

The Importance of Tourism Development to Socioeconomic Development of Taraba State: A Case Study of Gashaka Gumti National Park

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Abstract

It is not arguable that tourism is a social phenomenon developed by God in the Garden of Eden. The Garden was a social place God usually visited in the cool of the evenings to socialize with man. Today, tourism is fast becoming the most fashionable and lucrative enterprise the world over due to its socio-economic dividends. The commonest feature of the tourist industry is the development of recreation centres such as parks, museums, zoos, stadia, game reserves, among others. It is repeating the obvious to say that tourism is being enhanced and facilitated by the globalization process. The main thrust of this study is, therefore, not only to appraise the socio-economic dividends of tourism industry, but also to examine the specific factors that have been major impediments in the development of tourism industry in Taraba State, and with specific focus to the Gashaka Gumti National Park. A multi-disciplinary approach has been adopted for data collection spread mainly across oral and written sources. Effort has also been made to proffer some recommendations as the panacea for the development of tourism industry in Taraba State in particular. The effort by the Taraba State Government to develop tourism industry is, therefore, basically the desire of the State to key into the global trend due to its socio-economic dividends. The case of the Gashaka Gumti National Park by the Federal Government of Nigeria is equally a leaf from the global trend. Of crucial importance to note, however, is the fact that very crucial capital intensive variables are needed to develop an attractive tourism industry of both national and international standard. The variables range from money, manpower, security (peace), to infrastructure, among others. The inadequacy of these variables adversely hampers the development of any level of tourism industry in any place across the world, including Taraba State.

Key words: Gumti, Gashaka Globalization, Taraba State & Tourism.

Introduction

It is not arguable that tourism industry as a social phenomenon was developed by God in the Garden of Eden. The Garden was a social environment God developed, which He usually visited in the cool of the evenings for recreational purposes, specifically to socialize with man. For instance, the Holy Bible (Genesis 2: 8-9, 15; 3: 8) testifies that:

The Lord planted a garden to the east of Eden--- And the Lord Made to grow out of the garden every tree that is

pleasing to the eyes and for food--- Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work the ground and care for it--- Then they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the evening---

Today, billions of years after God developed the first tourism centre otherwise referred to as the Garden of Eden, tourism is fast becoming about the most lucrative and fast growing enterprise. This is basically because tourism has become a very significant tool for socio-economic development in any society. The reason is simple; tourism has the potential of bringing to limelight, hitherto unknown cultures, peoples and places. Dubai today is a very good example in this regard. It serves as a catalyst for sustained social and economic development, especially when properly harnessed, organised and marketed to a wider audience. In addition to this, tourism has the potential to promote cultural exchange of values and experiences, which in the long run, tends to promote global peace, tolerance and understanding.

The exposure to an entirely new and distinct culture, race and people is crucial in understanding and appreciating the diversity of the human race. No other human endeavour does this better than tourism. Apart from this, it also serves as a booster to an economy. This is made possible because of the exchange of cash that accrues when tourists visit a tourism destination. Thus, an improvement in the tourism sector of Taraba state would, in no small measure, spur rapid socio-economic development of the State.

Taraba state, dubbed "Nature's Gift to the Nation", has been greatly endowed by providence with abundant tourism potentials. Worthy of mention are; the Mambilla Plateau (which comprises mountain chains of Adamawa, Obudu, Shebshi and Alantika), with a height of about 1,830 metres above sea level, (www.cometongeria.com, 2018), the Gashaka Gumti National Park (Nigeria's largest National Park), Ngel Nyaki Forest Reserve (about 60km West of Gashaka Gumti National Park), Donga River Basin, Mamara Crocodile Pond in Wukari, among many others (www.cometonigeria.com, 2018).

In addition to these natural tourist sites, cultural festivals of the diverse groups that make up Taraba state, when properly supported and organized, have the tendency to transform tourism, which shall ultimately result to socio-economic development. Prominent among these cultural festivals are; the Nwonyo Fishing Festival in Ibi Local Government Area, Matau Festival in Zing/Yorro Local Government Areas, Kungana in Bali Local Government Area, Puje in Wukari Local Local Government Area, Kuchicheb Festival in Ussa/Takum Local Government Areas (NYSC, 2018, p.5), just to mention a few. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the importance of tourism to the socio-economic development of Taraba state, with focus on the Gashaka Gumti National Park.

Socio-economic Importance of Tourism Development to Taraba State

The United Nation's World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) aptly describes tourism as an "economic and social phenomenon" (www.unwto.org, 2018). Tourism is also multifaceted because it exists in different types. There are basically two major aspects of tourism across the globe today. These are tourism for leisure, that is, when people travel to relax, watch things and generally enjoy themselves as well as medical tourism, which deals with people travelling in search of medical treatment (Agbideye, 2014). There is also cultural tourism.

Other aspects of tourism, although not widely acknowledged, are educational and spiritual tourism. This is when people travel in search of knowledge and religious purposes respectively. These two have significantly contributed to the socio-economic growth of countries such as the USA, UK, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Italy (Vatican), Egypt, etc. The Saudi Government, for instance, makes billions of dollars annually from the hajj performed by millions of Muslims the world over. Despite her oil wealth, substantial foreign exchange and revenue of the country come from religious tourism (hajj).

It is interesting to note that Taraba State has potentials for medical tourism. A lot of medicinal herbs abound in Sardauna Local Government Area. Proper identification, processing and branding of these products as well as establishing world class hospitals with modern equipment and highly skilled medical professionals can promote medical tourism in the area and the state at large (Agbideye, 2014). What that means for the state is that there would be more jobs for the relatively young population and more revenue to the coffers of the state.

In the last two decades, tourism has been closely linked to socio-economic development, encompassing a growing number of destinations. It has continued to experience steady growth and deepening diversification, thus becoming one of the fastest growing sectors of the world's economy. Surprisingly, the business volume of tourism today equals or even surpasses that of oil exports, food products and automobiles (www.unwto.org, 2018). From Dubai to London, Hong Kong to Paris, Mecca to Jerusalem, tourism accounts for a greater number of people visiting these cities from different parts of the world. This simply translates to an increased level of cultural/racial interaction as well as more money made by local businesses, ranging from taxi operators, hotels, airline operators, food vendors, supermarkets/malls and many others.

By implication, the development of tourism in Taraba state is capable of stimulating an unprecedented level of socio-economic growth and development. In the social front, tourism has the potential of curbing the growing monster of youth unemployment. An improvement in tourism would create more opportunities for young people to engage in productive ventures such as transportation, food processing, laundry services, tourists' guide/museum curator services, local craft production, security guard services, hospitality, etc. In essence, this tackles two knotty problems; poverty and crimes. Having jobs, means

steady income for young people, which leads to an improvement in the standard of living as well as an increase in purchasing power, ultimately reducing the tendency of young people to engage in criminal activities.

In addition, tourism has the potential of promoting the level of cultural/racial interaction between the people of the state and tourists. It could either be local (domestic) or international (foreign). A Yoruba man from Ogbomosho in Oyo state, for instance, visiting Ibi for the annual Nwonyo Fishing Festival would learn more about the Jukun (Wanu) people, and in like manner, the people of Ibi would also learn certain aspects of Yoruba culture from the visiting Ogbomosho man, so also a German tourist and vice versa.

Tourism also facilitates the promotion of urbanisation, through the construction of infrastructural facilities such as roads, airports, rail lines, electricity, water supply, parks, stadiums, cinemas, etc. These facilities are necessary not only for the comfort of tourists, but also for the residents.

Economically, the construction of infrastructural facilities can contribute substantially to trade and commerce, which uplifts the economic and financial status of the people. Tourism can stimulate the establishment and expansion of small, medium and large scale businesses in Taraba state. The key business to benefit from this is the hospitality industry. Tourists' do not sleep on trees; neither do they sleep in people's homes. Most tourists the world over either lodge in hotels or specially rented apartments. Therefore, hotel business stands the chance to experience a boom and unprecedented growth. The Burj Khalifa, also known as Burj Dubai, in the city of Dubai, United Arab Emirate (UAE), is an example of what tourism can do to the hospitality industry in Taraba State. The hotel reputed to be the tallest skyscraper in the world, has become an "architectural wonder of the 21st century" (Bianchi, Stefania and Critchlow, 2010). Inaugurated in 2010, the hotel has a total height of 829.8m (2,722ft) and a roof height (excluding antenna) of 828m (2,717ft) (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>, 2018). This magnificent edifice has continued to attract millions of people, the world over, to Dubai. It may be a very lofty dream, but it is possible to erect an edifice, may be not as huge as the Burj Khalifa, but something magnificent, capable of attracting millions, the world over to the beautiful Mambilla Plateau.

Next to hospitality are transportation and food processing respectively. Tourists would need to be conveyed from one point to another. The implication of this is that, airline operators, taxi operators and rail line operators would witness a boom in their businesses, thereby making more money. Restaurants with specialty in local and continental cuisines would also emerge, with existing ones expanding to meet the feeding needs of tourists. The spill-over effects of all these would be felt in agriculture, energy services, automobile maintenance, banking, etc. Local craft/art industry in the state operates largely on a small scale basis. Since most communities in Taraba State have distinct crafts that they specialize in, there will be large number of tourists who would buy their products, such as calabash, mats, pots, caps, cloth, etc, as souvenirs. This would lead to the boom of the local craft art industry in Taraba State.

Photography would also not be left out. For instance, Four Seasons Hotel in Hangzhou, China, runs a private dinner and tour where tourists are taken to the local food market where they can enjoy authentic Shanohainese and Cantonese cuisine (www.millionmetrics.com, 2018). This is good business for local farmers who produce pigs, chickens, green tea as well as fishermen. The Cuisine Museum in the eastern city of Hangzhou is one of a growing number of food museums in China. In fact, it is probably the most magnificent, attracting thousands of people annually (www.bbc.com/news/magazine, 2018).

Another good example of the multiplier effects of tourism on local craft is the development of open-air markets in Dubai. The Ripe Market takes place across the city throughout the year, and is packed with artisans' craft, stylish labels, food trucks, and fresh organic produce straight from the Ripe Farm (www.visitcalabar.com, 2018). The Arte Market is home to the "Artisans of the Emirate". Every Friday, in various locations around the city, painters, artists, crafters and bankers converge to show off their pieces, handmade with love (www.visitcalabar.com, 2018). The markets attract many tourists on a daily basis, who throng them in order to purchase the different items on display.

Tourism can indeed be a goldmine when properly harnessed. India, for instance makes so much money from medical tourism today. It is now a thriving sector, currently valued at a whopping \$3billion, which is further expected to reach \$8billion by 2020 (www.qura.com, 2018). An unusual combination of modern medical infrastructure, highly qualified doctors, latest world-class technology and superior quality medical attention, have today contributed to making India a top choice for medical tourism (www.qura.com, 2018). Taraba State can take a cue from this. The potentials and resources are there, what is needed is a clear cut blueprint and the political will to see to its implementation.

Another importance of tourism development as regards the economy is the increase in the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of Taraba State. The increase in commercial activities brought about by the influx of tourists would lead to the state making money through taxes and rates. The increase in IGR, when prudently utilized, would promote overall economic development of the state. A good example of this is the Cross River State. According to Donald Duke, a former Governor of the state, "I developed and promoted the tourism assets of Cross River State to increase the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of my state (Duke, 2016). Interestingly, Cross River State today is one of the leading states in Nigeria, as far as tourism is concerned. Tourism destinations such as the Obudu Mountain Resort, Tinapa Business Resort and the Cross River National Park are some of the foremost and most visited tourist sites in Nigeria. The Calabar Carnival which takes place every December has unarguably become the largest and most organized carnival in Nigeria, attracting millions of tourists from different parts of the world. The 2017 edition of the carnival tagged "Migration", attracted millions of fun seekers from 26 different countries (Ikobi, 2017). One can only imagine how much revenue accrued to the state as a result of the month long carnival.

To further elaborate the importance of Tourism to socio-economic development, Duke (2016) explains:

After putting the necessary machineries in place, tourism brought about 2.3 million people to the state within a month. New hotels kept springing up in the state, yet they were not enough. What we generated within a month, through Calabar Carnival was more than our Internally Generated Revenue in 11 months. Not only that, Calabar Airport became the busiest in Nigeria.

It therefore means that Taraba State can generate more revenue, if the enormous tourism potentials of the state are properly utilized and harnessed. This would go a long way in reducing its over reliance on Federal Allocation to meet its financial obligations, such as paying workers salaries, embarking on capital projects, etc.

Another example is the Rio Festival in Brazil, which attracts millions of people from different parts of the world, who spend millions of dollars, thereby boosting the Brazilian economy. Rio Festival dates far back as 1723 (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>, 2018). It is a cultural and religious festival celebrated in honour of the gods and to respect the great waters. It takes place between February and March every year. It begins on the last Friday before Ash Wednesday at noon (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>, 2018). Therefore, there is absolutely no reason why tourism (festival), when well organized, given the multi-culturalism and richness of Taraba State would not produce the kind of result obtained in Brazil.

Gashaka Gumti National Park (GGNP)

The groundwork for the establishment of the Gashaka Gumti National Park began in 1969, when the then North-Eastern State commissioned a Consultant to extensively survey the areas described as Wildlife Sanctuaries of Gashaka, Gumti and Serti, which later became known as the Gashaka Gumti Game Reserve in 1976 (Mafindi, 2016, p. 25). With the creation of Gongola State in 1976, the ownership of the Game Reserve was transferred to the newly created state. However, due to improper management of the Game Reserve by the defunct Gongola State, the Federal Government took over the management of the place in 1991, renaming it Gashaka Gumti National Park (Mafindi, 2016, p.25).

The Gashaka Gumti National Park (GGNP) is regarded as the largest National Park in Nigeria. It has a wide variety of terrains, such as the savannah grasslands, montane forests and steep mountainous regions. These multiple terrains lead to the diversity of wildlife in the park. In particular, the savannah grassland is covered with coarse, tall grasses and fringing forests, with the montane forest rarely closed, allowing for rich vegetation on the highland floor. The tallest trees are the stragglers, like the ficus and other species of fig (<https://sites.google.com>, 2018).

In terms of size, the GGNP covers a total area of about 6,402km, with altitude ranging from about 457m (1,499ft) in the Northern flatter corner of the park, up to 2,419m (7,936ft) at Chappal Waddi, Nigeria's highest mountain peak in the Southern Section. It is an important water catchment area for Benue River and there is abundant river flow, even in the dry season (Nwanne, 2017).

The animals in the Gashaka Gumti National Park are diverse. About 103 species of mammals have been recorded at censuses. These species include, African Golden Cat (*Profelis Aurata*), The African Buffalo, Chimpanzee (*Pan Troglodytes*), The Kob Antelope (*Kobus Kob*), African Elephant (*Loxodonta Africana*), and the West African Wild Dog (*Lycaon Pictus Manguensis*), among others. There exist also a great variety of birds. There are more than 500 species of birds found in the park. It is believed that the red faced lovebird can only be found in GGNP and nowhere else in Nigeria (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>, 2018). All these provide tourists with a great variety of animals, not forgetting the different species of flowers, shrubs and trees.

Socioeconomic Importance of the Gashaka Gumti National Park (GGNP)

The Gashaka Gumti National Park has significantly benefitted the host community of Serti (Gashaka), Taraba and Nigeria as a whole. Although the Park has, in recent times, been plagued by several difficulties, its contribution to the socio-economic development of the host community is commendable. Its contribution in the areas of job creation, educational research and scholarship, as well as the development of settlements is significant.

Aside the primary aim of establishing the Park, which is to protect, preserve, conserve and manage representative samples of indigenous plants and animals, it has also created opportunities for jobs, especially for the people of the host community. About 20% of the employees in the Park are the indigenous people, while the remaining 80% is shared between Taraba (40%) and Adamawa (40%) (Mafindi, 2016, p.26). The employees include cleaners, rangers, security guard, clerks, managers, etc. That apart, a number of tourists who visit the Park usually patronize the local artisans' craft, especially the mats and baskets, as well as other businesses.

Also, the GGNP has become a centre for academic research and scholarship. Scholars such as Anthropologists, Biologists, Ecologists, Geographers, Conservationists, Historians, among many others from both within and outside the country, visit the Part for one form of research or the other (Mafindi, 2016, 25). Students from various Universities and Colleges, especially from Departments such as Biology, Anthropology, Geography, Forestry, Wildlife, etc also visit the Park for field work and excursion. Furthermore, researchers in the field of medicine have carried out several studies on diseases and Immunology, solely dependent on the availability of wildlife in the Park (Mafindi, 2016, p.25).

Gashaka Gumti National Park also serves as a settlement for people in the host community and environs, through the provision of settlement enclaves such as Fillinga, Mayo Sabere, Chappal Dalam, Chappal Sirgu, Selbe, etc. Portable water and primary schools as well as clinics have been constructed in the enclaves, thus improve their quality of life (Mafindi, 2016 p.26)

Challenges Confronting the Gashaka Gumti National Park (GGNP)

The Gashaka Gumti National Park (GGNP) has continued to battle with series of challenges. These Challenges have resulted in the lack of optimal utilization of the tourism potentials of the Park, thus contributing very little to the socio-economic development of Taraba State. The major challenges are; lack of adequate infrastructure/recreational facilities, low level of patronage, poor funding, inadequate publicity and poaching (<https://www.sciencedomain.org>, 2018).

Low patronage is the major problem confronting the park. Only a few tourists visit the GGNP annually, despite its richness and diversity. Research findings between the period of 2005 and 2015 shows that the Park only received about 6,713 local and 612 International tourists, with about 33% of these foreign tourist from Britain. This invariably resulted in only a paltry 44million (\$114,000) generated as revenue within the period (<https://www.sciencedomain.org>---, 2018). This, by every standard, is abysmal and therefore calls for serious concern. The problem of low patronage has been attributed to the remote location and poor accessibility within the Park (<https://www.sciencedomain.org>, 2018). Although nothing has been done about the former, everything can be done about the latter. It behoves on the Taraba State Government to liaise with the Federal Government to solve the problem of poor accessibility within the Park, so as to attract more people from across the globe.

Poor funding has also been identified as another major problem confronting the GGNP. The effective management of any Park of that magnitude requires huge funds. Consequently, the dwindling allocation to the Park, coupled with the very low revenue accruing to it, has continued to militate against the effective and efficient running of the day to day activities of the Park. This is further compounded by the persistent drop in the meagre allocation to the Park by successive governments, despite its huge size and potentials (Mafindi, 2016).

Inadequate Publicity has further continued to militate against the popularity of the GGNP. The Park has not been adequately publicized to a wider audience. Tourists mostly get interested in visiting a place they constantly see or hear about, especially distant ones, on the media, be it conventional or social. Invariably, the lack of adequate publicity of the Park has continued to be a major stumbling block to its development (Obong, 2018).

Another challenge to the Gashaka Gumti National Park is that, infrastructural and recreational facilities within and around the Park are obsolete and highly inadequate. Most of the facilities available are in a state of disrepair. Roads, service vehicles, power supply,

water and other basic amenities that can make life comfortable in the Park are grossly inadequate. For instance, it becomes near impossible to drive all the way from the Park's gate at Bodel into Gashaka Village and beyond during the rainy season (June to November), due to over flooding of a number of rivers in the Southern section of the GGNP (Adams, 2018). Also in the Northern sector of the Park, the journey to Toungo after Ganye becomes difficult once the rains start, because the heavy downpour usually cuts off accessibility to areas beyond Tounga (Adams, 2018). Reception of GSM network within the Park is also limited, making communication with the outside world difficult. Thus the creation of buffer dams and drainages to control and reduce the impact of flood on the roads within the Park is necessary for easy navigation especially during the rainy season.

In addition to these problems, the illegal activities of humans within and around the Park have been identified as another stumbling block for the GGNP. Poachers, miners, herders, hunters, and even settlers in the enclaves located within the Park have continued to pose serious problems to its viability and sustenance. At a special event to commemorate the World Rangers Day in Serti, head quarter of Gashaka Local Government Area, the Conservator of the Park, Sylvester Viashima (2018), identified increasing illegal logging activities and indiscriminate grazing as major man-made factors killing Park life in the GGNP. Viashima (2018) further explained that;

Gashaka Gumti National Park has had its fair share of human pressure on the Park's resources, ranging from activities of poaching, logging, illegal grazing, mining, fishing and farming. Of particular concern is the current spate of desperation for illegal logging of Rosewood, commonly called Madrid.

Further compounding the problem of illegal activities within the Park is the shortage of manpower. The protection staff strength is slightly above 139 wild life rangers, largely ill-equipped and trained. This is grossly inadequate to watch over and protect an area of over 6,000sqkms (Mafindi, 2016).

Challenges of Tourism Development in Taraba State

Tourism in Taraba State is faced with several daunting challenges. These challenges have continued to militate against the development of tourism, thereby denying the state the numerous benefits it stands to gain. These challenges include: Insecurity, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate funding, lack of proper media coverage, and lack of political will.

Insecurity: It is a fact that no meaningful development can take place in an environment that is devoid of peace, harmony and tranquillity. For tourists to visit any place of interest, there has to be a reasonable sense of safety, for their lives and properties. However, where this is not the case, tourism, as well as all other productive aspects of human endeavor, would suffer greatly. It is imperative for peace to reign in Taraba State,

if tourism and its enormous potentials are to be maximized. A former Special Adviser on Tourism to then Governor of the State in 2014 (Agbidye), lamented thus:

We were planning very seriously to launch the Nwonyo Fishing Festival, when the ethno-religious crisis in Southern Taraba State surfaced. The crisis seems to have caused tourism activities not to be vibrant. You cannot promote tourism when there is insecurity in the area.

Also, the very important Kuchicheb cultural festival of the Kuteb in Takum/Ussa areas has not been held since 2008 due to insecurity (Andeyaba, 2018). Kuchicheb is a cultural festival of the Kuteb ethnic group which takes place in March every year. It is a thanksgiving festival organised to appreciate God for the farming season. Apart from depicting the Kuteb's unique way of dressing, respect for law and order, food and drinks, farming and hunting tools, it also attracts hundreds of people from far and near (Andeyaba, 2018). These people, in their numbers, usually witness the beauty of the Kuteb culture, in addition to learning about them (Kuteb people). It also provides opportunities for trade and commercial transactions. Unfortunately, a ban was placed on the celebration of the festival in 2008, because of the violent clashes that broke out between some Jukun/Chamba and Kuteb youths, during the celebration of "Takachiyawa Festival" of the Chamba in December 2008, which led to the death of some persons and the destruction of properties in Takum town.

Similarly, in other parts of Africa, for instance, in Kenya, the political uncertainties, fueled by ethnic politics in the country, which resulted in the post-election violence that engulfed the country in 2007, severely damaged the fortunes of tourism in that country (Moses, 2001). Kenya Bureau of Statistics reports shows that the number of international arrivals declined sharply by 33.8% from 1.8million in 2007 to 1.2million in 2008. In addition, the number of visitors to Game Parks and National Reserves declined from 2.5million in 2006 to 1.6million in 2008, representing a decline of 34.5% (Ikara, 2001, p.11). All these happened because of the volatile security situation in the country. Generally, violence and other forms of social unrest have the tendency to slow down any meaningful development of tourism. By implication, likewise in Taraba State, unless the problem of insecurity is checked, tourism and other economic activities would continue to suffer a lot of setback, as it is currently being witnessed in the state.

The problem of inadequate infrastructural and recreational facilities has become a clog in the wheel of progress for tourism in Taraba State. The shortage of basic amenities, such as roads, water supply, cinemas, electricity, etc, has become a very serious challenge. It is a fact that not many people can endure the long and very scary drive up the hill to Sardauna Local Government Area, where the amazing Mambilla Plateau is located. However, if an airport is constructed in the area, a good number of tourists would like to fly into the Mambilla to savour the beauty of nature in the area.

A vivid picture of the foregoing issue was painted by a former Sales Manager of the Nigeria Breweries Limited in Gembu while advising an intending visitor to Gembu, describes the journey as “hours stretching into sleep, edgy, undulating and rolling hills on the Plateau” (<https://samadeleke.com>, 2017). Another user of the road claims that cars go slowly, so they do not collide on narrow roads. That if a vehicle should fall off the road that will be the end. It goes deep down the rocky hills that no one will even know anything happened (Victor, 2018). He concluded that the road leading to Gashaka up into Mambilla Plateau surely qualifies, and is the most scary route in Nigeria. “Whoever has travelled to the area can testify” (Lingmu, 2018).

Inadequate Funding: “To fix the infrastructure, we need huge sum of money, which the state does not have at the moment” (Agbidye, 2014). Developing tourism usually requires huge investments. When the funds are not readily available, it becomes extremely difficult to make any headway. Agbidye (2014) concluded that:

The potentials are there but untapped. I have divided the State into three zones- A, B, and C in terms of tourism. My desire is to ensure that at least we develop an attractive cultural/tourist centre in each of the zones. But looking at the amount of resources needed to build these infrastructures to a point of attracting national and international tourists, it wouldn't be that easy, because we don't have that kind of resources.

Furthermore, the lack of media coverage in the tourism sector in Taraba so far is another serious challenge for its development. At a one day workshop organized by the Nigerian Association of Women Journalist (NAWOJ), tagged "The Role of Media in Promoting Tourism", the problem of inadequate and poor coverage of the tourism potentials in the state was brought to the fore (www.tarabastate.gov.ng, 2018). In his remark, the keynote speaker, Sylvanus Giwa (2018), expressed worry over the level of neglect the Media has for tourism in the state. Giwa, a former Special Adviser to the Governor on Media and Publicity, charged the journalists to passionately promote the rich tourism potentials of the State, adding that it was their responsibility to positively project the tourism potentials, which the state has been endowed with to the outside world. Tourist destinations that attract millions of people from different parts of the world have been greatly publicized to attain the enviable status they enjoy today.

It is because of the importance of massive media coverage to tourism that the Cross River State Carnival and Festivals Commission has over the years engaged the services of different Marketing Communications Consultancy Firms, to lead the sponsorship and marketing drive of the Calabar Carnival (Mwantok, 2017). This is among other reasons why the Calabar Carnival has grown to become Africa's biggest and most successful tourism destination brand (Mwantok, 2017).

Also, the production of documentaries on the various tourism destinations in Taraba State can go a long way in boosting the publicity drive and efforts towards the sector. For instance, in the state of Kentucky, USA, the Kentucky Department of Tourism (KDT) is responsible for marketing Kentucky as a tourism destination (<https://www.ktia.com>, 2018). A one-percent state-wide hotel room tax is levied on all hotels, which is then used for advertising and marketing. Tourism generates about \$1.57billion in tax revenues for Kentucky Government, and it is worth over \$15billion (<https://www.ktia.com>, 2018). Documentaries and short videos are produced and uploaded on the internet by young people (millennials), and as such millions of people, the world over view these. This helps to positively promote the tourism potentials and image of Kentucky (<https://www.ktia.com>, 2018). Taraba State can learn from this, leveraging on the wider reach of the conventional and social media would greatly promote tourism in the state. This is because tourism destinations are made known to tourists before they set off and these destinations are publicized among tourists by mostly the media.

Lack of Political Will: Beyond the lip service government officials pay to tourism development, there has not been any concrete blueprint or workable plan to transform tourism in the state. Political speeches and rhetoric which do not translate to reality, through concrete and deliberate actions, have become the bane of tourism development in Taraba State. A very good example of this is the much celebrated deal between the Taraba State Government and an airline operator. Overland Airways, which has really not done much to tourism development to the state (Sobowale, 2016). The government has not demonstrated very strong political will in order to create the enabling environment for tourism to thrive. One good option is the promotion of public- private partnership, since government cannot do everything. In the area of safeguarding the physical environment, the government seems to neglect the strict implementation of environmental laws necessary for protecting, preserving and conserving the environment for the present and future generations.

Conclusion

Statistics and several research findings have shown that tourism, when properly harnessed and marketed, can serve as a catalyst for all round societal transformation and development. Example from Dubai (UAE), Mecca (Saudi Arabia), Calabar (Nigeria), Jerusalem (Israel), among many others, all go to show that any significant investment in tourism has tremendous socio-economic benefits.

Taraba State equally stands to gain much from tourism just in the same manner as the communities mentioned above have benefited from, and are still doing so, and will continue to eternity all things being equal. But the crucial issue about tourism is that the industry demands much money and related resources for its development. All the communities have devoted much money and resources to push tourism industry to the levels they have taken it to.

Recommendations

The foregoing suggests that tourism industry cannot prosper if the needed variables are not adequately provided. These variables, as pointed out are finance, manpower, peace, security, infrastructure, among others. And to many societies, the inadequacy of these variables has remained the main impediments to the development of tourism industry. Taraba State tourism industry has continued to experienced serious setback due to the inadequacy of these variables.

This paper, therefore, recommends that what is now left for the Taraba State Government is to do the followings in order for tourism industry to be developed:

- i. To carefully identify and study the problems enumerated in this paper.
- ii. To exhibit an open mind and the willingness to put the necessary machinery and framework in place, in order to support the development of tourism.
- iii. To provide adequate infrastructure for tourism industry to strive.
- iv. To enact tourism friendly laws.
- v. To ensure safety and security of lives and properties as well as a positive change in the attitude of both government and the governed, among other measures.

It is believed that the foregoing measures can instigate the development of tourism industry in Taraba State if adequately complied with. This, in the long run, would bring about significant socio-economic development to Taraba State.

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