the children, youth and adults. In what has become an established tradition, Calabar Festival celebration starts on the 1st of December with the city walk campaign against HIV/AIDS. In the event, the organizers thought there was a need to ensure the fitness of the citizens as well as to regenerate the awareness on HIV/AIDS for the season. This activity also commemorates the World AIDS Day declared by the United Nations and observed globally as an annual event. The city walk in some cases serves as a test run for Carnival Calabar since it goes through the same route and covers the same 12km distance. As part of the Calabar festival, several shows and entertainment activities are held every evening and late into the nights at a number of venues – the Millennium Park, The U J Esuene Stadium, the Cultural Centre Complex, Marina Beach and Resort, Tinapa and the Botanical Garden. No day is wasted, no dull moments. Every show is free for all classes of audiences amongst others.

Despite these cultural displays, Cross River State cultural tourism faces challenges like inadequate funding, poor political will, poor policy implementation, instability and inadequate infrastructural facilities. These difficulties have made it more difficult for the state to draw in and keep tourists, which has had an impact on its overall socioeconomic development (Ekpenyong & Esu, 2020). In addition, inadequate marketing tactics, environmental deterioration, and sociopolitical instability all have an impact on the state's cultural tourism development. These elements present major obstacles to attaining sustainable cultural tourism development in the twenty-first century and contribute to the underutilization of the state's tourism resources (Akpan & Obang, 2015). In Cross River, security is still a major worry for tourists. Significant hazards are posed to both tourists and the local community by the prevalence of crime, political instability, and communal disputes. Idem and Ogar (2019) maintained that these security problems have hurt Cross River's standing as an attractive and safe travel destination, which has resulted in a drop in visitor numbers. Even in isolated cases, perceptions of insecurity can have a long-lasting detrimental effect on cultural tourism, impacting both present and future visitor numbers.

Additionally, a major obstacle to Calabar's tourism industry's successful development is governance concerns. According to Bessong et al. (2018), the expansion of cultural tourism is hampered by underutilization of quality policy frameworks and inefficient deployment of ultramodern policies. The situation is made worse by bureaucratic inefficiencies, poor stakeholder collaboration, and corruption, leading to mismanagement of cultural tourism resources and missed opportunities for development. The primary center of cultural tourism activity, Calabar, has inadequate infrastructural facilities, which prevent the tourism industry from expanding. Other significant challenges include inadequate water and sanitation facilities, poor road networks, and unstable electrical supplies. Eja, et al. (2018) assert that Calabar's inadequate infrastructural facilities deters potential visitors and lowers their overall experience. The municipality's ability to hold significant cultural tourism events is restricted by inadequate infrastructure, which also jeopardizes the industry's potential to facilitate community development. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to determine the role of cultural tourism to community development in Cross River State.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to determine the role of cultural tourism to community development in Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the extent to which cultural tourism has contributed to community development in Cross River State.

Research Question

This study was guided by one research question:

1. To what extent has cultural tourism contributed to community development in Cross River State?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of community leaders and tourism staff on the extent to which cultural tourism has contributed to community development in Cross River State.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for this study consisted of 5458 respondents (3928 tourism staff and 1530 community leaders) in the three senatorial zones in Cross River State. A sample of 357 respondents was used for this study. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for this study. In the first stage, four local government areas (Boki, Etung, Obudu and Akamkpa) were selected from the three senatorial zones using simple random sampling technique with replacement. In the second stage, simple random sampling technique with replacement was also used to select 16 communities from the four local governments areas, 4 from each local government. In third stage, proportionate sampling technique was used to sample 256 tourism staff in the 16 selected communities respectively using the formula Proportionate sampling technique was used in the third stage because the numbers of tourism staff in each of the 16 sampled communities were not equal. The whole sampled community leaders were used making it a total number of 101 community leaders. The instrument used for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire titled "The Role of Cultural Tourism to Community Development Questionnaire (RCTCDQ)". The researchers developed the questionnaire based on the research question and the hypothesis. To ensure the validity of the instruments (the quantitative and qualitative), the initial drafts of the questionnaire were given to three experts for validation, two of the experts were from the Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies and the third from Measurement and Evaluation unit of the Department of Science Education, all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. To test the reliability of the instrument, the researchers distributed 25copies of the questionnaire to the workers in Ibom Plaza, Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State which was outside the study area. Data collected were subjected to test for internal consistency using Crombach alpha procedure with a reliability co-efficient of 0.88. The researcher made use of two field assistants to assist in distributing the instruments to the respondents. The research assistants were briefed on the modalities for administering the instruments to the respondents. The use of these research assistants helped to ensure that the actual respondents for whom the instrument is meant for were those who filled the instrument. The research assistants also helped in collecting the completed instruments. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistical tools to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research question one: To what extent has cultural tourism contributed to community development in Cross River State?

Table 1: Mean rating and standard deviation showing the extent cultural tourism has contributed to the community development in Cross River State

S/N	Item Statement	N	Mean	SD	DEC.
1	Tourism encourages cultural festivals in Cross River State.	357	3.62	1.33	Very High Extent
2	Tourism offers cultural interpersonal values in Cross River State.	357	3.52	1.67	Very High Extent
3	Tourism makes it possible for tourists outside the country to learn and adapt to the cultural activities in Cross River State.	357	3.77	1.78	Very High Extent
4	Tourism activities in Cross River State provide opportunity to the host communities	357	3.51	1.96	Very High Extent
5	Tourism activities in Cross River State have led to the refurbishing of the conference sectors	357	3.89	1.67	Very High Extent
6	Tourism activities in Cross River State have led to the refurbishing of the cultural centers	357	3.76	1.88	Very High Extent
7	Tourism activities in Cross River State promote the cultural heritage of the host communities.	357	3.64	1.45	Very High Extent
8	Tourism motivates the people of Cross River State to exhibit their cultural talents and creativity during festivals.	357	3.77	1.82	Very High Extent
9	Tourism brings about cultural growth through its conservation of cultural value.	357	3.56	1.50	Very High Extent
10	Tourism activities make both local and fore	357	3.69	1.66	Very High Extent
	O v e r a l l M e a n	357	3.67	1.67	Very High Extent

Key: Mean, SD – Standard deviation, DEC – Decision, VHE-Very High Extent, GE- High Extent, LE- Low Extent, VLE-Very Low Extent

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviations of the extent cultural tourism has contributed to the community development of Cross River State. Result shows that items 1-10 have mean ratings of 3.62, 3.52, 3.77, 3.51, 3.89, 3.76, 3.64, 3.77, 3.56, and 3.69 with standard deviations of 1.33, 1.67, 1.78, 1.96, 1.67, 1.88, 1.43, 1.82, 1.50, and 1.66 respectively. Since the mean ratings are above the criterion level of 2.50 for accepting an item, this means that the respondents agreed that the items above are to a very high extent ways in which cultural tourism has contributed to the community development in Cross River State. The grand mean of 3.67 with a standard deviation of 1.67 means that all the items in table 1 are to a very high extent ways in which cultural tourism has contributed to the community development in Cross River State.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of community leaders and tourism staff on the extent to which cultural tourism has contributed to the community development in Cross River State.

Table 2: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of community leaders and tourism staff on the extent to which cultural tourism has contributed to community development of Cross River State.

Statu s	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	D	f	t - c a l	Sig. (2-tailed)
Community Leaders	101	3.02	.43				
Tourism Staff	256	3.09	.43	355		-1.552	.121

Table 2, reveals that the probability associated with the calculated value of t (-1.552) for the mean difference between community leaders and tourism staff on these extent to which cultural tourism has contributed to community development of Cross River State. The decision rule was used on the mean as 2.50. This means that any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was considered important for the role of cultural tourism to community development and as such accepted. While any mean score below 2.50 was considered negative and unimportant for the role of cultural tourism to community development, and therefore was rejected. Since the probability value of 0.121 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference between the mean rating of community leaders and tourism staff on the extent to which cultural tourism has contributed to the community development in Cross River State.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study as presented in table 1, showed that to a very high extent, cultural tourism has contributed to community development in Cross River State. It also revealed that tourism encourages cultural festivals, offers opportunities for interpersonal contacts and interchange of cultural values among communities, makes it possible for tourists outside the country to learn and adapt to the cultural activities, provides opportunity to the host communities to display their cultural festival at yearly interval for entertainment, brings about cultural growth through its conservation of cultural values and others. Further analysis also shows that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of community leaders and tourism staff on the extent to which tourism has contributed to the cultural development in Cross River State. These findings are in line with (Bessong, et al. 2023) who stated that cultural tourism contributes immensely to the rural and urban community transformation of the host communities. The authors further stressed that it encourages cultural festivals, and cultural growth of people.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that cultural tourism to a very high extent has contributed to community development in Cross River State. The paper affirms that with products such as Calabar Festival and Carnival Calabar, Cross River State may already have started the process of economic diversification from oil driven economy to ecological/cultural tourism-driven economy of the future.

Recommendation

Following the findings of the study, it was recommended that there should be national-re-orientation by governments on the need to preserve our cultural and historical sites within our various communities, especially by using different media available to enlighten the citizens on the significance of cultural and historical attractions and the future positive effect. There is also need to improve and or provide cultural festivals, carnivals and masquerade dances to promote cultural tourism development in Cross River State.

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