

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE FOREST
COMMUNITY OF IKPE ORO, URUE OFFONG ORUKO LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE**

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ABSTRACT: *This study on socio-economic impact of tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe Oro community, Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom state is aimed at establishing the socio-economic impact of tourism development in the forest community in the study area. The correlational research design was adopted. To achieve the purpose of this study, two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting three communities while the multi-stage stratified random sampling technique and accidental sampling technique was used to select the one hundred and fifty (150) community members used for the study. A fifteen (15) items four points likert scale questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. To test the hypotheses, Pearson product moment correlation statistical analysis technique was used for data analysis. The results obtained from analysis of data revealed that, there is a significant relationship between employment opportunities and improvement in infrastructural facilities and tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe oro, Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa ibom State*

KEYWORDS: Socio-Economic, Tourism Development, Forest Community, Ikpe Oro Community.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a rapidly growing phenomenon and has become one of the largest industries in the world. The impact of tourism varies extremely. On one hand, it plays an important and certainly positive role in the socio economic and political development in destination countries by, for instance, offering new employment opportunities. Also, in certain instances, it may contribute to a broader cultural and understanding by creating awareness, respecting the diversity of cultures and ways of life. On the other hand, it is a tool to create jobs. Tourism has been a major driver of socio-economic development in Western society; it is an alternative strategy for sustainability and diversification of economy for important policy of a good government.

In recent times, tourism is one of the largest industries that have contributed to the socio-economic growth of many countries especially countries where tourism is the mainstay of her economy, World Tourism Organization (WTO, 1998; cited in Ejaetal, 2012 and Ojo, 2014). Despite the fact that that industry is a vehicle for promoting cultural exchange that enhances international understanding and goodwill among the diverse peoples of the world, it is also a catalyst for enhancing many country destination employment opportunities, foreign exchange and infrastructural facilities (ESCAP, 2002; cited in Ejaetal, 2012).

The development of tourism as a critical sector of the economy has gradually assumed a centre stage in the economic agenda of most nations of the world. In the past few decades, international

attention on tourism as a critical sector of the economy has greatly increased. This is in view of its capacity to quickly stimulate income growth, generate foreign exchange and contribute to domestic earnings of government through fees and taxes (Vanguard Newspaper, June 24, 2011). The interest in tourism by the Nigeria's government started way back in the 1960s with the Obasanjo's regime in 1976 establishing the Nigeria Tourism Board (NTB) now Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) via Decree No. 54 of 1976 reviewed to Decree No. 86 of 1991 and giving it a 'preferred sector' status respectively. Master Plan on tourism development in Nigeria started in 1982 with a tourism development policy first rolled out in 1990. To further consolidate the quest for quality service delivery in the tourism industry, the government created the Federal Ministry of Tourism and Culture to actualize the dream of catching up with the global train in tourism development (Munzali, 2011).

Tourism has always been regarded as a means of economic modernization, but has not been seriously considered as a means of social and cultural modernization. The concept of socio-economic modernization emphasizes improvements in various indicators, including improvement in living conditions and the quality of life and well-being of populations (Owan, 2012). According to Boo (1992), tourism has recently been assumed as the world largest employer of labour and most safe of all the industries with regards to atmospheric pollution. Tourism has been describe by Cross (1998) as an industry of globalization which has witnessed people of different nations. As this happens, new friendships are established, interpretation of cultural differences resulting in greater tolerance occur, and global diversities are better appreciated and understood. Thus, the emergence of a synthetic global culture has been largely predicted since 1956 to become a reality (UNESCO, 2007).

Ikpe oro community of Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State is one of the leading tourist destinations, mainly because of the rich wildlife resources it sustains and the scenic beauty, tourism has stimulated the development of a variety of allied infrastructures and facilities, such as Eco lodges and camps, bridges and culverts, including boreholes. Tourism in Ikpe oro community also provides employment opportunities to Local communities around. Therefore, this study focuses on the socio-economic impact of tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe oro, Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the problem

Several problems of the world are environmentally, economically, socially and culturally related. Ikpe oro community is one of the leading tourist destinations in Akwa Ibom State mainly because of the rich wildlife resources it sustains and the scenic beauty. Tourism has stimulated the development of a variety of allied infrastructures and facilities, such as Eco lodges and camps, bridges and culverts. The motivating force behind this study is based on the face that in the past, there has been no research on tourism development amongst the people of Ikpe oro community of Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Based on this, the researcher therefore, is intended to examine the socio-economic impact of tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe oro community, Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the socio-economic impact of tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe oro community, Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Specifically the study is aimed at determining whether:

1. Employment opportunity relate with tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe Oro
2. Improvement in infrastructural facilities relate with tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe Oro

Statement of hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. Employment opportunity does not significantly relate with tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe Oro
2. There is no significant relationship between improvement in infrastructural facility and tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe Oro

LITERATURE REVIEW**Tourism Development and Employment Opportunities**

Nigeria as a nation is endowed with both natural and material resources that can be harnessed to aid the economic development of the country by providing revenue and foreign exchange. Tourism plays significant roles in socio-economic development of many nations. This is because it contributes towards alleviating the major political, social and economic problems that characterize the rural areas. It equally helps in developing the urban centres. Tourism has been discovered to be a very important instrument to poverty alleviation, attainment of the millennium development goals (MDGs) and sustain-able development (Olorunfemi and Raheem, 2008 cited in Tunde, 2012)). It is pertinent to note that tourism ranks as one of the programme initiatives that contribute to national development. Tourism could contribute meaning-fully to the economic development of Nigeria if properly harnessed (Dalat, 2010 cited in Ojo, 2014). In Nigeria the contribution to government revenue from levies on Hospitality sector (registration and other charges) recorded N1.149m in 2004 while N100m was generated in 2009. Furthermore, N313m was generated by company tax (National Bureau of Statistics, NBS). In 2011, the industry contributed about N1, 232.2 billion (3.3 percent) to the GDP in Nigeria. In its report, the WITC forecasts that the industry will generate 897,500 jobs representing 1.4 percent of Nigeria's total workforce in 2012 and that over the next 10 years, the amount is expected to grow by 6.5 percent per annum to N483.4 billion in 2022. From the foregoing, the only way to have sustainable tourism is through the development of the entire neglected tourist sites in Nigeria. This would translate to increased contribution towards Gross Domestic Product, employment generation, improved economic and social progress within Nigeria and Africa as a whole (Tunde, 2012). The immense socio-economic impacts and benefits of tourism have in recent time been recognized by several states and the Federal Government of Nigeria. Contingent upon this, part of the effort towards diversifying the economy of the nation has been to harness and develop tourism – the untapped non- oil sector (Akpan and Obang, 2012).

Foreign Earning/Exchange: The tourism industry makes room for foreign earning in the Nigeria economy. It does this by attaining foreigners from other countries to Nigeria e.g. The Tinapa or Obudu Cattle ranch in Cross River State attract foreigners to the state annually for site seeing and

holiday visit. Tourism also attract Agriculture as it encourages foreign exchange through international trade e.g. cocoa exportation, rubber exportation etc. (Naijaedu.wordpress. com).

Tourism over the years has distinguished itself as one of the major tools for income generation and poverty alleviation in both rural and urban areas in developing nations like Nigeria. Participation in tourism-related economic activities contributes immensely in the community development of localities or places. Hence, the central aim of community development is to positively affect lives and standard of living of a people. Localities with equitable tourism potentials stand a better chance in maximizing the contributions of tourism to their economic lives by actively initiating and participating in various tourism businesses; small and large scale businesses (Elochukwu, 2013). From the foregoing, Nigerian geographical landscape has tourism potential which attracts foreigners that may contribute to the socio-economic development of Nigeria if well and properly developed.

According to George, (2013), the tourism industry offers marvelous opportunities in jobs creation and strengthening of the nation's economy. The statistics indicate that Nigeria will gain a rise in employment of 897,500, which will translate to N252bn in investment equivalent to 1.6 per cent increments and 1.4 percent annually with the aim of hitting 5.4 percent in 2022. Around 840,000 Nigerians are currently employed directly within the country's tourism industry, representing 1.4% of the labor force. WTTC expects the figure to rise to 1.6% over the next 10 years. The number of jobs created both directly and indirectly by the industry should reach almost 1.9m this year, according to the WTTC, and is expected to rise to 2.9m by 2022, making up 3.5% of total employment. In another expansion WTCC's estimate, Nigeria's visitor numbers should increase by 3.5% per year over the coming decade, with the country expected to welcome a total of 1.8m international travelers this year. The number is forecast to rise to 2.9 m over the next 10 years. By comparison, the WTTC expects South Africa to see 9.7m international tourist arrivals in 2012 and 13.9m per year by 2022. (Oxford Business Group, 2012). The tourism sector has made momentous contributions to the nation's Gross Domestic Product and boosted employment assess in the past four years. (Agency Reporter, 2012). WTTC further forecasts in their reports, that in 2012 alone, some 897,500 jobs, representing 1.4 percent of Nigeria's total engaged workforce will be generated by the travel and tourism industry. With about N1,232.2 billion (3.3 percent) contribution to the GDP in 2011; rises by 10.8 percent in 2012 and further increase by 7.0 percent annually to hit N2,690.8 billion in 2022, the Nigerian travel and tourism industry is fast opening up to huge investments. Travel and tourism generated 838,500 jobs directly in 2011 (1.4 percent of total employment), and this was forecast to grow by 7.0 percent in 2012 to 897,500 jobs, stated in the WTTC reports, which give details that the expected jobs include employment by hotels, travel agents, airlines as well as the activities of the restaurant and leisure industries directly supported by tourists and other passenger services (excluding commuter services). (Obinna, 2012)

Tourism Development and Infrastructure

Smith (1994) was among the first to acknowledge the role of service infrastructure in creating a product experience. He argued that "service infrastructure is housed within the larger macro-environment or physical plant of the destination" (Smith, 1994). He stressed the fact that the level, use, or lack of infrastructure and technology in a destination (for example transportation, water and power supply, use of computer technology and communications among others) are also visible and determining features that can enhance the visitors' trip experience. Other authors subsequently supported his views (Choy 1992; Buharis 2000; Crouch and Ritchie 2000). They posited that tourists' overall impression develops their image of a destination after their visitation and that

infrastructure may play an important role in that respect. Gearing et al (1974) study the case of Turkey as a tourist destination and find that infrastructure (comprising roads, water, electricity, safety services, health services, communications and public transportation) is a key determinant explaining tourist arrivals. Tang and Rochananond (1990) conclude that infrastructure is an important element in promoting Thailand as a tourist destination country. More recently, Kim et al (2000) in discussing the case of Sun Lost City, South Africa, and McElroy (2003) in discussing small islands highlight the importance of infrastructure, particularly government financed infrastructure, in the success of a destination.

Gunn (1988) denotes the tourism product as a complex consumptive experience that results from a process where tourists use multiple of services (information, relative prices, and transportation, accommodation, and attraction services) during the course of their visit. Other economic and political conditions and structural features are also important factor shaping many tourist experiences and contribute to the nature of the destination product. Murphy et al (2000) related this type of product to a supply and demand analysis and described how various components of the destination interact with travelers during their trip. Prideaux (2000) acknowledges the importance of transport infrastructure as an essential component of successful tourism in that it provides inducement for the growth of existing tourist destinations and the creation of new attractions. More so, the establishment of high quality tourism resort in any country depends on the availability of a critical mass of public infrastructure. The absence of it can create heavy burden on operating cost with attendant negative effect on the competitiveness of a destination (Prideaux, 2000).

Tourism promotes development and even distribution of wealth in a nation. Due to the fact that most of the tourist attraction sites are located in the rural communities, the need to concentrate development in most local places is imperatively necessary. One of the most important development and improvement in infrastructural facilities is the construction of road linking rural and urban people together. The improvement of rural lives through the provision of rural care centers and facilities such as dispensaries, clinics and hospitals is government effort to encourage rural development in order to boost tourism development (Umana, 2010).

In Nigeria for instance, tourism development is in top speed. Government, individuals and corporate bodies such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are very supportive in promoting tourism thrive. Government commitment to develop most especially communities with tourist attraction site has resulted in the propagation of modern towns and mega cities in Nigeria. As part of government effort to develop and sustain tourism sector of the economy, standard accommodation facilities have been developed. There is also the supply of portable drinking water for both inhabitants and tourists arrivals (Esekong, 2006).

Etefia, (2004) asserts that improvement in infrastructural development is paramount in tourism development. The commitment on the part of the government to develop tourism business in Nigeria is as important as the tourism sector itself. The provision of basic amenities of life such as good road network, electricity, pipe borne water, communication network of standard, modification and improvement of facilities, provision of hotels and guest houses, and provision of adequate security network through the localization of police station in most communities, as well as formation of other uniform organizations to provide security for people is a big boost to the

tourism sector. Even though all these things have been done, there is still more commitment needed to ensure maintenance and standard in the services provided.

METHODOLOGY

A sample of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents from 25 years and above were selected for the study from three (3) communities which include, Mbikpu Eyokan, Oyubi and Okossi all in Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The correlational survey design was adopted because the researcher carries out the study the way it occurs as at the time of investigation.

Instrumentation

A well-constructed and validated instrument tagged “Socio Economic Impact of Tourism Development in the Forest Community Questionnaire” (SITDFCQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was designed into two sections. Section “A” consists of respondents’ personal data while section “B” consists of ten items on issues that relate to the variables. A test-retest reliability estimate was calculated using 30 respondents from two communities in the same local government area who are not part of the actual study. The calculated reliability analysis coefficient range of 0.86 to 0.89 was obtained. The data collected for the study was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation statistical technique to examine the relationship between employment opportunity and improvement in infrastructural facility on tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe Oro, Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

TABLE 1
Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Relationship between Employment Opportunity and Tourism Development in the Forest Community of Ikpe Oro.

N=150

Variables	Σx	Σy	Σx^2	Σy^2	Σxy	r-cal
Employment opportunity	670		91978		7688	0.97
Tourism development in the forest community		57		691		

Significant at 0.05, df= 148, t-critical 0.195*

Data analysis in the table above shows that, the calculated r-value of 0.97 is greater than the t-critical value of 0.195 at .05 level of significant with 148 degree of freedom. From the above result obtained, the null (H_0) hypothesis was rejected while the alternate (H_1) was upheld and retained. This implies that there is a significant relationship between employment opportunity and tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe Oro, Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

TABLE 2**Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Relationship between Improvement in Infrastructural Facility and Tourism Development in the Forest Community of Ikpe Oro.**

N=150

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum y$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r-cal
Improvement in infrastructural facility	672		90370		8414	0.96
Tourism development in the forest community		63		847		

Significant at 0.05, df= 148, t-critical 0.195*

Data analysis above shows that, the calculated r-value of 0.96 is greater than t-critical value of 0.195 at 0.05 level of significance with 148 degree of freedom. Based on the result of the finding, the null (H_0) hypothesis was rejected while the alternate (H_1) hypothesis was upheld and retained. This implies that, there is a significant relationship between improvement in infrastructural facility and tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe Oro, Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of findings

Tourism is a catalyst to community development. The encouragement of tourism in a nation can promote the development of infrastructural facility and also promote job creation. Owan (2012) asserts that tourism has always been regarded as a means of economic modernization, but has not been seriously considered as a means of social and cultural modernization. The concept of socio-economic modernization emphasizes improvement in living conditions and the quality of life and well-being of population.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing the result from the data analysis has shown that:

1. There is a significant relationship between employment opportunity and tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe Oro, Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
2. There is a significant relationship between improvement in infrastructural facility and tourism development in the forest community of Ikpe Oro, Urue Offong Oruko Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Government, individuals and corporate organizations such as NGOs take active part in the development of tourism to stimulate infrastructural development and job creation.

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Managing tourism for socio-economic development in
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