

## **Tourism Activities and Sustainability of Tourist Sites in Cross River State, Nigeria.**

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### **Background to the Study**

The sustainability of tourist sites is a crucial aspect of tourism management, ensuring the economic, social, and environmental well-being of destinations. Sustainable tourism is essential for stakeholders whose interactions shape the outcomes of tourism activities. Tourism requires a balance among the natural environment, social environment, cultural heritage, and economic factors related to tourism (Bramwell, 2021). Sustainable tourism is defined as the set of physical, biological, social, and economic conditions that guarantee the continuity of tourist activity, maintaining productivity and visitor satisfaction for present and future generations.

Cross River State boasts numerous tourist sites, making it a unique destination that attracts visitors seeking recreation and cultural experiences. Tourism is a significant socio-economic sector globally, expanding at an average annual rate of 4–5% and accounting for approximately 7% of global investment (Cole, 2018). In recognition of its tourism potential, the Cross River State government has invested heavily in developing tourist sites to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The state's tourism strategy includes both natural and cultural attractions. Obi (2016) reported that notable sites include the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Obudu Mountain Resort, Cross River National Park, the Nkarasi Monoliths, Agbokim Waterfalls, Kwa Falls, Mary Slessor Tomb, Millennium Park, the Cultural Centre Complex, and the U. J. Esuene Stadium. These sites have drawn numerous visitors over the years.

The development of sustainable tourism infrastructure was championed during the administration of former governor Donald Duke (1999–2007). Investments included road construction, electricity provision, hospitality training, and the establishment of the Cross River State Tourism Bureau in 2003, tasked with converting tourism potentials into viable economic activities. Initiatives such as the street carnival and Obudu Mountain Race increased visitor inflows and stimulated growth in hotels and transport services. Tourism is increasingly recognized as a driver of regional development, employment, and poverty alleviation (Fred, 2018). Its sustainability depends on complementary services, including hotels, communication, and commerce, which enhance tourist comfort and satisfaction (Kin, 2016; Luca, 2016). Cross River State hosts cultural events with tourism undertones, such as the Calabar Carnival, Leboku New Yam Festival, Christmas celebrations, sports events, and the Obudu International Mountain Race. Ibo (2016) defined tourism broadly to include recreation, leisure, festivals, business trips, education, and adventure activities.

Tourism activities that contribute to the sustainability of sites include amusement parks, carnival activities, new yam festivals, museum and heritage trails, and theme parks. Amusement parks are large outdoor areas providing attractions, rides, and entertainment for visitors, promoting relaxation and leisure (Etefia, 2018). Carnival activities, exemplified by the Calabar Carnival, attract international tourists and stimulate local economic development (Odok, 2018). Festivals such as the Leboku New Yam Festival have been upgraded to international standards, attracting visitors from various regions (Akpam, 2019). Museums and heritage trails preserve cultural artifacts and historical knowledge, enhancing the tourism experience (Nsa, 2018). Theme parks target specific groups or events, providing recreation and contributing to site sustainability (Richard, 2017).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine tourism activities and the sustainability of tourist sites in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine how amusement park activities relate to the sustainability of tourist sites.
2. Examine the relationship between carnival activities and the sustainability of tourist sites.

### **Statement of Hypotheses**

1. Amusement park activities do not significantly relate to the sustainability of tourist sites.
2. There is no significant relationship between carnival activities and the sustainability of tourist sites.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Amusement Park Activity and Sustainability of Tourist Sites**

Ezenagu, Diminyi, and Muhammed (2019) investigated the role of amusement parks in promoting tourism in Nigeria, using Magic Land Amusement Park in Abuja as a case study. Findings revealed that amusement parks significantly contribute to tourism promotion, creating a new market niche.

Olawuyi, Jimoh, and Bukola (2017) studied the use of modern information systems to enhance sustainable tourism at Trans Amusement Park, Ibadan. Results indicated that the integration of information systems improves customer services, marketing, and booking efficiency, thereby supporting sustainable tourism operations.

Essien, Anthony, and Effiong (2017) examined amusement parks and youth economic development in Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State. The study found a significant relationship between amusement park activities and youth economic empowerment, recommending the establishment and maintenance of amusement parks to encourage tourism.

Etefia and Nkpoyen (2017) assessed the effect of amusement park activities on the economic achievements of young people in Calabar Metropolis. Results showed that amusement parks significantly influence local economic activities, emphasizing the need for developing more such facilities. Young (2014) reported that strategic investment in New York City parks yielded significant economic returns, including increased property values and reduced business turnover, highlighting the broader economic benefits of recreational spaces. The American Planning Association (2018) highlighted that city parks positively affect real property values, municipal revenues, shopping districts, and employment opportunities in U.S. cities.

### **Carnival Activity and Sustainability of Tourist Sites**

Essien and Anthony (2019) investigated carnival activities and youth economic development in Southern Senatorial District, Cross River State. Findings revealed a significant positive impact, suggesting that extending carnival activities to other local government areas could enhance tourism and economic growth. Odok and Etefia (2014) examined the impact of the Calabar Carnival Fiesta on economic development in Calabar Metropolis. Results indicated a high positive effect on local economic development, with recommendations for expanding the number of carnival bands and innovations to sustain tourism benefits.

### **Methodology**

A correlational research design was adopted. The study area is Cross River State, Nigeria, and the population comprised all tourism operators, including staff of the State Tourism Bureau, tour operators, and local government tourism committees. The State Tourism Bureau (2024) reported 4,206 tourism operators.

A stratified random sampling technique was used, dividing the state's 18 local government areas into three education zones and selecting 50% of the LGAs from each zone. Proportionate and systematic random sampling techniques were used to select 614 respondents for the study.

Data were collected using the Tourism Activities and Sustainability of Tourist Sites Questionnaire (TASTSQ), which included 35 items measured on a 4-point Likert scale. Items measured amusement park activities, carnival activities, new yam festival activities, museum/heritage trail, theme park activities, and sustainability of tourist sites.

The instrument was validated by two tourism lecturers and three experts in measurement and evaluation. Reliability was tested with 50 respondents in two non-study LGAs using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a reliability range of 0.72–0.84, indicating acceptable reliability.

### **Results**

#### **Hypothesis One**

There is no significant relationship between amusement park activity and sustainability of tourist sites. The independent variable in this hypothesis is amusement park activity while the dependent variable is sustainability of tourist sites. Pearson product moment correlation statistical tool was employed for data analysis. The result of this data analysis is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between amusement park activity and sustainability of tourist sites in Cross River State (N = 609)

Variables	X	SD	Cal.r	P.value
Amusement park activity	15.29	.90		
			.217	.000
Sustainability of tourist sites	24.01	1.55		

\*Significant at 0.05; df = 607

The result of data analysis that is presented in Table 1 shows that the calculated r-value of .217 is higher than the p.value of .000 at 0.05 significance level with 607 degree of freedom. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected. The implication of this result is that there is a significant relationship between amusement park activity and sustainability of tourist sites in Cross River State.

### Hypothesis two

Carnival activity does not significantly relate to sustainability of tourist sites. The independent variable in this hypothesis is carnival activity while the dependent variable is sustainability of tourist sites. Pearson product moment correlation statistical tool was employed for data analysis. The result of this analysis is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between carnival activity and sustainability of tourist sites in Cross River State (N = 609)

Variables	X	SD	Cal.r	P.value
Carnival activity	15.01	1.26		
			.312	.000
Sustainability of tourist sites	24.01	1.55		

\*Significant at 0.05; df = 607

The result of data analysis that is presented in Table 2 shows that the calculated r-value of .312 is higher than the p.value of .000 at 0.05 significance level with 607 degree of freedom. This means

that the null hypothesis is rejected. The implication of this result is that there is a significant relationship between carnival activity and sustainability of tourist sites in Cross River State.

### **Discussion of findings**

This section focuses on the discussion of findings obtained from the study in accordance with each hypotheses formulated.

#### **Amusement park activity and sustainability of tourist sites**

The finding that was obtained from data analysis and testing of hypothesis one in this study revealed that the null hypothesis was rejected. The meaning of this is that there was a significant relationship between amusement park activity and sustainability of tourist sites in Cross River State. The reason for this finding could be traced to the understanding that the establishment of amusement parks across the state by previous government has been sustained through private sector initiative. Tourism operators have continued to invest in and expand existing amusement parks. This initiative has sustained the development and growth of various amusement parks across parts of the state. This establishment of new and expansion of existing amusement parks have continued to contribute positively to the sustainability of tourists' sites in various parts of Cross River State.

The finding of this study agrees with that of Ibrahim (2014) who reported that amusement park is one of the tourism options of any country and the development in Nigeria has suffered from lack of investment over the years due largely to the huge capital required for start-up. The amusement park Project should provide leisure to the public, complete with Popular Rides, Indoor/Outdoor Soft Playground Equipment as well as the installation of a wide range of Entertainment Attractions. The Indoor Rides and Games will make for a safe place for children to visit while conquering the boredom factor and providing entertainment for them and their adult parents. Safety, cleanliness, good customer service, low prices and exciting staff should be the selling points of any amusement park in Nigeria.

The finding of this study is also in support of Ayinde (2018) who maintained that, amusement parks can be best described as artificially created parks that are designed and developed for the sole purpose of offering visitors' entertainment and new experiences. Over the years, there has been the coming up of very notable amusement parks such as Disney; parks that have had a great impact on tourism. There are endless economic aspects that are associated with the establishment of these parks. By extension, the parks have also had notable influence on tourism and lead to the upcoming of new trends in tourism. Amusement parks constitute a substantial proportion of the total global tourism. This is because of the fact that these parks boast of very high numbers throughout the year.

#### **4.3.2 Carnival activity and sustainability of tourist sites**

The finding that was obtained from data analysis and testing of hypothesis two in this study revealed that the null hypothesis was rejected. The meaning of this is that there is a significant relationship between carnival activity and sustainability of tourist sites in Cross River State. The reason for this finding could be traced to the understanding that the introduction of carnival activities into the state tourism calendar boosted the state's tourism status and potentials. Carnival activities usually attract visitors from various parts of the country and beyond to witness the rich and dynamic cultural values in the state. The introduction of carnival activities, has put Cross River State in a significant tourism position, and has promoted tourism activities in the state. The potentials of carnival activities in the growth and development of the tourism are enormous and cannot be easily quantified. As a result, carnival activities in the state are contributing in no little measure to the sustainability of tourist sites due to the influx of visitors into the state during such carnival activities.

The finding of this study is in agreement with that of Nsa (2019) who reported that Calabar Carnival festival in Cross River state, Nigeria, also tagged "Africa's Biggest Street Party", was created as part of the vision of making the Cross River State in Nigeria, the number one tourist destination for Nigerians and tourist all over the world. The carnival which begins on every 1st of December and last till 31st December has boosted the cultural mosaic of Nigeria people while entertaining the millions of spectators within and outside the State, and boosting industry for all stakeholders. The Calabar Carnival has gone a long way since its inception in 2004, when the then governor of the State, Mr. Donald Duke had a vision of making the state the hub for tourism and hospitality in Nigerian and in Africa. The Carnival presents a perfect platform from brand visibility for consumer and market awareness.

The finding of this study also supported that of Ejim (2018) who revealed that carnivals and festivals arguably have potentials of contributing significantly to the cultural and economic development of Nigeria. They have major impacts on the development of cultural tourism to the host communities. The organizers of such Carnivals and Festivals employ the historical and cultural themes to develop the annual events in an attempt to attract tourists and creating cultural appearance in the host metropolis by holding such events in the community settings. The organization of such events has been observed not explicitly to meet the needs of any one particular group, but also the hosting of such colorful events is often hinged on the tourism and economic opportunities in addition to socio-cultural benefits accruable from the events.

### **Implication of the findings**

The finding obtained in the study has the following implications;

- i. The effective management and expansion of amusement parks within the study area will continue to contribute positively to sustainability of tourist sites

- ii. The proper coordination and planning of carnival activities with the study area will always contribute meaningfully to the sustainability of tourist sites

### **Conclusion**

The study was carried out to investigate and present findings on tourism activities and sustainability of tourist sites in Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings obtained from analysis of data and testing of hypotheses in the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between amusement park activity, carnival activities and sustainability of tourist sites in the study area.

### **Recommendations**

The research made the following recommendations based on the findings obtained in the study;

- i. Tourism operators should continue to expand and improve existing amusement parks across the various local government areas in the state as a means of promoting sustainability of tourist sites
- ii. The State Tourism Bureau should continue to partner with relevant government and private sector actors to spread carnival activities across all the local government areas in the state in order to promote the sustainability of tourist sites

### **Implications of the Findings**

1. Expansion and effective management of amusement parks will positively contribute to the sustainability of tourist sites.
2. Proper coordination and planning of carnival activities will enhance the sustainability of tourist sites.

### **Conclusion**

This study revealed significant relationships between amusement park activities, carnival activities, and the sustainability of tourist sites in Cross River State.

### **Recommendations**

1. Tourism operators should expand and improve amusement parks across the state to promote sustainable tourism.
2. The State Tourism Bureau should partner with government and private sector actors to decentralize carnival activities across all local government areas to enhance sustainability.

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