

An Assessment of Government's Contribution to the Tourism Industry in Cross River State

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Abstract: *Tourism contributes positively to the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals of all classes. It is for this reason that large tracts of land are usually set aside for the development of tourism. For tourism to be developed, a number of capital intensive infrastructures such as transportation, power, security, etc. must be put in place by the government while support services such as accommodation, restaurants, shops, etc. could come from the private sector having been encouraged by the government. Over the years, tourism in Cross River State has been revolving round Cross River State National Park, Tinapa Business Resort, Obudu Ranch Resort etc. The quest for tourism has gone beyond the just mentioned to calling for proper maintenance/upgrading of the sites and the identification/development of new tourism sites. This paper therefore assesses government's contribution to the development of the tourism industry in Cross River State from 2006-2010. The paper assesses government's contribution by determining the budgetary allocation for tourism and the direction of tourism bureau projects for the period under investigation. The findings of the paper revealed that, Cross River State budgetary allocation for tourism was reviewed downwards and constantly fluctuating, tourism bureau projects were all tilted towards maintaining functional tourism sites in Calabar and Obudu Ranch Resort and nothing was done about identification and development of new sites to enhance the development of the tourism industry. It is therefore concluded that: resources/facilities of the tourism industry are inadequate, maintaining/upgrading of already functioning tourism sites is inadequate and that the exploration of new tourism sites is not considered. However, to meet the government's aspiration towards tourism, the recommendations as proffered in the paper should be favourably considered.*

I. Background Of The Study

Tourism revolves round the provision of infinite variety of psychic and physical experiences, pleasurable conditions to consumers designated as tourist who travel out of their home environment to enjoy such facilities and services. Thus even the journeys to such destination must have to be pleasant, whether it is by land, air or sea. According to Nwakonobi (2004), tourism is a conglomeration of services related to all forms of hospitality, travel, accommodation, entertainment, recreation, sports and education whose by-products are safety, infrastructure, material/technical bases and goods and services.

Tourism is not as developed in Nigeria as is evident in other countries in East African region. This is so in spite of the fact that there are extended and adequate ocean beaches with sufficient carrying capacity that are ideal for swimming and other water sports, unique wildlife, vast tracts of unspoiled nature ranging from tropical forest, magnificent waterfalls and rapidly growing cities that are prominent in the country. Others are traditional ways of life preserved in local customs, rich and varied hand craft depicting or illustrative of nature art and lifestyle, and the unsophisticated but friendly attitude of many in the Nigerian population. These attractions are left in their raw state probably because of lack of the required modern infrastructural facilities to explore and exploit them, and in some parts of the country, ignorance of the potentiality of such features.

Cross River State, is rich and well-disposed to various forms of tourist cynosures ranging from wildlife species, mountain climate, alluring hills, waterfalls, historical caves, endangered species such as lowland gorillas, amazing cultural dynamics, beautiful local arts and craft, a variety of agricultural products and warm hospitality (Egbaji, 2007). For a state like this, full of natural and cultural inexhaustible tourism features mentioned above and limited industrial capacity, tourism could be a very important source of income.

Tourism being all embracing and capital intensive cannot be handled by the private sector alone. The government remains the catalyst for tourism development. The government which is responsible for the provision of major infrastructure such as roads, power supply, water supply, security among others takes the lead in the development of the tourism industry. The private sector having been encouraged by the government comes in with tourism support services such as accommodation, restaurants, and shops among others. This paper therefore seeks to find out the extent to which government have contributed to tourism development from 2006-2010 in Cross River State. This paper aims at assessing government's contribution to the development of the tourism industry in Cross River State from 2006-2010, the study also set out to examine Cross River State

budgetary allocations for tourism from 2006-2010, to examine Cross State budgetary allocations for tourism from 2006-2010, to examine Cross State tourism bureau projects from 2006-2010 and to proffer recommendations that are geared towards enhancing the development of the tourism industry in Cross River State.

II. Methodology

The current Cross River State which is one of the 36 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was configured in 1987 when Akwa Ibom State was carved out of the former South Eastern State structure, which was renamed Cross River State in 1975. Cross River State is bounded in the north by Benue State, in the south-west by Akwalbom State, in the south by the Atlantic Ocean, in the east by the Republic of Cameroun and in the west by Abia and Ebonyi States. The state falls within latitudes 70 and 40 30' north and longitudes 70 23' and 90 30' east. The state is delineated into 18 Local Government Areas namely: Abi, Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Bekwarra, Biase, Boki, CalabarMuniciple, Calabar South, Etung, Ikom, Obanliku, Obudu, Odukpani, Ogoja, Yakurr and Yala. Cross River State has a land area measuring about 98,000 square kilometers with a population of 2.89 million. One-third of the state is covered by water from the tributaries of Cross River, Cross River and the Atlantic Ocean. This renders the land very fertile and provides abundant aquatic resources for exploitation (Government of Cross River State, 2007).

The tempareture of the state varies with altitude and vegetation cover. Highlands for instance ObuduRanch Resort in Obanliku Local Government Area have lower mean annual tempareture (under 70 F) when compared with the low land areas with higher tempareture (75 F-80 F). Rainfall also varies with distance from the ocean and season. In the southern part of the state which is bounded by the the ocean, the rainfall distribution is over 300 cm while in the northern part of the state it is between 200 cm-300 cm. Rainfall is heavier in the rainy season (March-October) than in the dry season (November-February). There are peaks of rainfall which are in June/July and September/October. The state falls within three vegetational belts; from the south, mangrove, tropical rain forest and guinea savanna. Cross River State is drained by cross river and its tributaries. Cross River State is described as a miniature nation because of its ethnic, cultural and artistic diversity (Egbaji, 2007). There are three major languages in the state namely; Efic, Ejagham and Bekwarra. The culture of the people of Cross River State is expressed in their various languages, songs, dances, festivals, dressing, food and religious affiliations. Craft such as basket and mat weaving, pottery, production of black soap, sculturing and indigenou blacksmithing where hoes, knives and local guns are made abound in the state. The people of Cross River State are predominantly farmers. Coaco, maize, beneseed, cassava, groundnut, lucost bean, palm oil, palm wine, rice and yam are major agricultural products of the area. The people also practice hunting and lumbering.

The people are predominantly christians, hence, many colonial schools, hospitals, convents, seminaries and ecclesiastical buildings are found dotted all over the state. There are other faith adherents such as the traditional worshippers, hence, shrines used for this worship are found in the state. Prominent markets like the age long Watt, Marrian, Apiapum, Ekukunela, Ikom, Edor, Okuku, Mbube, Otugwang, Sankwala markets among others exist where local products are marketed.

Data for the study was obtained from the secondary source: the Cross River State budgetary allocation for tourism for the period under investigation (2006-2010). The data as obtained was examined to understand the nature and direction of government's contribution to the tourism industry from 2006-2010 and presented in tables 1 and 2.

III. Results

Data on government's contribution to tourism development in Cross River State are presented as obtained in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Cross River State Budgetary Allocation for Tourism from 2006-2010

S/N	YEAR	AMOUNT IN NAIRA
1	2006	52,100,900.00
2	2007	84,913,370.00
3	2008	1,809,685,670.00
4	2009	696,189,748.00
5	2010	514,587,430.00
TOTAL		3,157,487,118.00

Source: Cross River State Government (2010)

Table 1 shows clearly that, rather than experiencing a continuous appreciation in the amount allocated to tourism as seen in the first three years, the allocation kept on depreciating in the fourth and fifth years. The table further revealed that, there was fluctuation in the budgetary allocation for tourism in Cross River State for the period under review, with 2006 as having the lowest allocation and 2008 having the highest allocation.

Table 2: Cross River State Tourism Bureau Projects from 2006-2010

S/N	Description	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
1	Human Resources Data Base and Payroll	-	-	√	-	-
2	Maintenance of Cable car thunder Arrestor	-	-	√	√	-
3	Maintenance of Cable car communication cable	-	-	√	√	-
4	Water Park project	-	-	√	√	-
5	Management/Board Meeting	-	-	√	√	-
6	Marketing and Tactical Campaign.	-	-	√	√	-
7	Education and Training	-	-	√	-	-
8	Tour circuits coordination	-	-	√	√	-
9	Purchase of 1 Utility Vehicles	-	-	√	-	-
10	Purchase of 1 unit 3 seater Luxury Bus	-	-	√	-	-
11	Setting up of Tourism Institution	-	-	√	-	-
12	Development of Tour Sites	-	-	√	√	-
13	Completion of work on Utanga Safari Lodge	-	-	√	√	-
14	Hi Tech Security	-	-	√	√	√
15	Aero construction Engagement Fee	-	-	√	√	-
16	Visitors Reception Buanchor	-	-	√	√	-
17	Building of Tails/Sinages	-	-	√	√	-
18	Servicing of canopy walkway	-	-	√	√	-
19	Bebi Airstrip ILS Installation	-	-	√	-	-
20	Bebi Airstrip Fence Completion	-	-	√	-	-
21	Training of Engineers for NDB/ILS	-	-	√	√	-
22	Management Fee for Bebi Airstrip	-	-	√	√	-
23	Ranch Facility Management Imprest	-	-	√	-	-
24	Obudu Ranch Estate Operational Expenses	-	-	√	√	-
25	Landscaping and Maintenance of Tour Sites	-	-	√	√	-
26	African Sun working Capital	-	-	√	-	-
27	Ranch Insurance Policy	-	-	√	-	-
28	Completion of Bebi Airstrip Lighting	-	-	√	√	-
29	Rechannelling of UCTH Sewage	-	-	√	√	-
30	Marina African Style Open Sitout	-	-	√	√	-
31	Construction of Marina Service Bar for Vendors	-	-	√	√	-
32	Marina Borehole/Overhead Tank	-	-	√	√	-
33	Repainting of Museum and Carosoil	-	-	√	-	-
34	Facility Management	-	-	√	√	-
35	Purchase of Equipment and Furniture	-	-	√	-	-
36	Facility Inspections	-	-	√	√	-
37	Operations (Liconsing/Standard)	-	-	√	-	-
38	Inspection of Tour Sites	-	-	√	√	-
39	Completion/Commissioning Of Bebi Airstrip	-	-	√	√	√
40	Maintenance of Museum And Heritage Sites	-	-	√	-	-
41	Development of Millenium Park/Marina	-	-	√	-	-

Source: Cross River State Government (2010)

Table 2 reveals that, there were no projects in 2006 and 2007. The highest number of projects was executed in 2008 and 2009. This indicates that, the execution of projects is dependent on the available cash. The table went further to reveal that, although the budgetary allocation for tourism was constantly fluctuating, projects were being carried out and some even being repeated. Main while, no project geared towards the inclusion of new tourism sites by way of identification and development of potential tourism features was carried out within the period under review. Finally, the table revealed that tourism bureau projects that were executed within the period under investigation were all about maintaining and upgrading already functioning tourism sites of interest. Tourism bureau projects are evident only in tourism sites in Calabar and Obudu Ranch Resort to the neglect of other sites.

IV. Discussion Of Findings

In considering the extent of government's contribution to the development of the tourism industry in the area under investigation, table 1 showed that, rather than experiencing a continuous appreciation in the amount of money allocated to tourism as seen in the first three years, the allocation kept on depreciating in the fourth and fifth years. Tourism which is a long term investment and still in the developing stage in Cross River State, needs more money to strive and strive well to the point of being classed among states or regions that are advanced in terms of tourism development. It is when tourism has attained the advanced stage that its full economic, social and environmental benefits will be tapped. Table 1 further revealed that, there was fluctuation in the Cross River State Budgetary allocation for tourism from 2006-2010 being the period under investigation. 2006 had the lowest allocation, followed by 2007, 2010, then 2009 and finally 2008 having the highest allocation. In considering this along side with table 2, it goes a long way to explain why there were no tourism

bureau projects executed in 2006 and 2007 and, only two projects were executed in 2010, 28 projects in 2009 and 38 projects in 2008. Projects were being executed in line with the amount of money that was allocated to tourism for the various years; and that tourism bureau projects that were executed were all about maintenance and upgrading of the few already functioning tourism sites in Calabar and Obudu Ranch Resort to the neglect of other functioning sites as well as identification and development of potential tourism features which will lead to the enhancement of the development of the tourism industry in Cross River State. By this, if more money is allocated to tourism, more projects including identification and development of potential tourism features will be considered across the state thereby taking the tourism industry in Cross River State to an enviable height and increasing its benefits concurrently. According to Okoroafor (1994), with the possible exception of mineral oil, the tourist trade is the most important item in world trade, with its over-whelming economic impact.

This finding agrees with the view of Ogbuewu (2004) who posited that, funding is a serious constraint to the development of the tourism industry in the past and currently. Further in line with the findings of this study is Onuoha (1992) who opined that lack of fund to develop the tourism industry is a major bane of tourism. Practitioners believe that government should lead the way by granting substantial allocation to tourism in the country's budget. This they believe will convince the private sector and financial institutions of government genuine commitment to the development and promotion of the industry.

Implications of the Findings

- i. Depreciation in the amount of money allocated to tourism as seen in 2009 and 2010 respectively implies that, tourism development will be hampered in Cross River State if the trend does not change bearing in mind the fact that tourism has just be gone in Cross River State.
- ii. Fluctuation in the budgetary allocation for tourism implies that, with such inconsistency in the budgetary allocation, tourism planning and development will be quite difficult. With consistency in the budgetary allocation for tourism, tourism planning, development as well as projections will be enhanced as against what happens in the case of inconsistency.
- iii. Directing tourism bureau projects to just maintenance and upgrading of already functioning sites in Calabar and Obudu Ranch Resort without considering other functioning sites as well as identification and development of new sites to enhance variety implies that, tourism development in Cross River State will be at a very slow pace and that tourists will have very limited sites to visits leading to very few or no return visits.

V. Recommendation

- i. Allocation for tourism should be considerably stepped up to enhance conscious and attractive packaging of the physical infrastructure through the provision of efficient material infrastructure.
- ii. There should be consistency in the budgetary allocation for tourism to ensure the enhancement of tourism planning, development as well as projections.
- iii. Maintenance and upgrading of tourism sites should be carried out in all already functioning sites. This will bring about general uplift of the status of the tourism industry in Cross River State.
- iv. Identification and development of tourism potentials should be made a part of tourism bureau projects as this will lead to the expansion of the tourism industry thereby enhancing more benefits from the tourism industry.

VI. Conclusion

One of the aspirations of the present administration is to make Cross River State an international tourism hot-spot. The findings of this study has shown that, resources/facilities of the tourism industry are inadequate, maintaining/upgrading of already functioning tourism sites is inadequate and that the exploration of new tourism sites is not considered. However, to meet the government's aspiration towards tourism, the recommendations as proffered in this paper should be favourably considered.

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