Collaboration as a potential strategy for addressing socio-cultural impacts of tourism development: Insights from Nigeria

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Abstract
Using selected clans in Anambra and Enugu States as case studies, this study discusses collaboration as a potential strategy for addressing socio-cultural consequences of tourism to help achieve responsible tourism development. Most studies in this field focus on economic factors which are easier to measure than socio-cultural. Our study aims to explain how tourism operators are using local peoples’ socio-cultural values and practices for tourism, the challenges encountered and how collaboration/community participation can help to address these challenges. The findings presented in this study are from ongoing PhD fieldwork. This is a qualitative research which adopts an ethnographic method of data collection. The study utilizes triangulation of methods to interact with participants through in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and participant observation. There are four groups of participants: traditional rulers; village representatives; men, women and youth and tourism officials. Tourism development in Anambra and Enugu States is localized. This is a consequence of poor funding and stakeholder’ attitudes including those of government and tourism planners. Stakeholders adopt a top-down approach to tourism development thus neglecting the views of the local people. This affects the peoples’ perception of tourism and its consequences. Positive and negative socio-cultural results of tourism were observed. The local people argued that if they are part of the planning and decision-making process, they can support tourism development and help address potential problems. The findings from this study will serve as reference point to future tourism researchers. This research contributes to knowledge on Nigerian tourism, especially with regards to the need for collaboration between stakeholders in tourism planning and development. Such a strategy has the potential to minimize anticipated negative impacts of tourism development.

Keywords
socio-cultural impacts, tourism, development, collaboration, responsible tourism, Nigeria

1. Introduction
Authors including Andriotis (2007); Dredge and Jamal (2015); Gunn (2004); and Tosun and Timothy, (2003) noted that adequate tourism planning influences how tourism develops, and addresses impacts. Many governments and destination managers develop tourism without proper consideration of the consequences for the local people and their culture. When tourism stakeholders, including researchers, consider the impacts of tourism they often focus on the environmental and economic aspects while ignoring socio-cultural aspects. According to Andriotis (2007), those involved in early research into the outcomes of tourism planning restricted it to the measurement of economic impacts in developed countries because it was relatively easy to measure. There remains insufficient literature from emerging economies (Javier, 2016) including countries in Africa.

The limited studies focused on socio-cultural impacts of tourism development in Africa were conducted in countries such as Ghana, South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and Kenya. Findings from these studies showed that unplanned tourism development negatively influenced the local peoples’ socio-cultural values and practices including their religion, cultural practices, festivals, family relationships, historic sites and monuments. These impacts lead to staged authenticity (presenting peoples’ culture as original to meet tourists’ expectation), demonstration effect (observable changes in the behavior of the local people because of the actions of tourist, which may not hitherto be acceptable in the community), commodification of culture, sex tourism, drug trafficking, aggression and cultural conflict (Anstrand, 2006; Et, 2013; Mbaiwa, 2005; Muganda, Sirima and Marwa, 2013; Nzama, 2008; Tichaawa and Mhlanga, 2015). We argue that community participation in tourism, a tenet of responsible tourism, might help address these negative impacts. This is important if tourism is to gain the support of residents who understand the environment, and which tourism requires to thrive (Cole, 2006; Javier, 2016).
Therefore, we argue that collaboration/community participation can help minimize the negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism development in Southeastern Nigeria and increase the positive consequences. To do this requires developers to educate the local people, adopt genuine community participation, and address unequal power relations amongst the stakeholders. Collaboration/community participation which follows a bottom-up approach is likely to induce greater positive community input. Findings from the ongoing research will also contribute to responsible tourism discourse which is a new area of research in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

Importantly, as Gunn (2004) noted, “the traditional view that all tourism development is positive is merely a half-truth” (p:4). Tourism has positive and negative results, which discussions with stakeholders, including local people, prior to development may increase or ameliorate. Javier (2016) argues that the local peoples’ goodwill is needed in tourism planning to ensure sustainability and reduce negative impacts. We provide a brief overview of evidence from African countries to support this view.

2.1 Study of socio-cultural impacts of tourism development from Western Africa

In a study of resident perception of tourism impacts in Ghana, Et noted that tourism in Elmina and Ada impacted the communities economically, environmentally and socio-culturally. According to Et, an increase in the adverse impacts of tourism creates resentment among hosts and de-motivates tourists (Et, 2013). Et argued that if residents were involved in tourism planning and development, they would develop positive attitudes. Et noted that while tourism revitalized the peoples’ festivals and encouraged production of arts and crafts, the artworks were commodified to appeal to tourists, and the festivals modified to include football games, state dancing competitions and beauty pageants; all modern forms of entertainment. Tourism development has equally led to over-population and pressure on infrastructure, an increase in local crime, drug abuse and prostitution (Et, 2013). Et found that Elmina respondents’ perceptions were more positive than those of Ada who had little contact with tourism. He argued that the tension in Ada was avoidable if the people were included in the development process.

2.2 Study of socio-cultural impacts of tourism development from Southern Africa

Nzama (2008) in a study of socio-cultural impacts of tourism on rural areas around the Kwazulu-Natal region of South Africa, observed that the low level of local people’s involvement in tourism resulted in negative socio-cultural impacts on their lifestyle. The author found that tourism development made visible changes to the peoples’ culture and daily life. According to Nzama, staged authenticity, which manifested as loss of authentic culture of the local people was a negative impact that genuine community involvement could help overcome through dialogue. The author argued this was because those involved in the industry better understood the processes and consequences of tourism than people who were less involved. Therefore, there is need to sensitize the local people for more informed participation. Nzama also found that the elders in the community expressed more concerns about the changes in their lifestyle brought about by tourism than the youth.

2.3 Socio-cultural impacts of tourism development from Eastern Africa

In Tanzania, Anstrand (2006) observed that tourism negatively impacted the socio-cultural lifestyle of the local people, leading to changes such as loss of identity and values. The author argued that negative consequences occur when peoples’ culture turns into commodities to conform to tourists’ expectations. Anstrand also noted that unplanned tourism can lead to cultural and technological standardization, to satisfy tourists which might not conform to the people’s beliefs. Other negative consequences of
tourism include loss of authenticity, frontstage and backstage distinctions (the local people behave to appeal to tourists and then go back to their daily lifestyle), cultural clash and irritation due to tourist behavior (Anstrand 2006). The author noted that planning could help ameliorate these impacts.

McComb, Boyd and Boluk (2016) therefore argued that collaboration/community participation aids in representing local peoples’ concerns and expectations, and is a potential strategy for engaging with them and ensuring responsible tourism. This is consistent with Tosun and Timothy’s argument that local people often have better knowledge of the environment which can assist in tourism development including what is likely to work and what will not (Tosun and Timothy, 2003). There are however various types of community participation, including full, pseudo, spontaneous, coercive and nominal but not all are beneficial to the local people (Tosun; 2006; White, 1996). Possible limitations to collaboration/community participation, especially in emerging economies are peoples’ lack of knowledge or ability, unequal power relations, lack of tourism skills, poor institutional structure and limited access to tourism resources. Because of these limitations, Tosun (2000) noted that scholars need to test the application of community participation in developing countries to measure its usefulness.

3. Methodology
This is a working paper. This paper presents findings on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism development from the ongoing fieldwork in Southeastern Nigeria. The research is qualitative. The study uses an ethnographic method of data collection to elicit first-hand information through direct observations, focus group discussion and interviews. This strategy will elicit knowledge of the peoples’ culture and tourism activities. During the fieldwork the researcher will ask the people of the selected clans in the states- Agulu-Aquiyi and Ntuegb Nese- to select a representative from each village. Each representative will participate in the FGD sessions. The men, women and youth representatives from each town will be interviewed separately using semi-structured interviews. Other participants to be interviewed include traditional rulers, priests of shrines and groves in the community, and selected tourism officials. Seventeen FGDs with selected representatives, and 65 interviews will be conducted with the participants. The researcher chose this method to capture the diverse views of the people about whether they want increased tourism and to discuss how best to address positive and negative socio-cultural impacts.

4. Results
The researcher has conducted preliminary inquiries prior to beginning the ongoing fieldwork. An analysis of interactions with the local people showed some themes and categories. These include:

Tourism development in the area is localized: Key tourism resources include festivals, heritage/historic sites, monuments, shrines, sacred groves, caves and mythical lakes. Most of these resources have not been properly harnessed for tourism development because of poor access roads, poor infrastructure development, poor working conditions between the local people and government and lack of basic amenities. These issues have challenged tourism development in the region and must be addressed if the local people want to further develop tourism.

Lack of skills: The local people also lack the required skills and resources to develop tourism on their own, thus, the need for collaboration between stakeholders. Such collaboration would ensure that stakeholders are better placed for informed decisions on tourism development in the area.

Lack of trust: The local people voiced fears about dealing with the Nigerian government because of the top-down development approach it usually adopts, which most times neglect the views and contributions of the local people as a major key stakeholder in tourism development.
**Negative impacts of tourism:** People also expressed concern about the negative impacts of tourism in the communities including changes in the behavior of some community members (especially youth who emulate visitors), defacing of monuments, attitudes of the people towards tourists, increases in prices of commodities, and the violation of local customs by tourists. Whilst the current economic recession in Nigeria influenced some participant’s willingness to welcome tourism as a source of income, many elders spoke of their concern to retain the authenticity of their cultural values and practices. Most youth saw employment opportunities from tourism.

**Need for collaboration:** Majority of the respondents that the researcher interacted with agreed that collaboration/community participation is a good strategy for addressing socio-cultural impacts. They however pointed out that issues of power relations, empowerment, education and ownership of tourism development should be addressed. Addressing these concerns is consistent with responsible tourism which recognizes that the local peoples’ views need to be included. These preliminary discussions support results from other scholars who worked on similar topics in Africa, including Mbaiwa (2005) in Botswana; Tichaawa and Mhlanga (2015) in Zimbabwe and Nzama (2008) in South Africa.

This study seeks to achieve genuine community participation which supports bottom-up approaches such as spontaneous, full or transformative strategies for addressing negative and positive socio-cultural impacts of tourism in Southeastern Nigeria. If properly implemented, responsible tourism development may be achieved in the region.

5. Implications

This study contributes to knowledge on Nigerian tourism, especially that focused on collaboration/community participation to address negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism to help achieve responsible tourism. The findings from the study will serve as a reference point for future researchers, and as a potential policy tool for tourism planners and government in the study area.

6. Conclusion

Since this study is still ongoing, it is expected that the results from the fieldwork will contribute to our understanding of the potential benefits and problems associated with adopting collaboration/community participation during tourism planning and development, especially in an emerging economy such as Nigeria. Collaboration is not an assurance that tourism would be sustainable, however, absence of collaboration is tantamount to misunderstanding among stakeholders, crisis and failure of sustainable tourism development at the tourism destination. Whilst there are also some challenges associated with collaboration, the strategy is viable for representing stakeholders’ voices, concerns, and expectations. If stakeholders can address issues of power relations, mistrust, legitimacy, and adopt genuine collaboration/participation, there is a possibility of determining if the local people would want to develop tourism and participate in addressing the socio-cultural impacts. This will help achieve responsible tourism development in Southeastern Nigeria which is still a growing tourism destination.

References


