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Assessment of Tourism Opportunities in Bauchi State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

Tourism resources that abound in a destination area are essential in attracting both tourists and investors alike, hence, the need to harness them and support the sector to prosper. The tourism destinations and attraction centers seem to be decaying over time as a result of improper management and marketing of the resources. In this study, the paper focused on "Assessment of tourism opportunities in Bauchi state, Nigeria". It specifically sought to identify the available tourism resources in the state which comprised of historical resort and safari, game reserve, and recreation centers among others; and their prospects towards investment; also, determine sectors that attract more investment and ascertained problems associated with tourism development. It is expected that the study could help in creating awareness on the benefits derivable from the sector. The main question was the level of utilization of tourism resources in Bauchi state. Data was obtained through quantitative method; questionnaires were administered on twenty respondents drawn from the public and private organizations to obtain relevant information. Field observation was conducted for further authentication of data. Descriptive statistics was employed to analyze information gathered. 100 percent of responses agreed that Bauchi state has abundant tourism resources and 80 percent believed to some extent they are accessible to visitors. But, many respondents stated that the state derived little benefit due to under-utilization of the tourism resources, inadequate facilities for tourism activities, lack of awareness, and poor management are among major concerns. However, the hospitality sector attracted attention of private practitioners, while few destinations experience patronage periodically; many others require government commitment to attract investors and develop the industry. There has been little effort done in identifying the tourism resources that attract investment in Bauchi state; as a base for local and foreign interests that could make it more functional and pull more visitors. Some destination areas are still virgin because of limited funds to develop the attractions. More need to be done on them. Therefore, the current research is timely as it seeks to understand the role of existing tourism opportunities in attracting investors and tourists.

Keywords: *Tourism opportunities, resources, investment, Bauchi state*

1. Introduction

Many developing countries, for example, Egypt, Morocco, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Gambia, Brazil and Spain among others depend mainly on tourism for economic growth and diversity. However, achieving both depends to a large extent on the ability of a country to sufficiently develop, manage and promote its own tourism resources, which involves attractions, facilities, activities and programs. Nigeria is blessed in this regard, with Bauchi state having abundant tourism opportunities owing to its potential and existing resources with tendency to contribute to the nation's development.

In the history of tourism, opportunities have been focused on encouraging investment by attracting investors to various tourism sectors world over. Attention has been drawn to examine how local and international investors can tap from the abundant opportunities by developing tourism destinations and generating activities in order to benefit. Also, tourism, as observed by Andrews (2007), is the act of travelling away from home, mostly, for the purpose of recreation and leisure. It shows that resources must be available to make tourism opportunities viable for suppliers, investors and the tourists as well. Therefore, creating tourism activities brings a lot of opportunities in terms of employment, revenue generation, socio-cultural interaction, etc.; example is given in Broadus (2009), who observes that tourism is the world largest civilian industry that accounts for about fourteen per cent of the world Growth Domestic Product (GDP) based on World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) report, 1991.

Henceforth, the travel industry had also enjoyed consistent growth in terms of population and income generation over time which employs more than 200 million people worldwide with twelve per cent of the global workforce and the leading generator of tax revenues with USD 600 billion generated annually in both direct and indirect sales (Broadus, 2009). With the above noted, nations offer a wide variety of tourism attractions and resources that are spread in different parts of a country which could go a long way in providing opportunities for investment in tourism sector. Increasingly, many of these attractions are unique, ranging from natural and artificial resources comprising of local handcrafts.

According to Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) (2002) Nigeria has a variety of tourists' attractions, comprising of extended and roomy rivers, ocean and beaches etc., which are unique for swimming and other water sporting activities; also, wildlife,

vast tracks of unspoiled environment, including water falls, varying climate condition in different regions and fast growing new cities which make it exceptionally conducive for holidaying. Particularly, Bauchi state is a place with varying locations where tourists are served to have a taste of different kinds of tourism; for example, ecotourism, sports, religion, business, leisure, entertainment, adventure, cultural tourism, medical tourism, etc. In essence, the tendency of Bauchi state to attract tourism investment is enormous. Additionally, traditional ways of life preserved in local customs, rich and varied handicrafts and display of colours depicting the native arts of different communities is contributing to tourism in the state. This research is interested in assessing tourism opportunities in Bauchi state for investment. It specifically sought to identify available tourism opportunities; determine the contribution of tourism resources to the development of tourism and identify sectors that attract more investment in the state. Hopefully, the outcome might serve as contribution to Bauchi state towards arousing interests of tourism investors. The study area covers the Bauchi state tourism board, Alawa hotel, and state investment house and multipurpose indoor sports complex located in the capital to get related information.

2. Literature Review

Frangialli (2002) discovers that tourism in the developing countries constitute exceptional fertile ground for private investment initiative serving as foothold from which the market economy can expand and flourish. A review of related literature revealed that essentially, tourism creates many jobs in the micro, small and medium scale enterprises, as well as work for the self-employed, for the poor, for women and young people, for indigenous communities and for unskilled and highly skilled workers. Therefore, the tendency of tourism to bring development is huge as it creates great number of jobs and provides development opportunities to many countries, generates jobs at remote rural areas in handicrafts used as souvenirs by tourists; and jobs linked to ecotourism, attractions, cultural tourism and others. This conforms with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2007) explanation that cross country evidences available illustrates the major contribution of tourism to the foreign exchange earnings which can bring balance of payment of less developed countries reducing their external debts and avoiding dependence.

In this regard, Sumu Wildlife Park which harbors only plant eaters (herbivores) animals, with few existing facilities, as others are left for tourism investors to identify and exploit; this is a great opportunity to interested investors because apart from attracting visitors from different works of life, comprising of research students from tourism and hospitality, zoology, botany, etc. So, essentially this has many advantages that are beneficial to many. Also, spread across different locations in Yankari Resorts and Safari are three warm springs, including popular wikki warm spring with crystal clear water, excellent bating facility and free from reptiles. Research conducted independently discovered that Wikki supplies 100-101millionliters daily; and one cold spring. The resort is host to several African wildlife, different birds' species and amazing historical sites and sceneries (Bauchi state, Nigeria, 2004). This destination reflects the form multipurpose setting comprising of unique cultural heritage, natural and human-made outlook, which hardly any individual can reject. Although, the routes around the park remain natural, the existing airstrip in the resort which is meant for hosting visitors' aircrafts of the attraction could not function So, opportunities abound for investors on natural and cultural based resources as they attract both local and international visitors and bring lots of economic benefits to state.

3. Methodology

The methodology employed was quantitative methods, because it is confirmatory and primarily used to develop knowledge (Creswel, 2009). Descriptive statistics was used to obtain data through questionnaires administered on twenty respondents in public and private tourism sectors to get relevant information. Though, semi-structured interview allows more probing to seek further explanation (Finn, etal., 2010), the questionnaire provided two questions to allow free flow of information in order to understand more about tourism investment opportunities in the state. As an observer, field observation at multipurpose indoor sports complex was carried out to ascertain the existing facilities. The research adopted descriptive statistics to analyze the data using computer software, statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 22.0). Reliability of variables was computed through the reliable procedures in SPSS for windows using mean and standard deviation.

3.1. Analysis

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Does Bauchi state have abundant tourism resources?	20	1.0000	.00000
Are those tourism resources accessible?	20	1.0000	.00000
If yes, to what extent?	20	1.2500	.55012
What is the level of private sector involvement in tourism investment in Bauchi state?	20	2.2500	.78640
To what extent is Bauchi state benefiting in her tourism resources?	20	1.1000	.30779
How are tourism resources managed in Bauchi state?	20	3.4500	1.05006
Comment freely on tourism investment in Bauchi state.	20	5.8000	.89443

*Table 1: Results of descriptive statistics
Source: Analysis of field survey data, 2015.*

4. Findings and Discussion

It is evident from the above table that Bauchi state has abundant tourism resources as revealed by all the respondents and the resources are accessible to visitors to some extent. To a certain extent Bauchi state is benefiting from her tourism resources. There is poor

management of tourism resources in the state and inadequate investment in the sector. If an organization decides to adopt standard, then there must be a commitment to control its performance (Cundell, 2004), and managing the boundary between tourism development, preservation of wildlife, and the needs of local residents in or around wildlife tourism areas have been the issue of research (Burns, 2004 and Burns & Sofield, 2001). There is little doubt that money spent over the years, on tourism sector, has transformed the state's industry into a desirable standard comparable to similar industry elsewhere in Nigeria. Worthy of note is airport construction which stands to provide good tourism opportunity to the state. Similarly, all the respondents agreed that other issues such as natural and human-made attractions, recreation facilities and culture/entertainment receiving least concern. With the above stated, it is clear that apart from hotel /accommodation which received major focus of attention from mostly, private investors, but partially, thereby shouldering the responsibility on government, and thus, neglecting tourism's contribution in generating currency flow into the state and country as well. Certain aspects of the tourism industry fall within the public sector, i.e. funded by the government through taxes (Rogers, 2001). While other sectors e.g., attractions, culture/entertainment, ecotourism, etc., have not been given required attention or explored by both the public and the private sectors for gainful investment. Although, certain facilities are fairly maintained, yet others are wearing out. Inaccessible industrial unit can be strengthened for new activities for cultural and heritage or creative arts, thus, boosting industrial tourism (Hospers, 2002).

Further analysis of this study suggested that the state government shouldered major parts of the investment especially in natural areas and major human made attractions. As the only state in Nigeria that is bordered by eight states, Bauchi stands a better opportunity when fully utilized. In destination areas, it is essential to examine the comparative economic benefits of investing in tourism as opposed to investing in another sector (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). It is worthwhile, when tourism investors consider what the same resource could realize if it were invested in another sector. Bauchi state, Nigeria (2004) recognized that provision of adequate socio-economic program such as development of tourism and culture for domestic and international visitors is the statutory responsibility of any good government. Once a policy has been established, different organizations will become involved in putting it into practice, however, many of public organizations are non-profit making and have been setup to provide a service that will either support local businesses or visitors to an area (Rogers, 2001). Change in government policy is a great concern because it continuously disrupts the good intention of the public office responsible on tourism issues. In the same vein, the community, state, nation and investors as well, would reap positively from the bountiful gifts if properly used. However, benefits to the locals are beyond financial, but, the interaction among those who involve in tourism and recreation enhances peace and understanding, and henceforth creates new jobs and improve the level of activities that would make both investors and the state happy.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the huge opportunities for tourism investment in Bauchi state, little attention is given to the tourism resources in order to tap the many resources situated at different locations, thus, leading to underutilization of the bountiful possessions. Tapping such wealth depends to a greater extent on government commitment in involving private sectors in the business of tourism. Hospitality sector attract more private proprietors while government itself concentrates on few natural destination areas. However, the state's efforts in constructing an airport of an international standard is a step forward in encouraging interested tourism investors. It appeared that the few available investors focused on few tourism sectors, chasing only few investments; and overlooking other areas which would have helped the tourism industry could not help the sector. Also, Active tourism increased popularity as well (Michalco, 2007). Presently, the state is vying for revenue generation and job creation to empower its people, communities and bring development. With this therefore, the enormous contribution of tourism to state should go beyond exploring hospitality sector alone and neglecting other areas. Then again, when adequate attention is given to ecotourism in Yankariresort and safari, Sumu Wildlife Park, cultural base areas of which most are decaying as observed by the research, among other well-known attractions in the state, it will help in tapping the benefits derivable in the sector. Essentially, these resources ought to be harnessed and used in order to reap the benefits derivable, but rather are left decaying and wearing out because of under-utilization, lack of attraction facilities, and lack of awareness. Henceforth, the new airport has tendency to attract potential investors but then the state government needs to put more efforts in order to encourage local and foreign investors. Ward (1996) identified that travel to many parts of the world has been transformed by the construction of new airports, airport facility tends to be assessed based on number of travellers who used them.

It is hoped that the state will provide enabling environment to boost the morale of service providers because they will operate smoothly and subsequently promote tourism in order to gain from the existing potentials. Improving the level of maintenance will attract and maintain visitors to various destinations. Although, Nigeria as a developing nation has other resources heavily deposited to exploit, especially in Bauchi state; scholars cautioned "small developing nations" not to over depend on tourism for economic growth (Wall & Mathieson, 2006:147); and sound government policy that might be appealing potential tourism investors in protecting the resources and encouraging all tourism components. Equally important is creation of awareness through various media within and outside the state/nation.

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