

AMUSEMENT PARKS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTHS IN SOUTHERN SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ADULT EDUCATION

ESSIEN, Cecilia Kori (Ph.D.), ANTHONY, Godwin Bullem, EFFIONG, Regina Christopher

Department of Continuing Education & Development Studies, University Of Calabar, Calabar,
Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *This paper examined amusement park and economic development of youths in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria: Implication for environmental adult education. To achieve the purpose of this study, one null hypothesis was formulated to direct the study. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The sample of the study consisted of five hundred and forty-four (544) respondents drawn from the area of the study. The instruments for data collection were Tourism Activities Questionnaire (TAQ) and Economic Development Questionnaire (EDQ) developed by the researchers which were validated by three (3) experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability was established through test-retest reliability. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was adopted to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between amusement park activities and economic development in the area. Based on the result of the findings, it was recommended that amusement parks such as ranch resort, Tinapa, Marina resort among others should be established, managed and maintained to encourage tourism activities in this regard.*

KEYWORDS: Amusement park, Economic development, youths

INTRODUCTION

In common language, the term theme park and amusement park are often synonymous. However, a theme park can be regarded as a distinct style of amusement park. Historically, Gail (2002) maintained that the amusement park evolved from three earlier traditions, the oldest being the periodic fair of the middle ages – one of the earliest was the Bartholomew fair in England, which began in 1133. By the 18th and 19th centuries, they had evolved into places of entertainment for the masses, where the public could view freak shows, acrobatics, conjuring and juggling takes part in competitions and walk through menageries. According to Esu (2009) a wave of innovations in the 1860s and 1870 created mechanical rides, such as the steam-powered carousel. This inaugurated the era of the modern funfair rides, as the working classes were increasingly able to spend their surplus wages on entertainment. The second influence was the pleasure garden. One of the earliest gardens was the Vauxhall Gardens (Gail, 2002) found in 1661 in London. The modern amusement park evolved from earlier seaside pleasure resorts that had become popular with the public for day-trips or weekend holidays.

Cross River State has emerged as a state facing diverse economic challenges. There is increased youth unemployment associated with lack of job opportunities, poor rural-urban road network, increased poverty engineered by limited livelihood options, increased arm-robbery and other criminal activities across the state, as well as declining revenues due to reduced budgetary allocations and low internal revenue sources. After being stripped of the 36 oil-wells and conceding Bakassi Peninsula to the Republic of Cameroon, Cross River State has become a resource-starved state which has affected the ability of the state to execute capital project and still render efficient basic services. Other problems are low standard of living due to widespread poverty, poor educational facilities, poor housing services and infrastructure, lack of basic amenities in some remote communities and lack of diversification of the state economy. The agricultural sector, for example, is still at peasant level, the manufacturing sector is not applicable in the state, the solid mineral sector is over-dependended upon, the transport sector is suffering due to bad roads while the educational sector is under-funded, under-staff and not self-sustaining. It is obvious that more effort and commitment are required to harness the untapped, under-utilized destinations and potentials that abound in the state. It is against this background that this study is under taken to assess the relationship between amusement park and economic development in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

According to Jimmy (2005), an amusement park, sometimes referred to as a funfair or theme park is a group of entertainment attractions, rides, and other events in a location for the enjoyment of large numbers of people. Amusement and travelling carnivals, and are more elaborate than simple city parks or playgrounds, usually providing attractions meant to cater specifically to certain age groups, as well as some that are aimed towards all ages. Amusement parks evolved from European fairs and pleasure gardens which were created for people's recreation. World's fairs and exposition were another influence on the development of the amusement park industry.

Etefia and Nkpoyen (2012) conducted a study on the effect of amusement parks activities on the economic achievement of young people in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. This study adopted ex-post facto research design. A multi-stage sampling procedure (simple random sampling and stratified random sampling) respectively. The simple random sampling technique was used in the selection of the amusement parks and areas, while the stratified random sampling technique was adopted in the selection of the four hundred (400) respondents used in the study. In testing the hypothesis formulated for the study, the independent t-test analysis was the statistical analysis used. The result from the testing of hypothesis showed that the calculated t-value of 6.965 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.960 when tested at 0.05 level of significance with 398 degree of freedom. This implies that amusement parks activities significantly influence economic achievement of the people in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State. This could be because of the facts that there is always influx of visitors into the town which also seeks the economic activities during that period. Based on the result of the findings, the researchers concluded that, the development of more amusement parks will promote economic achievement of the people particularly the youths in the study area

In terms of contribution to government revenues, Alter (2007) maintains that government revenues from the tourism sector can be categorized as direct contributions and indirect contributions. The direct

contributions are generated by taxes on incomes from tourism employment and tourism businesses, and by direct levies on tourists such as departure taxes. Indirect contributions are those originated from taxes and duties levied on goods and services supplied to tourists.

The rapid expansion of attractions has led to significant employment creation. For example, the hotel accommodation sector alone provided around 21.3 million jobs through hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, taxis and souvenirs sales, and indirectly through the supply of goods and services needed by tourism-related businesses. According to the WTO (2013), tourism supports some 10% of the world's workers. Tourism sector enhanced through family entertainment or amusement parks and other tourism-related ventures could stimulate infrastructure investment. Tourism can induce the local government to make infrastructure improvements such as better water and sewage systems, roads, electricity, telephone and public transport networks, all of which can improve the quality of life for residents as well as facilitate tourism.

Rathmall (2004) observes that tourism contributes to local economies. Tourism can be a significant, even essential, part of the local economy. As the environment is a basic component of the tourism industry's assets, tourism revenues are often used to measure the economic value of protected areas. The importance of tourism to local economies can also be illustrated by the regional output and employment. There are other local revenues that are not easily quantified, as not all tourist expenditures are formally registered in the macro-economic statistics. Money is earned from tourism through informal employment such as street vendors, informal guides, rickshaw drivers etc. the positive side of informal or unreported employment is that the money is returned to the local economy, and has a great multiplier effect as it is spent over and over again (WTTC, 2014).

Young (2014) investigated the benefits of Smart Park in the New York City and reported that, an extensive analysis of New York City's parks shows that strategic investment in revitalizing parks yields significant economic returns to the city, investors and neighboring communities. While not all park investments have generated economic returns, strategic planning, effective maintenance and community involvement can lead to successful park investments that create economic revitalization. City wide, across different demographic areas, parks have created economic returns. There are cases where city parks increased the value of nearby commercial real estate by up to 225% and residential real estate by up to 150%. City parks have caused turnover rates to drop to less than 1%. Park improvements have been paid for by returns from increased park use and concessions, one case study provided is Bryant Park. Opened as a public space in the 1880s, it has seen high and low points, but by the 1960s its decline was severe and in the 1970s it was known for crime and drugs. An additional assessment on adjacent properties and public and private funds was used for a decade long work to completely overhaul the park.

In 1991, a new Bryant park opened, with improved maintenance and security, restored sculptures, and new concessions, facilities and events and approximately 20,000 people visit it each day. Moveable chairs attract nearby workers on lunch breaks, and local businesses view the park as an employee amenity and use the park for outside lunch meetings. The park is a tourist draw and residents come by the thousands for outdoor movie screenings, free concerts, a free outdoor library and the chance to enjoy fresh air in the center of

Midtown. Financially, the city and the local business owners made a sound investment. The entire neighborhood has become more desirable and between 1990-2002, asking rents for commercial office space near Bryant Park increased between 115% and 225% as compared to increases ranging from 41% to 73% in the surrounding submarkets.

Essentially, tourism can have a profound impact on the society, economy and environment of nations. Socially, one of the most immediate benefits of the tourism industry is its ability to create employment and, in the case of tourism, an added benefit is that it caters for both skilled and unskilled employment. As a labour-intensive industry, tourism has the potential to create more jobs per unit of investment than any other industry and tourism can be a useful source of employment for women and ethnic minority groups. Environmentally, tourism, when properly developed and managed, can serve as a mechanism for protecting natural environments; preserving historical, archaeological and religious monuments; and, stimulating the practice of local cultures, folklore, traditions, arts and crafts, and cuisine. Economically, tourism brings many benefits to the Central Government, local authorities as well as the private sector through the generation of foreign revenue, financial returns on investment, taxation on tourists and tourist products, and, linkages to other local industries such as agriculture and fisheries.

Amusement Park is one of the tourism options of any country and the development in Nigeria has suffered from lack of investment over the years due largely to the huge capital required for start-up. The Amusement Park Project should provide leisure to the public, complete with Popular Rides, Indoor/Outdoor Soft Playground Equipment as well as the installation of a wide range of Entertainment Attractions. The Indoor Rides and Games will make for a safe place for children to visit while conquering the boredom factor and providing entertainment for them and their adult parents. Safety, cleanliness, good customer service, low prices and exciting staff should be the selling points of any Amusement Park in Nigeria. The Park should have the capacity of organizing groups and school tours events, birthday parties and family outings. Other attractions like Crocodile and aquatic animals could also be added to the park in order to attraction different groups of persons and show case the potential of the country in that area (Ibrahim, 2014).

Ayinde (2011) maintained that, amusement parks can be best described as artificially created parks that are designed and developed for the sole purpose of offering visitors entertainment and new experiences. Over the years, there has been the coming up of very notable amusement parks such as Disney; parks that have had a great impact on tourism. There are endless economic aspects that are associated with the establishment of these parks. By extension, the parks have also had notable influence on tourism and lead to the upcoming of new trends in tourism. Amusement parks constitute a substantial proportion of the total global tourism. This is because of the fact that these parks boast of very high numbers throughout the year. There is practically no peak and off-peak seasons for amusement parks. Amusement parks are quite broad in that they have several sub-categories that operate under the umbrella amusement park. These sub-categories are such as zoological & botanical gardens, water parks with different types of water games, shopping centers and theme parks among other sub-categories. The best thing about these sub-divisions is that they offer top class fun and amusement hence the name amusement parks. These parks provide world class experiences for both local and international tourists.

It is important to note that amusement parks have had direct impacts on the tourism sector. For countries like Czech Republic, Spain and France, its tourism sector has received great boosts from the incredible amusement parks found all over the countries. This is mainly due to the fact that these parks have been aligned uniquely to complement the tourism scene through the provision of tourist attraction scenes. The environment of those countries has favored the thriving of these amusement parks in that it provides a unique scenery and also supports the sustenance of theme parks with inclusion of the zoological and botanical gardens. Amusement parks account for a great percentage of both international and local tourism. This is specifically the case for well-known parks such as Disneyland Park. This park provides a very important and beneficial pull factor for the American tourism. What's amazing about this park is that it is rated as the number one park all across the globe. The park has gone a long way in increasing tourism levels in USA in that it has had a notable input in tourism intensity increase. Being one of the must visit parks in America; Disneyland enjoys great recognition and reputation globally thereby marketing USA's tourism scene far and wide. It is important to note that for amusement parks to have impacts on tourism there needs to be a connection between the park and the local tourism infrastructure. This is so as the park can be able to attract tourists and visitors to the local tourism sector.

Amusement parks have a great touristic portfolio that goes a long way in ensuring that the level of tourism is enhanced substantially. This calls for great diversification of the tourism sector such that amusement parks are able to bring about notable changes in tourism. It goes without saying that diversification gives rise to new inventions in the tourism sector thereby enhancing tourism by very high margins. Despite the fact that amusement parks have had great impacts on tourism, it is important for the tourism sector of any country to be self-sustainable. This is so as the sector is not solely dependent on amusement parks for its sustenance. This in turn brings about a balance in the tourism sector whereby the sector is not largely dependent on amusement parks for it to grow or thrive. This is because of the fact that whilst amusement parks have been quite advantageous to tourism, the parks' chances of eventual closure are very high.

Other than tourism, amusement parks have had great impacts in the employment arena. This is due to the fact that these parks provide very many employment opportunities both directly and indirectly. With the perfect collaboration between amusement parks and other sectors in the tourism industry, it becomes quite easy for the industry to grow incredibly. The impacts of amusement parks on tourism need to be put to consideration as far as improving tourism is concerned. This is because of the reason that the parks account for a great percentage of all activities in the tourism sector. As such, impacts of amusement parks on tourism are not overrated in any way. The existence of these parks has been notably very advantageous to the tourism sector and by extension other sectors of the economy.

A study conducted by the American Planning Association (2011) on how cities use parks for economic development in America. This study gives five key points on how city parks are a source of positive economic benefits and provides case studies for each. City parks: increase real property values Chattanooga, Tennessee: In the early 1980's, the city worked to lure middle-class residents back to the city, which faced rising unemployment and crime, polluted air, and a deteriorating quality of life, by cleaning

the air, acquiring open space, and creating parks and trails. Property values rose by more than \$11 million, a 127.5% increase. Increase municipal revenues Chattanooga, Tennessee: The city's work in the early 1980's to improve quality of life resulted in a 99% increase in combined city and county property tax revenues between 1988 and 1996. Shopping Districts: Prices for products in districts with trees are an average of 11% higher than in treeless districts. The quality of products are rated 30% higher in districts with sidewalk landscaping than in those without. The developments in the cities and increased quality products have added to job creation and gainful employment and empowerment of the youths living in the area and beyond.

Oakland, California: The East Bay Regional Park district stimulates an estimated \$254 million a year in park-related purchases. Attract and retain affluent retirees a 1994 study of retirees asked respondents to indicate the importance of 14 features in their decision to move to a new location. Their top three factors (in order of importance) were scenic beauty, recreational opportunities and mild climate. Attract knowledge workers and talent to live and work, Industry today is composed of smokeless industries, high technology, and service-sector businesses, collectively referred to as the "New Economy." The workers in the New Economy, "knowledge workers" sell their knowledge, as opposed to physical labor, as the main source of wealth creation and economic growth. They work for companies tied not to a certain location in order to achieve a competitive advantage but to retaining and attracting more talent. Knowledge workers prefer places with a diverse range of outdoor recreational activities, from walking trails, to cycle friendly cities, to rock climbing. A 1998 study found that quality of life in a community increases the attractiveness of a job by 33 percent. Attract homebuyers a 2001 survey by the National Association of Realtors found that 57% of potential homebuyers would choose a home close to parks and open space over one that was not. Fifty percent would be willing to pay 10% more for a home located near a park or protected open space.

In an article, Smith (2013) reviewed a sizable body of peer-reviewed and independent reports on the economic value of outdoor recreation facilities, open spaces and walkable community design. It focuses on benefits that accrue to nearby homeowners and to other open space users. Open spaces such as parks and recreation areas can have a positive effect on nearby residential property values and can lead to proportionately higher property tax revenues for local governments (provided municipalities are not subject to caps on tax levies). Amadi, James & Smith (2014) estimated that using a compact, walkable neighbourhood design can save developers 32% on the cost of providing infrastructure services. Open space tends to require fewer municipal services than residential, so land preservation can decrease a community's tax burden. The design elements used in these neighborhoods can also create a tax savings on infrastructure. In one such neighborhood, swales were used to direct storm water over porous soils, which irrigated nearby agricultural fields and saved \$800 per lot compared to conventional storm sewer construction and the parks, open spaces and greenbelts offered by compact, walkable neighbourhoods, (also known as traditional neighborhood development), create higher housing prices, create marketing opportunities, and tend to cause the neighborhood's houses to sell more quickly than conventionally designed neighborhoods.

Abia and Udonwa (2009) asserted that, parks provide a great benefit to citizens, both those who live nearby and tourists. In addition to their many environmental benefits, including preserving plant and animal habitat, decreasing air pollution, and water filtration, parks create an economic benefit for both governments and individuals. Creating well planned parks and preserving sufficient land for them can generate financial returns that are often many times greater than the money initially invested into the project, even when maintenance costs are factored in. Homebuyers prefer homes close to parks, open space, and greenery. Proximity to parks increases property value, thereby increasing property tax revenue. Research has shown that a 5% increase in property values for houses within 500 feet of a park is a conservative estimate of the change in property value due to proximity to a park. Companies often choose to locate in communities that offer amenities such as parks as a means of attracting and retaining top-level workers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Trickle- down theory of poverty by Keynes (1936)

This theory was propounded by Keynes (1936). This theory stated that economic development and growth are regarded as necessary sufficient conditions for reduction and eradication of poverty in the human society. The philosopher further maintained that, economic development would engender increase in demand for resources especially the labour factors. The benefits of rapid economic growth would trickle down the poor the recruitment of the unemployed into the labour force for gainful employment during periods of rapid growth. In this way, it is conjectured, the poor would be gradually pulled out of their poverty.

According to Keynes (1936) economic development is a very important strategy for poverty reduction or eradication. To ensure proper development of a given people or place, sectors such as tourism, trade and commerce, agriculture and so on must accompany a deliberate policy that would promote participation, equity and distribution of development and wealth to trickle down poverty.

The relevance of this theory to the present study is that, the promotion of tourism sector economy by the government of Cross River State and Nigeria ensures wealth creation for the government and people of the nation. With increase in poverty, unemployment and under-development, engagement in tourism business is one of the way out for repositioning the economy of the state and the country as a whole. To achieve these benefits therefore, resources must be committed to the promotion of the industry to enable it function the much it should, to yield the much needed benefits. This can be achieved through direct investment in tourism activities by government and private organization to promote job creation, revenue generation, and rural development among other

RESEARCH DESIGN/METHODOLOGY

The survey research design was considered most appropriate for the study. This design allows the researcher to assess the situation under investigation as it exists presently. According to Kerlinger (1986)

survey research design is directed towards determining the nature of the situation as it exists at the time of an investigation.

A multi-stage sampling procedure (purposive and simple, random sampling techniques) was adopted for the study. Stage one involved the use of purposive sampling technique in the selection of the various local government areas in the study area that are host to tourist destinations/attractions. Stage two of the sampling involved the purposive selection of the various tourist destinations/attractions in each of the local government areas sampled. In selecting the respondents (community members in which the destination is located, and tourists found in the tourist's destinations), the simple random sampling technique was adopted for the selection of respondents in the study. The sample of the study consisted of 544 respondents drawn from the study area.

Tourism Activities Questionnaire (TAQ) and Economic Development Questionnaire (EDQ) was use for the study. The questionnaire was sub-divided into two main parts. Part A was structured to elicit information on the personal characteristics of the respondents, while part B was designed to obtain information on the five sub- variables of the study. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using a test retest reliability estimate. The questionnaire was administered twice to 50 randomly selected respondents in a pilot testing. Data obtained was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation to determine the reliability coefficient.

Data Analysis

Null hypothesis

There is no significant influence of amusement park on economic development in Cross River State.

TABLE 1

Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between amusement parks and economic development in Cross River State (N=544)

Variables	\bar{x}	Sd	Cal-r	Sig.
Amusement parks activities	18.565	2.006	0.625*	.05
Economic development of youths	31.284	3.242		

*Significant at 0.05, df = 542, critical $-r = 0.113$

Table 1 shows the summary of Pearson product moment correlation coefficient of the relationship between amusement parks activities and economic development in Cross River State. The result revealed that the calculated r-valued of 0.625 was greater than the critical r-value of 0.113 at 0.05 level of significant with 542 degree of freedom. Since the calculated value was greater that the critical value, it means the result was significant. This implied that there is a significant relationship between amusement park activities and economic development. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of analysis found that there is a strong positive relationship between amusement park activities and economic development. Generally, amusement park, sometimes referred to as a funfair park is a group of entertainment attractions, rides, and other events in a location which employ a large number of people. The study supports that of Samuelson (2001) that the main positive economic impacts of amusement park tourism relate to foreign exchange earnings, contributions to government revenues, and generation of employment and business opportunities.

The findings also agrees with Alter (2007) that government revenues from the amusement parks sectors can be in forms of direct tax income contributions from tourism employment and businesses, and by direct levies on tourists and indirect taxes/levies on goods and services to tourists. WTO (2013), for instance, observed that amusement park-related activities provided around 21.3 million jobs through hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, taxis and souvenirs sales, and supply of goods and services. The amusement parks also stimulate improvement in infrastructure and contribute to local economy (Rathmall, 2004). This suggest that the Cross River State has reaped important benefits from amusement parks and further benefits could be realized from increased investment in the amusement park activities.

Implication for Environmental Education

This study is important to environmental adult education because everybody needs time for leisure which could bring about increase in productivity in which case, an environmental adult educationist is not an exception. This goes a long way to strengthen the adage which says ‘all work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy’. This study is also important to the environmental adult educationist since they can introduce themes or issues that can help sustain and protect the parks for economic and environmental development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Tourism provides both direct and indirect benefits to the government and the citizens. A wide range of tourism activities are associated with environmental conservation, ecological and nature management and biodiversity preservation. Besides, tourism-related employments and revenues are important players in the sustenance of most economies. This research has revealed that Cross River State enjoys the luxury of being regarded as a tourism hub of the nation. Based on the study finding, it was recommended that amusement parks such as drill ranch resort, Tinapa, Marina resort among others, should be established, manage and maintain to encourage tourism activities in this regard.

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