

Perception, Preference and Attitudes of Residents Toward Tourism Development: A Case of Cross River State, Nigeria

B.B. Esu

Department of Marketing, University of Calabar, P.M.B.1115, Calabar,
Cross River State, Nigeria

Abstract: This study investigated the perception and attitudes of residents of an emerging tourism destination and implication for tourism development and marketing. A combination of convenience and cluster sampling design was used to draw a sample size of 380 urban residents. A self administered structured questionnaire was used to collate data. Five attitudes variables were investigated-perceived socio-economic benefits, preference for tourism type, support for tourism activities, difference in attitudes based on age and employment type. The study revealed that residents' perception on the likelihood of tourism to offer the expected benefits was high for all the socio-economic variables used in the study. Residents' preference was high for entertainment, business tourism and recreation tourism and low for health, religious tourism. Perceive tourism benefits, preference for tourism types were found to be explanatory. Age and employment type were not explanatory variable for differences in attitudes toward tourism development. The implication is that results could inform the design for tourism planning and marketing.

Key words: Residents, attitudes, perception, preference, destination, tourism development, Cross River State, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a global business. It is affirmed to be the fastest growing sector of the world economy (WTO, 2003). Tourism generates employment, creates wealth and facilitates rural development. Tourism is classified as an invisible industry which encompasses transportation, lodging and entertainment. It is a form of business that entails attracting and transporting visitors; accommodating and catering for their needs and wants (McIntosh and Gupta, 1980). According to World Organization (WTO, 2000), the number of international tourists movement around the world is estimated at 1602 million by 2020. Tourism receipts are expected to reach some US\$200 billion. Tourism generates employment, creates wealth and facilitates rural development.

The core product in tourism is the place or attraction (natural, cultural, man-made, etc.). The success of a country's tourism initiative is a function of how best the planners manage the residents'-tourists' relationship. This is critical to the long-term viability of tourism destination.

Cross River State officially adopted tourism as a major economic development strategy in 1999. Since then, there has been concerted and intensive sensitization of the residents to key into tourism policy of Government. The effort of Government has been directed at positioning

the state as the most preferred tourism destination in Africa. This desire has led to the development of some major tourists' attractions in the State. These include; Obudu Ranch Resort, Afi Wild Sanctuary, Cross River National Park, Agbokim Water Falls, Mary Slessor House, Marina Resort, Tinapa Business Resort, etc. The choice of tourism as a development strategy was informed by the fact that the state is endowed with enormous natural and cultural resources. With several literature blandishing the efficacy of tourism to produce desired benefits such as economic, environmental, social and cultural, the state was determined to make tourism one of the major economic development tool (Esu and Etuk, 2007). Most importantly, the Government is driven by a strong desire to reposition the state from a purely civil service dominated structure, where the only business was being a civil servant or a public servant, to one that is private sector driven. This was seen as a means of attracting small and medium scale enterprises into the state that will eventually boost its socio-economic life.

The tourism system has two major components- the supply and the demand side. The tourist flow model describes these two sides as the tourist generating area and tourist receiving area. The supply side is the receiving area or attraction surplus area, while the demand side is the tourist generating area or attraction deficit area. The study conceptualizes Cross River State as a

tourism industry comprising the generating area and receiving area. The receiving area comprises all the tourist attractions in the states, while the generating area comprises the residents and over night visitors from within the state and other parts of the country and beyond.

Attitude is a learned predisposition to behave favourably or unfavourably toward a product or service (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1997). A positive resident attitude toward tourism is very expedient. This is because the journey to tourism greatness can only be attained when the residents know what they have and are positively disposed toward it. It is often said that "you cannot give what you do not have". Knowing what you have and how to market it is a function of the disposition or attitude of the people.

Attitudes of residents towards tourism development have widely and copiously been researched by tourism scholars. The emphasis has been focused on the variables that enhance residents'-visitors' interaction (age, gender, income, community attachment, length of residency and whether the person is employed in tourism activity) and the impact of tourism development on the quality of life of the people (Vaughan, 2003; Vogt and Jun, 2004). Destination lifecycle models depict the initial feelings of communities or regions at the point where government consider tourism local or regional socio-economic development tool (Doxey, 1975, Butler, 1980; Smith, 1989; Ap and Crompton, 1993). Research findings have shown that only some communities can achieve the positive impacts expected through tourism. To achieve these expected tourism goals, the support of the host community or region is an imperative (Kim and Gray, 2003).

This study analyzes the perception, preference and attitudes of residents toward tourism development in Cross River State and in addition, attempts to discuss the implication of the findings on tourism planning and marketing.

Objectives of the study: The main purpose of this study is to measure the perception and attitudes of residents toward tourism development. The specific objectives are:

- To assess residents' perception of tourism benefits. Expected tourism benefit signifies an opportunity for economic development of the residents and the state. A resident expectation disposes the individual favourably or unfavourably. Residents' appreciation of the benefits of tourism aids tourism planners on the kind of tourism objectives that should be emphasized when formulating a strategic tourism plan for the State.

- To determine residents' preference of tourism type. This will generate information about the type of tourism the residents wish to host. Preference for a particular type of tourism will elicit more favourable attitudes toward tourism. This will also assist in the development of the State tourism plan, especially in product development.
- To investigate the attitudes of residents of Cross River State toward the current levels of tourism development and ascertain the feelings and support about current and future tourism development.
- To investigate differences in attitudes toward tourism development among the residents based on gender and employment status of residents.

Theoretical background: Hoyer and MaccInnis (1997) define "attitudes as overall evaluation of an object, issue, person, or action." Residents' attitudes are now been recognized by tourism researchers as related to both the processes and outcomes of tourism development. This is true because according to Lawson *et al.* (1998), "residents irritability has the tendency of eroding the long-term sustainability of a destination and thus mitigate economic success". Ryan *et al.* (1998) in their study, found that a person's level of knowledge of tourism, whether the person was employed in tourism activity and the time a person spent as resident in a destination affects the resident's perception. They also reported that, residents perceived tourism as offering benefits to the region because it created jobs for the people. Demerol *et al.* (2005) using SWOT analysis identified that the level of awareness about tourism can influence resident's attitude toward tourism.

Vaughan (2003) in his study on urban residents' attitudes found that education and employment were the major factors affecting the attitudes of residents' toward tourism in Crete Island. He also found that residents in Crete were clustered into three attitude groups-advocates, socially and environmentally concerned and economic skeptics.

Ryan and Cooper (2000) found that gender and age were not significant variables in the perception of residents toward tourism development. Kim and Gray (2003), reported that Pizam and Pokela (1985) and Ritchie (1988) found that gender influences support for tourism. The period of residency, history of the destination, the state of tourism development were found to be discriminatory factors of residents' attitudes toward tourism (Faulkner and Tidewell, 1997; McDonald *et al.*, 1995). Residents who are new in a destination for employment related to tourism have a positive attitude towards tourism. Those who have stayed in a destination associated with tourism and are

accustomed to the destination expressed a positive attitude toward tourism. But those long-term residents in a destination that are adopting tourism are less favourably disposed to change cumulating from tourism development.

Support for the type of tourism development, political support and the influence of organic image developed by residents about residents-visitors interaction were also found to be discriminatory attitude variables (Anderek and Vogt, 2000; Schroeder, 1996). When the dependency of the residents on tourism is high, there is corresponding positive attitude. It was also found that residents viewed visitors market differently based on the impacts they have on the Quality Of Life (QOL) and the economy (Ap and Crompton, 1993; King *et al.*, 1993; Madrigal, 1995; Vogt and Jun, 2004). Lawson *et al.* (1998) found the sample was of the belief that tourism is a good thing for new Zealand in terms of economic rewards, but did not admit that tourism has real benefit to them personally.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Calabar. Calabar is a cosmopolitan city and the administrative headquarters of Cross River State, Nigeria. The State is located in the South- South Geo-political Zone of Nigeria. The tourism potential of the state has been extolled by many writers (Nason, 1992; Obot, 2003; Braide, 2005). Braide (2005) describes Cross River State as “the unbeatable tourist delight and the cleanest State in the Federation, has a lot of treasures and the jewel it can undeniably boast of”. Some of the attractions are not yet developed. The treasures span from the mangroves of the coastal areas of Calabar to the Obudu plateau of Obanliku. Calabar was selected because it hosts all classes of people from all works of life.

Descriptive research design was employed in order to specify the nature of the phenomena involve in the study area. The sample size for this study was estimated by using the population parameters from a pilot study carried out by the researcher. At 95% confidence level and 1% error, an estimated sample size of 384 respondents was obtained. A Cross-sectional survey design was used.

A combination of convenience and cluster-sampling design were used in selecting sampling units. The city was divided into thirteen clusters namely: Ishie town, 8 Miles, Essien Town, State Housing, Federal Housing, Big Qua Town, Uwanse, Eta Agbo, Henshaw Town, Atimbo, Mbukpa, Ekpo Abasi and Mayne Avenue. Through a convenience sampling method, six clusters were selected from the thirteen. Respondents were then drawn from the six clusters through a simple random sampling process.

The procedure involved using household as sampling elements. Data was collected by the use of well written structured questionnaire which were dropped off by trained enumerators in alternate households in each of the six clusters. Sixty five copies of the questionnaire were administered in each of the six selected clusters (Eta Agbo, State housing, Ekpo Abasi, Big Qua Town, Uwanse and Mayne Avenue). At the end of two weeks, three hundred and seventy copies of questionnaire were retrieved and out of this number, twenty copies were poorly filled. A total of 350 copies of questionnaire, representing ninety one per cent (91%) were utilized for the analysis. Each household through a consensus selected one person to respond to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was four pages long. There were a total of seventeen items on the questionnaire. There were variants of questions: dichotomous, fixed response type, opened ended and scale type questions. The instrument used for data collection was similar to those of McDonald *et al.* (1995) and Vogt and Jun (2004). Many of the questions required the respondents to rate a list of statements. To determine the perceived benefits of tourism as contained in objective one, the respondents were asked to express their opinion as to the ability of tourism to offer the state/residents the following benefits; entertainment, research/education, personal health, employment opportunities, wealth creation and development. The responses were ‘4’ = being very favourable, ‘3’ = favourable, ‘2’= fairly favourable and ‘1’ = not favourable. To determine residents’ preference of tourism types as contained in objective two, the respondents were presented with a list of tourism types (nature tourism, cultural tourism, business tourism, recreation tourism, religious tourism, visit to friends and relations tourism and health tourism) and asked to indicate their preference on a four -point Likert scale with ‘4’= being most preferred, ‘3’= preferred, ‘2’ = least preferred and ‘1’ = not preferred (which type of tourism do you prefer most, indicate by assigning number). To determine the support of residents toward current level of tourism development in the state, twelve tourism projects and activities of Government were listed and respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for each of these activities. The question goes thus: as a resident of this state, which tourism project/activity of Government do you support most. They were expected to respond by assigning a number with ‘4’= highly supported, ‘3’ = supported, ‘2’= fairly supported and ‘1’= not supported.

The SPSS software package was used for summarization and analysis of data. Descriptive statistics was used to measure residents’ mean perception of tourism benefits, tourism type preference and support for

tourism development. To determine differences in residents' attitudes in the destination, multiple regression analysis was used to establish relationship between perceived tourism benefits, preference for tourism type and support for tourism development respectively. Two demographic variables (gender and employment type) were also tested for their explanatory effect on attitude using ANOVA. Employment type was classified as civil servants and public servants, private sector and students, while gender was classified as male and female. The statistical significance of regression coefficient is based on the appropriateness of signs of multiple determinations (R^2) and explanatory variables were judged by t-ratios value.

RESULTS

Residents' perception of socio-economic benefits of tourism: Table 1 shows the perception of residents as regard the likelihood of tourism yielding some benefits to individuals and the state. The data shows that residents' perception was high for all the benefits contained in the questionnaire item. Entertainment was scored highest with a mean score of 3.82. This was followed by rural development (3.67), generation of employment opportunities (3.59) and wealth creation (3.45).

Residents' preference of tourism type: The result shows that residents have a higher mean preference for nature tourism (3.26), business tourism (3.08) and recreation tourism (3.08). The mean preference for other types of tourism was about average (Table 2).

Residents' attitude toward current development programmes and activities: Descriptive statistics reveals that the residents' support for tourism activities also differ among individuals and across activities. Residents' support was highest for construction of urban roads with a mean rating of 3.36, followed by construction of Tinapa Business Resort with 3.25. The least support was given to the promotion of the Ekpe Festival with a Mean of 2.22 (Table 3).

Explanatory variables affecting attitudes of residents toward tourism: In order to explore the relationship between residents' perception of socio-economic benefits and their attitudes toward tourism development, multiple regressions was performed. Regression analysis using Ordinary Least Square (OLS) shows a weak correlation ($R^2 = 0.46$). The relationship between residents perception of socio-economic benefits and support for tourism development was significant ($F = 2.780$, $p < 0.05$ Test).

Table 1: Mean rating for residents' perception of socio-economic benefits of tourism

	N	Mean	Std Dev.
Entertainment	350	3.82	0.455
Research/education	350	3.23	0.704
Personal health	350	3.31	0.832
Employment opportunities	350	3.59	0.747
Wealth creation	350	3.45	0.766
Rural development	350	3.67	0.680
ValidN (listwise)	350		

Source: Field survey (2007)

Table 2: Mean rating for residents' preference of tourism type

	N	Mean	Std Dev.
Nature tourism	350	3.26	1.023
Cultural tourism	350	2.93	1.068
Business tourism		3.09	0.998
Recreation tourism	350	3.08	0.988
Religion tourism		2.84	1.117
Visit to friends/relations	350	2.65	1.099
Health tourism		2.81	1.150
Valid N(listwise)	350		

Source: Field survey (2007)

Table 3: Mean rating of residents' support for tourism development by activities

	N	Mean	Std Dev.
Christmas festival	350	3.16	1.131
Ekpe festival	350	2.22	1.226
Leboku new yam festival	350	2.35	1.162
Cable car at the ranch resort	350	3.04	1.015
Canopy walkway at wildlife sanctuary, buanchor	350	2.92	1.017
Upgrading of facilities at the ranch resort	350	3.15	0.978
Leasing of the ranch resort	350	2.71	11.081
Privatization of metropolitan hotel	350	2.48	1.160
Construction of tinapa resort	350	3.25	1.045
Construction of urban roads	350	3.36	0.975
Environmental landscaping	350	3.20	1.006

Source: Field survey (2007)

Table 4: Regression analysis showing the relationship between perceive benefits, preference and support for tourism development

Independent variable	Beta	T-statistic	Sig.
Per ceive benefits			
Entertainment	0.203*	3.397	0.001
Research/education	0.075	1.338	0.182
Personal health	-0.059	-0.960	0.338
Employment opportunities	0.123	1.703	0.089
Wealth creation	0.128	-1.648	0.101
Rural development	-0.071	-1.082	0.280
Model statistics	Adjusted R square = 0.46, F = 2.780, p = 0.012		
Preference for type of tourism			
Nature tourism	0.081	1.118	0.264
Cultural tourism	0.117	1.643	0.101
Business tourism	0.180*	2.889	0.004
Recreation tourism	0.176*	2.610	0.009
Religion tourism	-0.066	-0.984	0.326
Visit to friends/relations	-0.078	1.199	0.231
Health tourism	0.059	0.864	0.388
Model statistics	Adjusted R square = 0.24, F = 15.940, p = 0.000		

*Indicate significance at $p < 0.05$ level

Table 4 revealed that entertainment is the only socio economic variable that shows significant relationship with support for development ($t = 4.120$, $p < 0.001$). By interpretation every one unit increase in the entertainment

Table 5: ANOVA showing the relationship between gender, Employment type and support for tourism development

Source	Type III SSS	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	4.700	5	0.940	1.435	0.211
Intercept	2125.991	1	2125.99	3245.090	0.000
Employment type	3.531	2	1.766	2.695	0.069
Gender	0.302	1	0.302	0.461	0.497
Error	225	344	0.655		
Total	3226	350			
Corrected Total	230.10	349			

R. Squared = 0.20 (Adjusted R squared = 0.006)

benefit enjoyed by resident will lead to 0.203 unit increase in residents' support for tourism development. All the other tourism benefits were not significant at $p < 0.05$.

Regression analysis for the relationship between preference for type of tourism and support for tourism development shows a very weak positive correlation ($R^2 = 0.24$). The ANOVA table reveals significant relationship between residents' preference for tourism types and support for tourism development ($F = 15.460$, $p < 0.001$). Residents' preference for nature tourism, culture tourism, visit to friends and relation (VRF) and health tourism were not significant. This is because the respective P values are greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). Business tourism and recreation tourism were significant at $p < 0.05$. All the predictor variables had positive regression coefficient except religious tourism (-0.066). This means that religious tourism has an inverse relationship with residents' support for tourism development. The variable with the highest regression coefficient is business tourism (0.180). One unit increase in business tourism will lead to 0.2889 increases in residents' support for tourism development. The fact that nature tourism did not show significance means that it is not a good explanatory variable of attitude towards tourism.

Attempt to establish whether gender and employment types affect attitudes and support for tourism development shows that gender difference is not significant ($F = 0.461$, $p > 0.05$). Employment type was not significant ($F = 2.695$, $p > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The favourable perceptions residents have about the likelihood of tourism yielding desired socio-economic benefits indicate the high degree of acceptance of tourism by residents. This finding agrees with what Ap and Crompton (1993) called the embracement stage of a destination. This stage is characterized by euphoria. The avalanche following the awareness that tourism has the potential to impact economically is strength to the industry. Secondly, it also points to the market segment

that the resident may want to leverage. Successful tourism development strategy must be focused on four pillars, visitors, industry, community and environment (Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, 2008). The strategy must engage the community residents and offer benefits. No tourism developments will success in an environment where there is despair and lack of confidence in the ability of the tourism development strategy to offer any gain. This is in line with Wang *et al.* (2006) whose work suggested that "the more personal benefits respondents expected from tourism, the more likely they are to attribute the improvement in quality of life to tourism development". Individuals visit destinations to have desired touristic experience. Entertainment gives pleasure, fun and fantasy. The finding here can be utilized to segment the local market based on the benefit sought by residents, which in this case is entertainment. This shows that, the residents are pleasure seekers. This agrees with the popular slogan about the word "CALABAR". It means "come and live and be at rest". The residents of Calabar are fun seekers and depict a viable market for tourism managers who can deliver this benefit.

Preference determines which course of action is selected or which is rejected (Montinho, 1987). The tourism types with very high mean ratings represent high growth and profitable market segment. Tourism preference is important because it is based on experience. It is much easier to work with residents who have shown preference for a given course than those who are against that course. The preference for nature tourism did not show significant relationship with level of residents' support for tourism development although it had a high mean rating. This finding agrees with a study in Charleston-South Carolina by Litvin and Alderson (2003) where target visitors (residents) from the same region show lack of interest in many of these natural areas attractions. The implication of this is that more attention should be given to business tourism and recreation tourism than other types. This could be because tourism has just started in the state and residents are yet to appreciate the nature tourism. At the moment, the most common feature of the State tourism effort is manifested in what appear to be urban tourism.

The level of support for tourism development in Cross River State differs among and between activities. To increase the touristic experience of residents, the industry should increase the tempo of infrastructural development and upgrading of facilities at destinations. This will in turn increase repeat visits and positive word of mouth. For example, the aesthetics of the cities have improved; there is better accessibility to destinations by land and air to Ranch Resort. Operational polices that

will enhance the performance of the industry should be promoted and put in place. Some of the tourism policies should be reviewed. This is because some were rated very low by the residents; examples include promotion of Ekpe and Leboku New Yam Festivals, the leasing of the Ranch Resort and the privatization of the Metropolitan Hotel. The low rating may also imply that residents' visitation to or intention to visit or patronize these attractions may likely be low. This finding agrees with result of Andereck and Vogt (2004) whose result shows that, there is a relationship between attitudes and support for tourism development.

The fact that gender is not a discriminatory attitude variable means that people do not support tourism initiative because of gender. This finding confirmed Ryan *et al.* (1998) result who also found that gender and age were not significant attitude variables. Type of employment was also found not to be a significant attitude variable. This means that people do not engage in tourism or support tourism on the basis of the type of employment they are engaged in.

CONCLUSION

The results show that residents of emerging tourist destination show positive perception and attitude toward tourism. The high mean score on attitudes measurement indicate that the residents are between the embracement and development stages of the destination life-cycle. Residents' perceptions and attitude have serious implications for tourism planning. The tourism types preferred by the residents affect to a large extent the degree of interaction between host communities and visitors, which invariably had complex effects on resident attitudes. Tourism planning should evolve and design orientations that tend toward sustainability. Harill and Potts (2003) advocacy for a participatory approach to tourism planning is very imperative at this point, especially for destinations that are just emerging as tourism markets. This is because residents' involvement in tourism planning will lead to the development of tourism products that would engage the interest and cooperation of residents. Tourism activities that are highly supported by residents should be given adequate attention. The findings could form the major motivations that will drive local tourists to visit destinations or give positive word of mouth advertising to visitors to the destination. The activities that are lowly rated such as Ekpe Festival and the Laboku New Yam Festivals should be redesigned or repositioned to increase the appeal to the residents. There appear to be some levels of tolerance as regards some of the operational policies. Tolerance here

is not against the presence or activities of visitors, but in this sense, it refers to residence aversion for some touristic products. Tourism planners and marketers should review areas that have created tolerance and through a participatory approach repackage such products to enhance residents' emotional state, emotional experience and satisfaction. The import of this is that tourism planners should take residents' perception and attitudes into consideration when designing and preparing strategic marketing plan for a destination.

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