

Socio-Economic Benefits of Oguta Lake Tourist Destination on the Host Community of Oguta, IMO State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Nigeria is endowed with numerous tourism attractions ranging from places of natural beauty to cultural and historical heritage resources. These abundant tourism resources if properly and fully harnessed could make the country the leading tourism provider and tourism destination in Africa. The research was aimed to assess the economic and socio-cultural contribution of Oguta Lake within the host community. The study was conducted in Oguta Local Government Area, Imo State which lies at 5° 42' 42¹¹ N and 6° 48' 34¹¹ E coordinates with a land mass of 2, 025.75Km² were used in the survey study. A total number of 370 respondents were sampled in course of the study. The data collected were quantitatively analyzed to determine the mean score. A bench mark of 3.0 mean score was used for agreeing or disagreeing with opinions. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested using Chi-Square (χ^2) inferential statistics. The study revealed that tourism has contributed positively in the host community through creating new jobs and improving the quality of lives of the people and as well tourism has not encouraged the people to appreciate their local language which imposes threat on heritage language of the Oguta people which is an essential ingredient for tourism to thrive and promote cultural values. Hence, stakeholders should intensify efforts to fully harness other tourism potentials within the locality and the state at large in order to maximize its benefits and at the same time the local communities and organizations must provide a healthy and supportive environment that reinforces the learning and speaking heritage language on a daily basis.

Keywords: *Tourism, Host Community, Ogutalake, Development, Socio-Economic Contributions, Imo State, Nigeria, Deforestation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is widely acknowledged as an effective tool for socio-economic development, because of the possible backward and forward linkages with the rest sectors of the economy, which allows it to facilitate employment opportunities, income, local economic development, and enhance the quality of life¹. However, the extent to which these benefits accrue to a nation crucially depends on local conditions (Hall, 2007). Furthermore, for tourism to be sustainable the community has to benefit directly from it and this will enable them to protect and conserve the resources upon which is based (Manwa, 2007). The extent to which tourism confers economic benefits on any country also depends on the expectations of the tourists and the host country's ability to provide appropriate and adequate facilities (Smith, 2007). And unless economic policies to promote tourism remain a focus in developing countries, tourism will not be a potential source of economic growth (Ekanayake and Lonng, 2012). Tourism has been considered as an effective vehicle for economic development of many countries in the

world. Tourism is a temporary movement of people to destination outside their normal place of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and facilities created and services provided to cater for their needs (Sharples, 2009). The study of tourism is the study of people away from their needs. The study of tourism is the study of people away from their usual habitat, of the establishments which respond to the requirements of travelers, and of the impacts they have on economic, environmental and social well-being of their hosts. Although the quality of environment, both natural and man-made is essential to tourism, this cannot be taken for granted given the complex relationships that exist between tourism and the environment. Many of these impacts are linked with the construction of general tourism enhancing infrastructure such as roads and airports, and of tourism facilities including resorts, hotel, restaurant, shops, golf courses and marinas to name but a few.

However, despite the fact that the 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 infrastructure facilities (ESCAP, 2002). Tourism in Africa has been seen as a means of enhancing economic growth and development as well as launching the image of the continent to the outside world (Gbadel, 2007). Today, the tourism industry has contributed in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and experts in many developing countries have been improving overtime. A document by World Tourism Organisation shows that there has been tremendous growth of about 4% the level of international tourist arrival in Africa, in spite of the global economic meltdown that has affected tourist arrivals to many developed countries (WTO, 2009). Globally, tourism has been one of the economic development success stories following World War II and now has evolved into one of the world's largest economic sectors contributing 35% of global exports or service (UNWTO, 2008). The two billions USD per day earnings from the tourism industry in 2006 and the 6.5% growth in international tourist per year throughout 1950 to 2006 made the claim authentic and also proved the sustainability of this sector (UNWTO, 2008). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) forecasts 1.6 billion international tourist arrivals worldwide by 2020 and it further proves the prospects of this sector (UNWTO, 2008). Tourism has been considered as an effective vehicle for economic development of many countries in the world (Sharples, 2009). Globally, it is regarded as the fastest growing industry, with economies benefitting from its positive impacts (UNWTO, 2008). Thus with appropriate government support, the economic benefits from tourism can expedite the

process of economic development countries and improve the standard of local communities (Sharpley, 2009). Thus, tourism has become a significant industry both in poor and rich countries due to its positive impacts on the economy, people's livelihood and socio-cultural development. In Nigeria, about 8.1% of the GDP has been generated from the tourism sector as a result of the numerous tourism potentials in the Region (Eja, 2010). These potential ranged from natural to man-made such as the table mountain, colorful folks, beautiful landscape, overwhelming serenity and agreeable climate welcoming fun seekers to the highlands of Nigeria (Larry, 2005). Today, the level of tourist arrivals in Nigeria is quite commendable especially during the festival periods in which all the cultural artifacts and other attractions in Nigeria are usually paraded (Eja, 2010). However, it has been observed that in spite of the laudable tourism attractions in Nigeria which has made the region a natural paradise where most fun-seekers wish to visit, the level of tourist inflow in most of these potential sites Nigeria still pose problems (Anih, 2006). Besides, the lack of adequate empirical data has hindered policy makers and other stakeholders on the availability of most of the existing tourism destinations in Nigeria. Apart from this, no database and model have clearly defined the visibility success factors that has put Nigeria in the league other nations with great tourism potentials which is on this backdrop of gaps in empirical studies of tourism in Nigeria that this study intend to contribute to the frontier of knowledge in tourism literature by evaluating success factors that determine Nigeria as a tourist destination.

Tourism is not a new concept in Imo state as it is one of the most prosperous and liveliest states of the eastern part of Nigerian and attracts millions of travelers. Imo state is strategically situated in the heart of south east. The state is one of the most preferred tourist destinations in Nigeria. Its tourist attractions are many and varied including Oguta lake holiday complex, the second largest fresh water in Nigeria. Its tourist attractions are many and varied including the Oguta lake holiday complex, the second largest fresh water in Nigeria, Abadabalake, Mbari cultural centre, amadioha shrine, the blue obana lake, IyiOgidi, Nekede Zoo and gardens, etc. Thus, these destinations have enormous importance to the local population as a source of water, fish and tourism; and also as an outlet for sewerage. The lake is the largest natural lake in the Imo State of Nigeria. Located within the equatorial rainforest region, it is of enormous importance to the local population (the people of Oguta, Orsu, Nkwesi and Awo) as a source of water, fish and tourism.

Despite the fact that tourism is important to any nation, the problems associated with nature based tourism and cultural heritage are quite enormous. In that case, such problems are perceptible at the Oguta Lake which is located in Imo State. The state being one of the most prosperous and liveliest states of the eastern part of Nigeria and attracts millions of travelers to the area for business, leisure and other purposes which have resulted in the state over-congested during the holidays. The infrastructural facilities such as good road network and electricity, hospitals and other amenities are not enough to meet the demand of the communities and other tourism infrastructures which support tourism development have been opposed to poor maintenance culture. This has been a problem for the developing countries with adequate infrastructure generally and tourism supporting infrastructure in particular. There is nowhere the problem of inadequate infrastructure in particular. There is

nowhere the problem of inadequate infrastructure is most pronounced than in Nigeria where the dearth of infrastructure is compounded by the ability to maintain the few existing ones and replicate infrastructure to support tourism in Nigeria, lack of infrastructures is most pronounced in the rural areas where incidentally most of its tourist sites are also located (Ayeni and Ebohon, 2012). Nevertheless, efforts at developing infrastructure to support tourism in Nigeria, paltry as these may be happen only in the urban areas. On the contrary, tourism is expected to have its most impact on economic development given the infrastructure and income it can attract to rural Nigeria to propel economic growth. Tourism in Nigeria is at low level not only because of any economic hardship but because of all the factors militating against the industry. The consequences of any country that fails to develop and promote its tourism economic sector as alternative sector of revenue will continue to be poor, under developed in other economic sector and over dependence on foreign goods. Considering the above, this study aimed at evaluating the socio-economic benefits of developing Oguta Lake in Imo State Nigeria into a tourist destination. Hence, the focus of the study was to provide answers to the following questions;

1. What are the socio-cultural contributions of developing Oguta Lake in Imo State into a tourist site?
2. What are the economic contributions of developing Oguta Lake holiday resort on the host communities of Imo State, Nigeria?
3. Is there any significant difference in the socio-cultural lives of host communities as a result of developing Oguta Lake in Imo State into tourist destination?
4. Is there any significant difference in the economic lives of host communities as a result of developing Oguta Lake in Imo State tourist site?

A. Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses tested in the study were stated in null (H_0) form and were subjected to chi-square test.

H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the socio-cultural lives of the host communities as a result of development of Oguta Lake in Imo state.

H_{02} : There is no significant different in the economic lives of the host communities as result of the development of the lake into tourism destinations in Imo state.

B. Methodology

The study was conducted in Oguta Lake located in Oguta L.G.A of Imo State, Nigeria. Oguta is one of the 27 Local Government Areas in the state. A land mass of 2,025.75km². It lies at 5°42'42"N and 6°48'34"E coordinates.

A survey design was adopted in the study. The instruments used in the study were structured questionnaire and interview guide. The instruments were tested for validity and reliability by five experts in tourism. A total number of 370 people were sampled during the study. The data collected were quantitative analyzed by determining the mean score. Any mean score of 3.0 and above was agreed and accepted, while any item that had a mean score of less than 3.0 (<3.0) was disagreed upon and rejected. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested using chi-square for the inferential statistics. A critical value of ($X^2_{0.05}$) was used. The null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and alternative

hypothesis (H_A) accepted. The calculated chi-square was greater than the critical value

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socio cultural contribution of Oguta Lake in Imo State to the host communities

S/n	Perception of impact	Total score	Mean	Decision
1	Tourism promotes indigenous culture	1546	4.2	Agreed
2	Tourism has encouraged social development	1692	4.6	Agreed
3	Tourism bridges gap	1130	3.1	Agreed
4	Tourism enhances cultural originality	1243	3.4	Agreed
5	Tourism has increased awareness of religious	1307	3.5	Agreed
6	Tourism has encourage you to appreciate your	725	2	Disagreed
7	Tourism does not encourage equal involvement of local	1521	4.1	Agreed
8	Tourism has enhanced local pride	1555	4.2	Agreed
9	Tourism has improved public security	1128	3	Agreed
Total		11,116	32.1	
Clustered mean			3.6	

Source: *Field survey, 2014*

Table 1 above showed that respondent agreed that tourism promotes indigenous culture, has encouraged social development, bridges social gap, enhances cultural originality, has increased awareness of religious festival, has not encouraged equal involvement of local communities, has enhanced local pride and improved public security with the following mean scores 4.2, 4.6, 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 3.0 respectively. The clustered mean score of the local residents' perceptions on the socio-cultural tourism on the host communities showed an average of 3.6 greater than 3.0 bench mark. This implies that the local people understood the fact that tourism development has positively influenced the socio-cultural lives of the host communities of Oguta people in Imo State, Nigeria. This result indicated that the people will continue to give their support to tourism development as long as tourism continues to contribute meaningfully into their lives and communities. However, respondents disagreed that tourism has encouraged them to appreciate their language with the mean score of 2.0. This indicates that there is a threat of losing the exceptional traditional features that are essential ingredients for tourism to be exactly what it should be in terms of people's value system. Losing traditional values for foreign values makes tourism to lose its quality. This is very dangerous and can lead to conflict in the community between the traditionalists who believe in local values and those that believe in foreign values. The result agreed with previous study that tourism created unrealistically high expectations among the residents in Sarawak, Malaysia who believe that tourism will solve all of their problems and this

uniqueness might create divisions in a host society between those who want to adopt foreign values and those who want to maintain traditional lifestyles and thus the conflict in society may create socio-political unrest in developing countries where traditionalist have a majority and this conflict may hinder the development of the tourism (Bratek, Devlin and Simmons, 2007). Tourism can create positive impacts if it motivates the local community to work more for the things they lack (Wall and Mathieson, 2006). It can be said that tourists bring new products and ideas to the host community and this creates opportunities for them to modify their behaviour and help them to introduce new styles, products and economic activities into their community.

Residents perceived that tourism has made a positive impact into the lives of the host communities considering the clustered mean 3.6 (from the decision rule; any mean response of 3.0 and above should be regarded as positive).

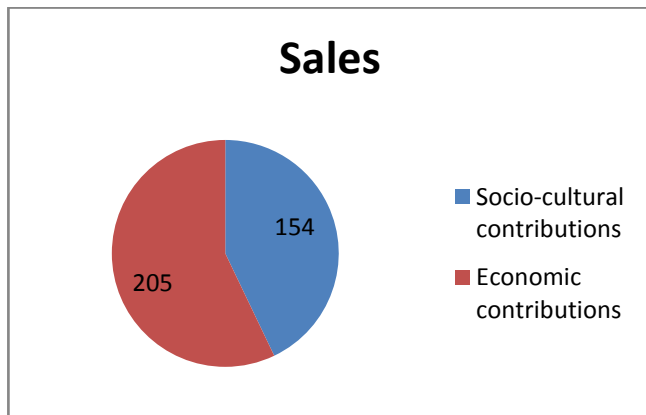
Table 2: Economic contribution of Oguta Lake in Imo State to the host communities

S/n	Perception of contributions	Total score	Mean	Decision
1	Tourism has caused seasonality effect	1596	4.3	Agreed
2	Tourism has encouraged investment and	1622	4.4	Agreed
3	Tourism has created	1548	4.2	Agreed
4	Tourism has increased business opportunity	1443	3.9	Agreed
5	Tourism has encouraged economic	1203	3.2	Agreed
6	Tourism has caused uneven distribution of economic benefits	1547	4.2	Agreed
7	Tourism has improved housing conditions of the host	900	2.4	Disagreed
8	Tourism has improved traditional Art, Music and Crafts	1548	4.2	Agreed
9	Tourism improved quality of life.	1747	4.7	Agreed
10	Tourism improved the conservation of historical monuments within the community.	1602	4.3	Agreed
Total		13160	35.5	
Clustered mean			3.9	

Source: *Field survey, 2014*

Table 2 showed respondent agreed that tourism has encouraged investment and infrastructural development, created new job tourism, caused uneven distribution of economic break-through, improved traditional art, music and craft, improved quality of life, improved the conservation of historical monuments within the community with the following mean scores 4.4, 4.4, 4.2, 3.9 3.2, 4.2, 4.2, 4.4, and 4.3 respectively. While respondents disagreed that tourism has improved housing condition of the host communities with a mean score of 2.4. The clustered mean

score was 3.9 which was above the bench mark of 3.0 indicating that the locals perceived that tourism has contributed positively in the economic lives of the host communities through creation of jobs, infrastructural development, generation of income, improving quality of life, improving traditional arts and crafts and bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. This has been supported by previous studies that tourism increases employment opportunities (Sebastian and Rajagopalan, 2009). The development of tourist facilities has been viewed as stimulating major positive contribution to the national balance of payment as a means of redressing disparities in incomes and employment (Wall and Mathieson, 2006).



Source: Field survey, 2014

Fig 1: Perception of people on tourism contributions

Fig 1 is the pie chart representation of the respondents on their overall perception about tourism which shows that respondents perceived the economic benefit of tourism development more than perception on the socio cultural benefits.

Table 3: Chi-Square Test of Hypotheses - HO₁ and HO₂

S/N	Hypotheses	X ² _{cal}	X ² _{tab}	Critical value	DF	Decision
1	HO ₁	2580.02	43.77	0.05	32	Rejected
2	HO ₂	4834.7	43.77	0.05	36	Rejected

Source: Field survey, 2014

Table 3 revealed that the first null hypothesis of the study was rejected because the value of the calculated chi-square (X²_{cal}) was greater than the chi-square tabulated x²_{tab} (x²_{cal} 2580.02 > x²_{tab} 43.773), therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is significant difference in the socio-cultural lives of the host communities as a result of the development of this destination in Imo state. This study indicates that tourism has affected the socio cultural lives of the host communities positively. This corresponds with previous work that claims that the socio-cultural changes caused by the development of tourism are beneficial and the role of tourism in promoting modern values, social progress and cultural changes should be appreciated (Lui, 2003).

Similarly, Table 3 showed the second hypothesis of the study which stated that there is no significant difference in the economic lives of the host communities as a result of the

development of these attractions into tourism destinations in Imo state. X² calculated was greater than X² tabulated (X²_{cal} 4834.7 > X²_{tab} 43.773). The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is significant difference in the economic lives of the host communities as a result of the development of these destinations in Imo state. This indicated that the contributions of tourism on the economic lives of the host communities were beneficial to them. The finding justifies the previous research which revealed that rapid growth of tourism and its potential as a development tool has increasingly given rise to pronounced economic, social and environmental development (Masudur, 2010). World Tourism Organisation asserted that tourism development projects if successful would attract international investment, contribute to a nation's foreign exchange earnings and create economic development (WTO, 2002).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

The study disclosed that the development of Oguta Lake to tourism destination has made good impact in the lives of the local residents of the host community by contributing positively both the economic and socio-cultural lives of the local people. Development of Oguta Lake into tourism destination has created new jobs, new business opportunity generally improved quality of life of the people in the area as well as bridging gap between the rich and the poor; and promotes indigenous culture. However, equal involvement of local community with other stakeholders necessary for sustainability in tourism development has not been encouraged. They identified a threat of losing exceptional traditional features-local Languages-that are essential ingredients for tourism to promote the people's value system.

Tourism planners and developers in the area should appropriately involve the local community together with other stakeholders in the planning and development process. The local community's expectation, desires and benefits should reflect in tourism policy and plans, since sustainability in tourism development can only be effectively achieved through the co-operation and support of the local people. Heritage languages should be learnt and spoken by the local people in their daily lives to help instill knowledge, pride and respect into their children to promote value system. This should be concerted efforts from everyone living in the community. Also, tourists who show interest to learn the traditional language should be assisted and mentored to learn the language since tourism is an essential ingredients for tourism to promote the value system of people.

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