

SWOT Analysis of Community-based Tourism Performance in Akwa Ibom State as a Tool for Sustainable Tourism Development in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to analyzed community-based tourism performance and introduces it as a tool for sustainable tourism development in Akwa Ibom. The study was descriptive in nature and adopted purposive sampling method to select two communities in each of the senatorial district making a sample size of six for the study. Data were obtained through questionnaire forms, interviews and personal observations. The questionnaire forms were administered to a total of three hundred (300) respondents using simple random sampling method. SWOT analysis technique was adopted as the analytical tool for the study. The result shows significantly that community-based tourism performance has impact on the locals and the tourism communities which also serves as an avenue for sustainable tourism development. Also, the involvement of the locals in decision-making gives them chances to develop and build confidence in the tourism industry. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the local communities should involve and participate immensely in community-based tourism related activities in Akwa Ibom State and they should be integrated in decision-making, planning and management.

KEYWORDS

community-based; development; sustainable tourism; tourism; Akwa Ibom

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has gained momentum globally in the past three decades with economic, social and environmental benefits. Ekong (2016) acknowledged that the benefits are achieved through the products and services available to attract the tourists. Therefore, tourists' satisfaction could be achieved with availability of tourism resources and community involvement in extending their responsibilities. Moreover, Guzman, Canizares and Pavon (2011) posited that community-based tourism (CBT) is ground on tourist products formation distinctive by community participation. According to Tamir (2015) and Feili, Qomi and Sheibani (2017) active community engagement is core to community-based tourism in developing the tourism industry and it is viewed as a plan based on community resources, needs and decisions that could enhance sustainability. Once tourism develops, the community would control and manage their resources actively, thus creating a chance for more accrued benefits to be retained within the community.

The involvement in the community-based tourism development process empowers the locals by building their capacity to control and manage their resources (Hussin and Kunjuraman, 2014; Lo, Ramayah, Lee and Hui, 2014). Furthermore, if community-based tourism is effectively managed, tourism costs reduction and benefits maximization is the outcome. If effective and successful, Tasci, Semrad and Yilmaz (2013) acknowledged that

community-based tourism may bring inter-cultural understanding and peace, environmental awareness, healthy economic and sustainable destination development. Moreover, the involvement of local communities in tourism is viewed as a key resource to sustaining tourism development and natural resources management. Nuzhar (2016), Feili *et al.* (2017) and Han, Eom, Al-Ansi, Ryu and Kim (2019) posited that community-based tourism does not only create value for the visiting tourists, they also ensure project sustainability through active community involvement. Hence, visit to tourist destinations incorporates economic support and socio-cultural improvement of the destination (Gunarekha, 2017).

In Akwa Ibom State, despite her enormous tourism attractions, tourism industry is experiencing a decline in usage and practice and as such is not sustainable. This may be due to its dependent on mass tourism and negligent in integrating and promoting other tourism related activities. In light to ameliorate the existing problem, there is need to assessed community-based tourism if it could support the tourism industry sustainably. Therefore, the study aimed to analyze community-based tourism performance and introduce it as a tool for sustainable tourism development. The study is significant in that it would help sustained tourism development and as well enhanced, preserved and conserved the community well-being, it cultural heritage and natural environment.

Study Area

Akwa Ibom state lies between latitudes $4^{\circ} 30^1$ and $5^{\circ} 32^1$ North and Longitudes $7^{\circ} 27^1$ and $8^{\circ} 25^1$ East. Its estimated land mass is about 8,412 km². It has a projected population of 6,491,864 people in 2021 from 2006 population census of 3,920,208 people with 3.4 per cent growth rate (AKSG, 2014). Ibibio, Annang and Oro remain the core ethnic groups. It has a plan terrain except the few dissected upland and the Obotme isolated hills. The drainage system emptied in the Atlantic Ocean. Akwa Ibom State is a tropical rain forest zone with two seasons - rainy seasons (March/April-November) and the dry season (November-March). The socio-economic activities in the state revolve round their resources. Hence, they are mostly farmers, traders and civil servants.



Figure 1. Map of the Study Area (Akwa Ibom State)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community-based tourism places at the leading position the community needs, collaborative approaches, the use of products, proper circulations, locally made goods, and diverse incomes (Lucchetti and Font, 2013; Eshun and Tichaawa, 2020). Community-based tourism according to Tamir (2015) is viewed as an avenue for integrated conservation and development. Okonkwo and Odey (2017) critically analysed the social, economic, environmental and cultural impacts of sustainable tourism on the economy and the local population of Cross River State. The result found out that tourism has contributed significantly to the economy of Cross River State, its environmental sustainability, and the socio-cultural standing of the locals, and also enhanced greatly the living standard and quality of life. Sebele (2010) ascertained that CBT enhanced the procuring of commodities from the local communities. According to Roosinde, Rapisari and Itriawardhani (2021) small, medium and micro businesses and the informal sector operators contribute immensely to tourist's services. In addition, arts and crafts are derived from community-based destinations. Moreover, source of locally available goods and services are of utmost value to these communities as there are chances for informal sector operators, that may not be chance to intrude the main tourism industry filled mostly with foreigners.

In Agua Blanca, Ballesteros (2011) acknowledged that the local community members who are involved in tourism activities gained more than the ones that are not involved. This he concluded has impacted greatly the economy of the locals involved in tourism related activities in relation to the ones who are solely on agriculture as it diversified the economic activities. Community-based tourism also instilled self-coordination skills in the community that could help a resilient community during disaster. For example, Ballesteros cited in Bolanos (2014) observed that in Ecuador, the Agua Blanca community tourism activities manages their financial transactions independently with clear rules and regulations indicating that community-based tourism could enhance self-coordination skills among the community members.

Using descriptive statistical methods, Bolanos (2014) analyzed the benefit of community-based tourism in Ecuador and categorized them into three categories: Socio-economic benefits, Cultural benefits and Environmental benefits. A successful development of community-based tourism should appeal to the social needs of the local community, and include a feasible commercial approach towards building a sustainable environment (Aref and Gill, 2010; Karacaoglu and Birdir, 2017; Grytsiuk *et al.*, 2017). According to Aref and Gill (2010) and Manwa, Saarinen, Athlopheng and Hambira (2017) community-based tourism supports the promotion of cultural tourism as a means of ensuring community participation in sustainable tourism development. Successful CBT depends on the locals as they have lived among the resources for generations and have developed indigenous knowledge systems to manage the resources in a sustainable manner. Participation and benefits may be of important to the tourism industry as they could spur up local communities interest in tourism.

In the work of Tolkach and King (2015) the major success factors perceived by the stakeholders on community-based tourism projects in East Timor Republic include financial support, local leadership and, collaboration and balance of power between the stakeholders. In Awi Zone, Ethiopia, Tamir (2015) observed that several opportunities such as the strategic location of the community-based tourism sites, good tourist attitude towards community based tourism, local community hospitality, and the area's tourism resources were identified as success factors which exacerbate sustainable tourism development. According to Sandu (2015), Briones, Yusay, Ulep and Eboy (2017) and Grytsiuk *et al.*, (2017) community-based tourism is viewed as the driving force for the locals' economic development and alleviation

of poverty. It encourages strategic community development settings and provides livelihood while managing natural and cultural attraction in a sustainable manner (Dogra, 2016; Briones *et al.*, 2017; Kiemi, 2018).

In another work, Sandu (2015) and Nunthasiriphon (2015) posited that the goal and objectives of community-based tourism emphasized on community development in diverse ways, such as revenue generation and employment, the encouragement of participation, and tourism awareness towards preservation of culture and environment (Ronald, Calliete and Emmy, 2019) as part of the sustainable development.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study is descriptive in nature and uses survey research design. The researcher incorporated both qualitative and quantitative statistical methods of data collection and analysis. The study employed purposive sampling method to select two (2) communities in each senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State for the study. Thus, a total of six communities were selected making the sample size. Based on reconnaissance survey, the following communities and attractions were selected Raffia community- Ikot Ekpene (Raffia), Ikot Akpabin community - Essien Udim (Arts and Crafts), Udung Uko Community- Udung Uko (traditional wrestling), Obolo community-Eastern Obolo (fishing), Ishiet community-Uruan (fish and crayfish port), Itam community-Itu (Arts and Crafts). A total of three hundred (300) questionnaire forms were distributed among the selected (6) communities across the Senatorial Districts of Akwa Ibom State. Fifty (50) questionnaire forms were distributed to each community. The questionnaire forms were administered to various communities using simple random sampling method. However, the total questionnaire forms distributed were properly filled and collected. The analytical techniques used for this study was SWOT.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The respondents were asked to respond to the assertion CBT encouraged the production of local goods and promotes local item. One hundred and seventy-seven (177) respondents representing 59.0 per cent strongly agreed. One hundred and twenty-three (123) respondents representing 41.0 per cent agreed with the assertion.

One hundred and ninety-One (191) respondents or 63.7 per cent of the sampled population and one hundred and nine (109) respondents or 36.3 per cent strongly agreed and agreed respectively to the proposition that community-based tourism create access to tourism market and resource use in Ikot Ekpene senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State.

Responding to the assertion that community based tourism enhances infrastructural development in the destination community such as availability of transport system, telecommunication, electricity, banks and accommodation/hotels. Two hundred and thirty-five (235) respondents representing 78.3 per cent strongly agreed with the assertion while sixty-five (65) respondents representing 21.7 per cent of the total respondent supported the assertion that community-based tourism enhances infrastructural development in the destination community. Two hundred and forty (240) respondents representing 80.0 per cent of the total respondents strongly agreed that community-based tourism lacks appropriate facilities for foreign tourists. Sixty (60) respondents representing 20.0 per cent of the total participants supported the proposition.

Based on the proposition that community-based tourism instilled government interest to invest on and promotes the tourism potential embedded in the local community in Ikot Ekpene senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State, two hundred and thirty-four (234) respondents representing 78.0 per cent of the total respondents strongly agreed that community-based tourism instilled government interest to invest on and promotes the

tourism potential embedded in the local community in the district. Sixty-six (66) respondents representing 22.0 per cent supported the proposition. Responding to the assertion that community-based tourism improves the locals' life's quality, two hundred and twenty-seven (227) respondents representing 75.7 per cent strongly agreed with the assertion that CBT improves the locals' life's quality in Ikot Ekpene senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State. Seventy-three (73) respondents representing 24.3 per cent supported the assertion.

Table 1. Responses to Community-Based Tourism Performance

S/n	Statements	SA	%	A	%	UD	%	D	%	SD	%
31.	Encouraged the production of local goods and Promotes local items.	266	66.5	134	33.5	-	-	-	-	-	-
32.	Create access to tourism market and resource use.	294	73.5	106	26.5	-	-	-	-	-	-
33.	Enhances infrastructural development	211	52.75	182	45.5	7	1.75	-	-	-	-
34.	Lack of appropriate facilities for foreign tourists	336	84.0	64	16.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
35.	Instilled government interest to invest on and promotes the tourism potential embedded in the local community.	302	75.5	98	24.5	-	-	-	-	-	-
36.	Improve the quality of life of the local.	317	79.25	83	20.75	-	-	-	-	-	-
37.	Other industries and business within the CBT premises share in the tourism benefit.	204	51.0	196	49.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
38.	Increased social crime among locals	156	39.0	218	54.5	17	4.25	9	2.25	-	-
39.	Improper marketing strategies	289	72.25	111	27.75	-	-	-	-	-	-
40.	Enhances community participation and involvement in tourism.	321	80.25	79	19.75	-	-	-	-	-	-
41.	Increases tourism motivation among people	288	72.0	112	28.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
42.	Lack of experts/professional	295	73.73	105	26.25	-	-	-	-	-	-
43.	Increases income of the locals	307	76.75	93	23.25	-	-	-	-	-	-
44.	Create jobs for people in the community	324	81.0	76	19.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
45.	Enhances the image of the tourism destination	302	75.5	98	24.5	-	-	-	-	-	-

A total of two hundred and twelve (212) respondents representing 70.67 per cent of the total respondents strongly agreed to the proposition that other industries and businesses within the community-based tourism environment share in the tourism benefits. Eighty-eight (88) respondents representing 29.33 per cent of the total respondents concurred. Based on increased social crime among the locals in Ikot Ekpene senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State, one hundred and forty-one (141) respondents representing 47.0 per cent of the total respondents strongly agreed that community based tourism increased social crime among the locals in the district. One hundred and fifty-nine (159) respondents representing 53.0 per cent of the total respondents supported the proposition. On the bases that community-based

tourism lack improper marketing strategy; two hundred and twenty-four (224) respondents representing 74.67 per cent of the total participants strongly agreed that community-based tourism lacks improper marketing strategy. Seventy-six (76) respondents representing 26.33 per cent of the total participant supported the statement.

It was observed through the response of the respondents that community-based tourism enhances community involvement in tourism industry. Two hundred and thirty-one (231) respondents or 77.0 per cent participants strongly agreed with the assertion. Sixty-nine (69) respondents or 23.0 per cent supported the assertion.

The research study revealed that one hundred and eighty-two (182) respondents representing 60.67 per cent of the total respondents agreed that community based tourism increases tourism motivation among people. One hundred and sixteen (116) respondents representing 38.67 per cent of the total respondents supported the proposition while two (2) respondents representing 0.67 per cent of the total participants were undecided. Based on lack of community-based tourism expert/professional in Ikot Ekpene senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State, two hundred and twenty (220) respondents representing 73.33 per cent of the total respondents strongly agreed that community-based tourism lacks expert/professional. Eighty (80) respondents representing 26.67 per cent of the total respondents supported the proposition. Two hundred and nineteen (219) respondents or 73.0 per cent of the sampled population and eighty-one (81) respondents or 27.0 per cent strongly agreed and agreed respectively that community-based tourism increased income of the locals in Ikot Ekpene senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State.

Responding to the assertion that community-based tourism creates jobs for the community people. Two hundred and forty-five (245) respondents representing 81.67 per cent strongly agreed with the assertion. Fifty-five (55) respondents representing 18.33 per cent supported the assertion. Based on the proposition, community-based tourism enhances the image of the destination; two hundred and thirty-four (234) respondents representing 78.0 per cent strongly agreed that community-based tourism enhances the image of the destination. Sixty-six (66) respondents representing 22.0 per cent supported the proposition.

Based on the SWOT analysis, the Strengths of CBT performance is advantageous to its Opportunities. However, the strengths overweigh the threats and the opportunities outweigh the Weaknesses. These yielded a good result in carrying out the objective since the positive potential outweigh the negative potential and affirmed CBT performance is significant with impact and could be used as a tool for sustainable tourism development in Akwa Ibom State. This affirmed the work Tamir (2015) that several opportunities have been identified as success factors for community-based tourism development which exacerbates sustainable tourism development. However, this research also affirmed the work of Manwa *et al.* (2017) that community-based tourism is a driving force for local economic development and poverty alleviation and also promotes strategic community development where it provides livelihood while managing natural and cultural attraction in a sustainable manner.



Figure 2. SWOT Analyses for Community-Based Tourism Performance

The result shows that if community-based tourism is adopted in Akwa Ibom State effectively, tourism development will be sustained. The Strength of the SWOT analysis indicates that community-based tourism performance has impacts on the locals and the tourism community which also served as an avenue for sustainable tourism development. Therefore, the strength would be among the most effective assets in the development of sustainable tourism potential of Akwa Ibom State. Moreover, the opportunities have set a pace in tackling the weaknesses which helps to minimizing or even eliminating the threat. Community-based tourism integrates economic, social and environmental qualities of tourism activities that exacerbate sustainable tourism development. Karacaoglu and Birdir (2017) acknowledged that a successful implementation of community-based tourism should appeal to the social needs of the local community and include a feasible commercial approach towards building a sustainable environment.

Tourism enhanced employment opportunity either directly or indirectly¹. However, local goods and handiworks produced by the locals are bought directly from the tourists thereby benefiting the producers in one hand and promoting tourism industry in the other hand. Community-based tourism also increased income of the locals. This encouraged local entrepreneurship and as well projects the image of the destination in the international tourism market. It was discovered that community-based tourism has indirect impact on the residents' economy and the state by providing job opportunities for the local residents

through active participation in tourism related activities which improves their economy. The field survey and the interview sessions showed that CBT had also economically improves the locals by promoting local supply of goods and services; and enhanced tourism supported business outfits who in turn spend on their healthcare, housing, child education, food security among others. These imply that people could benefit indirectly from community-based tourism through tourist's demand in the destination community thereby circulating and re-circulating the money spent by the tourists within the area making secondary round income or multipliers effect.

The research also shows that the involvement of the locals in decision making and management has given the locals chance to developed themselves and build confidence in the tourism industry since they are in the best position to know more about the problems and challenges of the area and could proffer best solution to mitigate the challenges since the terrain is theirs and also would help minimize social crime in the community. Their involvement in decision making and management has given the community people chance as stakeholders to say their minds which helps trigger development in the community and as well enhance sustainable tourism development. Community-based tourism enhances infrastructural development which aids the development of appropriate tourism facilities for foreign tourists.

Environmentally, tourism has an impact in environmental quality when it is overused and thus, depends on environmental impact limit by humans. The research shows that community-based tourism compared to the mass tourism has the ability to limit such impacts since the tourism environment is based on the community activities and resources, which the community people are aware of the needs for conserving the tourism resources as not to go extinct to attract the tourist. This implies that community-based tourism strongly support biodiversity conservation in that the community to attract tourists. However, proper waste management techniques sustained the uniqueness and attraction of any tourism environment and as such increases the flow of tourist to the destination while maintaining its environmental status. The research shows that community-based tourism could facilitate the protection of the environment, biodiversity and natural resources since the community believes on them as critical to attracting the tourist and in turn create awareness among community members leading to appreciation of the natural environment and protection of biodiversity endangered species.

CONCLUSION

Community-based tourism is a functional tool and an essential force to driving sustainable tourism development in Akwa Ibom State. Moreover, the research would enhance community-based tourism development and management in a sustainable manner through locals' participation in tourism related activities and in decision-making. These would give the locals opportunity to benefit more from tourism while preserving and conserving the cultural heritage and the natural resource base. Therefore, it is recommended that the local people should be greatly involved and participate in community-based tourism related activities in Akwa Ibom State. Also, community members should be integrated in tourism decision-making, planning, and management. This would aid the sustainability of the tourism industry in Akwa Ibom state.

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