



Benefits and Factors Retarding the Development of Fishery Tourism in Some Coastal Areas of Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This research assessed the aspects and benefits of fishery tourism as well as some factors limiting its development for maximum sustainability in some coastal areas of Rivers State, Nigeria. Structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data randomly from one hundred and twenty respondents in three coastal communities (Buguma, Obuama, and Abonnema), respectively from Asari-Toru, Degema and Akuku-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. The data from the respondents were analyzed, using descriptive statistics. The results indicated that fishing tournament (41.65%), and diving tournament (33.32%) were the major aspects of fisheries based tourism that is possible in the study area. Also, improvement of social amenities (50.00%) and positive impacts on local business (25.00%) were the main anticipated benefits of fishery based tourism expected in the study area. While, lack of monetary support for the project (50.0%), insecurity (25.0%), and environmental pollution (16.68%) were the major challenges confronting the development of fisheries based eco tourism in these coastal communities.

Keywords: Tourism, Challenges, Fishery, Rivers State, Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

Fisheries play very important roles for food security livelihoods and income generation in Nigeria. The demand for fish in Nigeria has been on the increase due to increasing human population, the health benefits attributable to consumption of fish amongst others. Apart from being an income earner to many Nigerians especially people in coastal, water ways and lake areas of the country, it has a value chain in areas such as fish processing, marketing, recreation, tourism, sport, medicine, fisheries research (Anene *et al.*, 2010; FAO, 2016). Fishing and aquaculture are human activities that have a significant role in the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the world's oceans and their resources and are therefore integral to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Ayward *et al.*, 1996; FAO, 2018). Artisanal fisheries and aquaculture are estimated by the FAO (2018) to account for 90% of the world fisheries workforce and play a crucial role in meeting the SDGs, particularly as part of so-called "blue economy" and "blue growth" strategies that seek to maximize marine (ocean, inland water and wetland) ecosystem goods and services (Clark *et al.*, 2015), while also providing SDG related social, economic and environmental benefits (Bedgue, 2016).

Tourism is arguably the largest industry in the world today, and one which continues to grow at an enviable rate. Tourism is estimated to represent over 4 trillion dollars, or 10 per cent of the World's GDP. The industry supplies over 230 million jobs and over \$800 billion in tax revenues internationally (Kruger, 2005; UNEP-MAP, 2009). It is a major generator of foreign exchange revenues and facilitates regional and international trade and investment linkages. Nigeria has strong potentials for tourism industry such as excellent beaches and islands, mountains and rich biodiversity, interesting wildlife, friendliness and rich social capital among people and its special place in the world history of anti-slavery movement as 'the land of the free.' In 2005, tourism comprised 24% of total exports, albeit marked by a very high volatility in tourism-related revenues. (Carey *et al.*, 2012) According to World Bank's DTIS (2006), the tourism industry in Nigeria has the potential of growing up to 105mn\$ by 2015 provided that beach subsector once uprooted by the conflict is re-established by opening of sizeable beach resorts and building hard and soft infrastructure necessary for sustaining

them. It is true that mass tourism involving tour operators runs the risk of high 'import leakage' ratio out of the host country because of the high import, foreign investment and foreign transaction contents of the industry (Goodwin, 1998; Kalpana, 2012). Tourism industry may serve as an income equalizer if handled properly. . Nigeria has long suffered from lopsided growth heavily concentrated in the mining sector, which can be attributed to some degree to the violent insurgency that engrossed the country between 1991 to date. Tourism can have direct impacts on the poor through direct employment or indirect linkages with the tourism supply chain (Roness, 2011).

Fisheries ecotourism can offer various activities for tourists for the benefit of both the fishers and local communities. Founding appropriate ecotourism development strategies and implementing activities will prove to provide additional sources of income to the families and region of the people (Wells, 1997; Ipinmoroti *et al.* 2007). The fisheries sector has been growing very rapidly with 120 million people estimated to be partly or totally dependent on fisheries related activities of which 95% are in developing countries (Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 2005). This rapid growth has led to fears of a world-wide fisheries crisis (Goodwin, 1998; Berkes *et al.*, 2001), and tropical fisheries are no exception (Young, 1999). Though fisheries ecotourism is still in its emerging phases, it is estimated that up to 700 million people might be engaged in some form of recreational fishing creating several million jobs and contributing to the national economy of countries (Diffey, 2012). Other activities related to fisheries ecotourism have been established depending on the natural assets of the site and its cultural and social heritage (Brandom, 1996; Diffey, 2012). The main aim is to support local communities by making ecosystem conservation and management of natural resources a source of economic benefits, for the present time and in the long term run (Dellink & Ruijs, 2008). Therefore this study investigate the the aspects and benefits of fishery tourism as well as some factors limiting its development for maximum sustainability in some coastal areas of Rivers State.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Study Area

The study was carried out in Buguma, Obuama and Abonnenma communities respectively in Asari Toru, Degema and Akuku Toru Local Government Areas of Rivers State, Nigeria. These areas are surrounded by large water bodies and the natural vegetation in this area varies from the mangrove to the freshwater swamp forests. The prevailing climate hydrographic conditions thus favour a thriving fishery, artisanal and aquacultural activities.

2.2. Sampling Procedures and Data Collection

The samples for the study were drawn by using random sampling from these communities in the three Local Government Areas; fifty respondents were randomly selected from each community to give a total sample size of 150. Data for this study were collected through a structured questionnaire administered in these areas. These data include socio-economic characteristics.

2.3. Data Collection

The primary and secondary data sources were used for the study. A set of structured questionnaires were used to collect the primary data. Also, secondary data were obtained from African Regional Aquaculture Centre Port Harcourt, Federal Department of Fisheries Office in Port Harcourt, and Fisheries Department, Rivers State University, Journals as well as other published and unpublished materials relevant to this study.

2.4. Analysis of Data

Descriptive Statistical technique such as mean, frequency distribution and percentage were used to obtain the objectives of the study.

3. RESULTS

The results of the aspects of fisheries based tourism that is possible in the area are presented in Table 1. From the results, most of the respondents believed that fishing (41.65%) and diving (33.32%) tournaments were feasible in the area. While other aspects such as dam and reservoir and art tournament recorded 8.33% each. However, lower values of 4.17% were observed in each of sport and rowing tournament. The anticipated benefits of fisheries based tourism in the study area is shown

in Table 2. About 50.0% had the believe that fisheries based tourism will improve tremendously on the social amenities of the host communities, 25.0% believed it will positively impact on their local business, 8.33% also understood it will conserve the environment and enhance cultural exchange. While 4.17% of the respondents asserted that it will attracts government attention and provide access to grants. The challenges confronting fisheries based tourism in the study area are presented in Table 3. Lack of monetary support for the project accounts for the highest value of 50.0%, this was followed by insecurity (25.0%), environmental pollution (16.68%), inadequate infrastructure (4.17%), lack of cultural acceptance (2.50%) and poor coordination and integration (1.67%).

Table1. *Aspects of Fisheries Based Tourism that is Possible in the Study Area*

Aspects	Frequency	Percentage
Dam and Reservoir	10	8.33
Diving Tournament	40	33.32
Fishing Tournament	50	41.65
Rowing Tournament	5	4.17
Sport Fishing	5	4.17
Art Tournament	10	8.33
Total	120	100

Source: *Field Survey (2022)*

Table2. *Anticipated Benefits of Fisheries Based Tourism in the Study Area*

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage
Positive Impact on Local Business	30	25.00
Access to Grants	5	4.17
Improvement of Social Amenities	60	50.00
Conservation of the Environment	10	8.33
Cultural Exchange	10	8.33
Attracts Government Attention and Intervention	5	4.17
Total	120	100

Source: *Field Survey (2022)*

Table3. *Challenges Confronting Fisheries Based Tourism in the Study Area*

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage
Insecurity	30	25.00
Inadequate infrastructure	5	4.17
Lack of monetary support for the project	60	50.00
Environmental Pollution	20	16.68
Lack of cultural acceptance	3	2.50
Poor Coordination and integration	2	1.67
Total	120	100

Source: *Field Survey (2022)*

4. DISCUSSION

The aspects of fisheries based tourism that is possible in the area revealed that most of the respondents believed that fishing and diving tournaments were feasible in the area. While other aspects such as dam and reservoir and art tournament recorded 8.33% each. However, lower values of 4.17% were observed in each of sport and rowing tournament. This observation agrees with the report of Ngodigha, and Alagoa (2019) who reported the same trend in Ogbia Creek, Niger Delta. The respondents believed that fishing and diving tournaments were popular and practicable in the study area. While other aspects such as dam and reservoir and art tournament were slightly practicable, this may be due to the terrain of Niger Delta, where building of dams are not encouraged. Lower values of 4.17% were observed in each of sport and rowing tournament, this is because sport and rowing are not common in the study area.

The anticipated benefits of fisheries based tourism in the study area is shown in Table 2. About 50.0% had the believe that fisheries based tourism will improve tremendously on the social amenities of the host communities, 25.0% believed it will positively impact on their local business, 8.33% also

understood it will conserve the environment and enhance cultural exchange. While 4.17% of the respondents asserted that it will attract government attention and provide access to grants. This observation agrees with the report of Nader et al. (2013), who reported that tourism's economic influence the development of some coastal areas of Lebanon. Tourism was utilized as part of an integrated development strategy to fuel urban regeneration transport systems, finance urban development, and catalyze private sector development through employment. Also, Kruger (2005), noted that establishment of fisheries based tourism is an opportunity for host community participation in biodiversity conservation, urban growth, and infrastructure overhaul and planning, rural development, environmental restoration, coastal protection and cultural heritage preservation.

Moreover, Cecil (2009) posits that beach tourism plays a very important role in the economies of Caribbean. He continues to argue that tourism plays a significant role and as such the government has taken a significant lead in the development of a suitable strategy to encourage growth using tourism. Indeed, as Cecil maintain that tourism is a major engine of economic growth in most parts of Caribbean as demonstrated by most government publications as well as advertisements. Thus, tourism has great capacity to create large scale employment from the more specialized to the unskilled and all of us know that generation of massive productive employment.- Unlike any other export, beach tourism can offer value added directly to the local people by allowing them to participate in providing goods and services to tourist and tourism business. This agrees with Yiheys (2003) who states that tourism can provide foreign exchange, product return on investment for emerging economies, bring technology and improve living standards of destination residents. According to him, the most prominent benefits used to promote tourism development are the economic benefit that communities can expect to drive from an increase in tourism activity. As a result, tourism increases revenue for local business and shopping facilities. The challenges confronting fisheries based tourism in the study area are lack of monetary support for the project accounts for the highest value of 50.0%, this was followed by insecurity (25.0%), environmental pollution (16.68%), inadequate infrastructure (4.17%), lack of cultural acceptance (2.50%) and poor coordination and integration (1.67%). This result agrees with the submission of Bird (2005) in some coastal communities in China and that of Amodu (2005) in Ondo State, Nigeria.

5. CONCLUSION

Fisheries based tourism industry have the potential of boosting the development and economy of coastal environment through promoting creation of job opportunities, technology transfer, infrastructure development, market development, and the likes. Coastal dwellers and government can equally generate revenues from tourism through hotels, tours and tour guides, travel agency and souvenir shops. This generates sales tax and room tax. In addition, income taxes are levied on the earnings of hotel employees and on the profits of the business and the hotel pay property taxes. In addition to this, revenue is obtained directly from tourists through museum admission fees and park entrance fees. Thus, fisheries based ecotourism can play a vital role in the revenue generation in Rivers State if properly harnessed and create jobs for the citizens of the state.

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