

THREATS AND CHALLENGES OF TOURISM TO INDIGENOUS CULTURE IN SOME SELECTED TOURISM SITES IN AKWA IBOM, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to assess tourism activities and the possible threats it may be posing to indigenous culture, human lives and environment at Oron and Itu villages in Akwa, Ibom, Nigeria. Data were collected with pre-tested and validated questionnaires which were randomly administered to workers traders and inhabitants at the tourism sites. The total respondents were 150. Simple frequency and mean score were used to analyze the data. The study revealed that inspite of some confirmed benefits of tourism to host communities, some negative effects, which constitute threats were identified. Some of these threats include; environmental pollution, displacement from farm land, biopiracy of local plants, unfair labour and wages etc. The study made recommendations to the government and stakeholders.

Keywords. Threats, Tourism impact, Indigenous Culture, Case studies, Survey research.

1. INTRODUCTION

The natural environment is an important resource for tourism. With increasing urbanization in both industrialized and developing countries, the significant natural features, scenery, cultural heritage or biodiversity are becoming increasingly popular sites for tourist destinations (Jacobson and Robles, 1998). Environments where past human interaction has been minimal are often fragile. Small islands, coastal areas, wetlands, mountains and deserts, all now popular as tourist destinations are five of the six fragile ecosystem's as identified by Agenda 21 of international council for Local Environmental initiatives' (ICLEI, 2014) that require specific action by Government and international donors. The biophysical characterizations of these habitat often threatens to become unsustainable. (Black and king , 2002).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Threats to Indigenous Cultures

Tourism often claims that it preserves and “enhances” local cultures. However, evidence shows that with the establishment of protected areas, local people have illegally lost their homes, and most often with no compensation. The establishment of parks can create harsh survival realities and deprive the people of their traditional use of land and natural resources. Ethnic groups are increasingly being seen as a “backup” to the scenery and wildlife. The local people struggle for cultural survival and freedom of cultural expression in the midst of strange tourism activities (Carter and Loman, 1994).

Some of the different kinds of impacts that tourism development and operational activities can have include:

- Threats to ecosystems and biodiversity e.g. loss of wildlife and rare species habitat loss and degradation.
- Disruption of coasts e.g. Shoreline erosion and pollution, impact to coral reefs and fish spawning groups
- Deforestation – loss of forest for fuel wood and timber by the tourist industry also impact on soil and water quality, biodiversity integrity, reducing the collection of forest products by local communities.
- Water overuse – As a result of tourism or recreation activities for example golf course, swimming pools and tourist consumption in hotels.
- Urban problems – Congestion and overcrowding, increased vehicles traffic and resultant environmental impacts, including air and noise pollution and health impact. Exacerbate climate change – from fossil fuel energy consumption for travel, hotel and recreational activities.
- Unsustainable and inequitable resource use unsustainable and inequitable resource use – energy and water over consumption, excessive production of waste, litter and garbage are all common impacts. (WTO, 2003, WTO 2004 and Ogbonayan, 2003).

2.2. Objective

The Objective of this study is to assess tourism in its real context and the possible threats to indigenous culture, human life and environment. Oron and Itu communities, Akwa Ibom, Nigeria.

2.3. Statement of Problem

Nigeria is doubtless blessed with a vast number of culture and tourist attractions. However, the tourism activities still do not satisfy the demand of the people as regard compensation on damaged ecosystem and right to own and cultural heritage that serves as tourist centers. and various factors have accounted for these short comings. Among these are the problem of too many individual stakeholders' and government functionaries that fails to put into consideration the welfare of the local inhabitants'. Thus indigenes people are faced with the problem of maintaining their cultural values and threats to their ecosystems and biodiversity coupled with the change brought about by restructuring and modernization of tourist sites.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Materials And Methods

The study was carried out in Oron and Itu communities, Akwa Ibom state, three tourist sites were purposively selected for the study due to the number of tourists that visit the area and commercial activities in these areas. Akwa Ibom is situated within the tropics and occupies a total mass of 8,412sq km of Nigeria's oil wealth basin, the south zone of the Delta regions. The people are predominantly farmers, cultivating coconuts, citrus, cassava, yams, and mango etcetera. It is a uni-culture state where the norms, taboos, customs and tradition are the same.

Three tourist sites were purposively selected for study, they are;

A. Amalgamation House.

This is the iconic building where Lord Laggard, the colonial governor, amalgamated the northern and southern protectorates in 1914, lived making Nigeria one geographical entity. It was also in this historical edifice which continues today to serve as an administrative office to Ikot Abasi Local Government, that General Olusegun Obasanjo the commanding officer of the Nigerian Army and General Philip Effiong in January 1970 signed and declared a cease fire that brought the Nigeria-Biafran civil war to an end NACD (2014).

B. Mary Slessor's "Babies Stream".

Oral history reveals that the babies stream is the place where Mary Slessor bathed abandoned twins after picking them up from the evil forest before taking them home to be adopted. It is a pool about a quarter of a football field, with calm, dark running waters.

C. Oron National Museum and Beach

Oron museum is encapsulated by the clear flowing water of the Oron river. The museum was established by K.C. Murray in 1959 as a treasure house for the preservation of several Ekpu Oro (ancestral spirit of oron), wood carving believed to be the oldest and the finest wooden sculptures in African. Other relics include skin covered and horned head mask masquerade, old monilla currency, traditional raffia, metal works, traditional pottery and metal carvings provide visitors with cultural voyage into the world of creativity (AISG, 2014)

3.2. Population Sample Size

A structure pre-tested questionnaire was validated and used for the study. The questionnaires were targeted at the indigenes who work at the tourist sites as tourist guides, hotel staff, beverage and confectionery traders, souvenirs sellers and food vendors. 150 people were randomly selected and administered with questionnaires. The total respondents were 150. Based on the classification of personnel and traders on the site, 30 questionnaires each were administered to the tourist guides, hotel staff traders, souvenir sellers and food vendors.

3.3. Data Collection

The questionnaires were designed with a 5 point type scale that rated the responses of the respondents of the respondents ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). Strongly Agree (SA) 5, Agree (A) 4 undecided (UD) 3 disagree (2) and strongly disagree (SD) 1.

3.4. Data Analysis

Simple frequencies and mean scores were used to analysis the data, Mean score of 3.50 was used as the cutoff point as decision making for each statement. Any item with a mean score 3.50 and above ($X > 3.50$) was considered an acceptable response to the statement made While those with score below 3.50 ($X < 3.50$) were considered as unacceptable response to the statement made.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSION

The results on the demographic data of respondent in accordance with age, occupation, sex marital status and religions belief are summarized in table 1-6, while table 7-8 consist of mean scores of actions of policies constituting threats to culture, ecotourism and benefits in the study area.

Table 1 showed the result of the respondents age range of 18-58 years and above. Those with highest frequency are range 38-47 years (29.00%) while the respondents with lowest were 58 years and above (4.00%).

Table 2 indicated the distribution of respondents according to sex. The respondents with the highest distribution were male 89 (59.00%) while female populations were 61, (40.00%) being the least.

Table 3 indicated the respondent's distribution according to marital status. The married respondents had the highest scores 94.00 (62.00%). Table 4-6 indicated the respondents in accordance with their religious belief, educational status and occupation. The data showed that the respondent were predominantly Christian 143 (95.00%), Muslim 7(4.66%). for educational status, WASC/GCE holder seems to be more than others 63(41.00%) while the least were those with post graduate certificate (4.0%) As for occupation, majority were engaged in trading (40.00%), followed by artisans 45 (30.00%).The least were the unemployed due to old age and health challenges 5 (3.00%).

Table 7 indicated the mean scores of actions or policies of tourism stakeholders that constitute threats to culture and the rural environment in the study area. About twelve acts of threats were articulated, ranging from environment pollution, poor waste management human right abuse etcetera Eight (8) had mean values above (3.50) ($X > 3.50$). Meaning that eight were accepted by respondents to be actions or policies of tourism that constitute threats to those stated areas of their living and those with mean score below $X < 3.50$ were those that rejected the statement, culminating a minority.

Table 8 showed the mean score of benefits accruing to host communities as perceived by respondents. The highest score was improvement in the quality of life with mean score $X = 4.42$. The least mean score was ($x=2.17$) with statement that tourism 'shift tax burden to non-residence' and was rejected as not relevant in their community. Some goes for infrastructural development which was rejected ($x=2.20$)

The respondent's age bracket of 38-47 with the highest frequency showed that majority are married and are very much active and involved in culture preservation. As regards occupation, traders and allied business group had the highest frequency, followed by the artisan group. This is an indication of a buoyant commerce in the community, made possible through tourism trades that seems to have created buying, selling and offering services etc

This confirmed Fegence (2001) who postulates that 'direct benefits of tourism are realized through direct tourist expenditures for goods and services at the destination in the form of business receipts, income, employment and government receipt from tourism expenditure while the indirect are through inter-business transactions in the domestic economy thereby reduce environmental issues associated with poverty and unemployment. As indicated in the study, the other side of tourism impacts on local inhabitants were discussed by international council for local environmental initiatives (ICLEL, 2014) stating that 'indirect impact of tourism or on biodiversity wildlife and pristine landscapes are usually not visible but pervasive and with lasting consequence, often times irreversible'.

5. CONCLUSION

Tourism trades no doubt have lots of benefits which have relevant bearing on the social and economic lives of the host communities. However, this does not diminish that fact that tourism also threatens the culture of the indigenes places and also has a changing effect on the various ways of life of indigenes at the tourist sites. Thus, these changes gradually eradicate the indigenous culture of the areas involved and if allowed to continue, over time would completely erase the cultural heritage of the local people which serve as an attraction in the first place.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

To minimize the threats and challenges of tourism to indigenes of Akwa Ibom the following recommendations were made to tourism stakeholders and the government.

- Minimize the negative impacts on nature and culture that can damage destinations
- Educate the tourists on the importance of conservation.
- Provide information prior to the trip on the culture and traditions of the site to be visited.
- Stress the importance of responsible business, co-operation with the locals
- Offer guidelines on appropriate dress, behavior, interactions etc with the locals to foster acceptability and tolerance
- Educates the tourists to observe as much as possible hygiene on the environment, food and personal.
- Government should provide infrastructural facilities such as good roads, electricity water at tourist sites. Hotels and restaurants should be established around tourist sites.
- Local communities should be encouraged to produce arts, crafts that can be sold as souvenirs to tourists.
- Visitors or tourists to tourism sites should be compelled to pay a token fee for visiting those sites (NCC, 2003)

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RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Demographic distribution of respondents according to Age, sex, Marital status, Religion, Education and occupation were tabulated on table 1-6, While 7-8 highlighted the threats and benefits of tourism to culture and ecotourism.

| Age | Frequency | Percent % |
|---------------|------------|--------------|
| Valid 18 – 27 | 38 | 25.00 |
| 28 – 37 | 42 | 28.00 |
| 38 – 47 | 44 | 29.00 |
| 47 – 57 | 19 | 12.70 |
| 58 and above | 6.0 | 4.00 |
| Total | 149 | 99.00 |
| Total | 150 | 100.0 |

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to Age N=150

| Sex | Frequency | Percent % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Valid Male | 89 | 59.00 |
| Female | 61 | 40.00 |
| Total | 150 | 100.0 |

Table 2: Demographic distributions of respondents according to sex N – 150

| Marital Status | Frequency | Percent % |
|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Single | 45 | 30.0 |
| Married | 94 | 62.00 |
| Widow | 3 | 2.00 |
| Widower | 7 | 4.70 |
| Divorced | 1 | 7.00 |
| Total | 150 | 100.0 |

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to marital status N – 150

| Valid | Frequency | Percent % |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Christianity | 143 | 95.00 |
| Islam | 7.0 | 5.00 |
| Total | 150 | 100.0 |

Table 4: Distribution of respondents on religious belief N – 150

| Qualification | Frequency | Percent % |
|---------------|------------|--------------|
| WASCE | 63 | 41.00 |
| OND/HND | 31 | 21.00 |
| Bsc | 20 | 13.00 |
| Post graduate | 29 | 19.00 |
| Msc and above | 6.0 | 4.00 |
| Total | 150 | 100.0 |

Table 5: Distribution of respondents on educational status N – 150

| Occupation | Frequency | Percent % |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Trading alied business | 60 | 40.00 |
| Fishing & Farming | 25 | 16.66 |
| Tourist guiding | 15 | 10.00 |
| Artisans | 45 | 30.00 |
| Unemployed | 5.0 | 3.00 |
| Total | 150 | 100.00 |

Table 6: Occupational distribution of respondents N – 150

| S/N | Areas affected | SA | A | UD | D | SD | F | X | REMARKS |
|-----|--|----|----|----|----|----|---|------|----------|
| 1. | Environment pollution-fishing & farming | 75 | 60 | 5 | 8 | 2 | | 4.50 | Accepted |
| 2. | Poor waste management | 65 | 25 | 25 | 5 | 5 | | 4.20 | Accepted |
| 3. | Displacement from farm land e.g. farmers fishermen | 60 | 75 | 9 | 4 | 2 | | 4.20 | Accepted |
| 4. | Human right abuse | 70 | 40 | 30 | 20 | 10 | | 3.80 | Accepted |
| 5. | Unfair labour & culture | 75 | 60 | 10 | 8 | 2 | | 4.15 | Accepted |
| 6. | Co-modification of culture | 65 | 50 | 25 | 5 | 5 | | 3.85 | Accepted |
| 7. | Bastardizing of local plant | 81 | 64 | 10 | 8 | 2 | | 4.18 | Accepted |
| 8. | Biopiracy of local plants | 75 | 40 | 25 | 6 | 4 | | 3.25 | Rejected |
| 9. | Disrupt means of livelihood | 95 | 30 | 10 | 13 | 7 | | 4.52 | Accepted |
| 10. | Unfavorable commerce policy | 51 | 60 | 20 | 10 | 9 | | 3.10 | Rejected |
| 11. | Foreign investment over host community | 50 | 70 | 10 | 8 | 12 | | 3.05 | Rejected |
| 12. | Negative influence on local values system | 30 | 40 | 40 | 15 | 25 | | 2.75 | Rejected |

Table 7: Mean Scores of Tourism actions/policies constituting threats to culture and environment N – 150 Field Study (2013)

| S/N | AREA OF TOURISM BENEFITS | SA | A | UD | D | SD | X | REAMRK |
|-----|--|----|----|----|----|----|------|----------|
| 1. | Employment of Labour | 75 | 40 | 25 | 6 | 4 | 4.25 | Accepted |
| 2. | Infrastructure Development | 46 | 24 | 10 | 53 | 17 | 2.10 | Accepted |
| 3. | Income revenue generation | 50 | 70 | 10 | 8 | 12 | 3.32 | Accepted |
| 4. | Shift tax burden to non residence | 30 | 20 | 20 | 60 | 20 | 2.17 | Accepted |
| 5. | Improvement in the quality of life | 81 | 64 | 10 | 8 | 2 | 4.42 | Accepted |
| 6. | Promotes rural-urban integration | 60 | 50 | 10 | 6 | 14 | 3.73 | Accepted |
| 7. | Encourages production of indigenous art & crafts | 80 | 40 | 5 | 15 | 10 | 4.32 | Accepted |
| 8. | Foster cultural diversity & understanding | 61 | 30 | 9 | 26 | 24 | 3.53 | Accepted |
| 9. | Promotes local cuisine and dietary intake | 90 | 30 | 5 | 15 | 15 | 4.35 | Accepted |
| 10. | Faster language and education interaction | 55 | 45 | 10 | 25 | 15 | 3.42 | Accepted |

Table 8: Mean Scores of tourism benefits to the community by respondents (N=150)