

OBUDU CATTLE RANCH: A TOURIST DESTINATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The world over, the impact of tourism has made a positive and significant change to countries in recent times, as well as in communities and the society at large. It is therefore, one of the contributors to the economy of many countries as well as Nigeria. Obudu cattle ranch has contributed maximally to the development of Cross River State and indeed Nigeria. The ranch has provided an avenue for many people, organizations and countries to host activities within the Obudu community. There are many hotels in Obudu today, which serve as a part of development of tourism activities. These and other activities being carried out in turn bring economic growth and development to both the individuals involved and the government of Nigeria. Therefore, this paper examines the impact of Obudu cattle ranch as a tourist destination in Nigeria. The method adopted in this paper includes a review of previous literature as a method of data collection. The findings thus reveal that, tourism activities in the cattle ranch has brought development to the Obudu community and also created an avenue for foreign exchange for the government of Nigeria and the people who are engaged in the field of tourism therein. The paper therefore recommends that, the cattle ranch should serve as a positive example to other states in Nigeria which have neglected the development of tourism activities in their various states where such potentials are wasting. It also recommends the development of such tourism activities in other countries in Africa where the potentials are also neglected.

Keywords: *Obudu Community, Obudu Cattle Ranch, Hotels, Tourism and Nigeria.*

Introduction

Tourism has made a lot of positive impact on many countries around the world with the view of creating conducive environments for tourists to visit such destinations and by so doing; it has promoted avenues for revenue generation in such countries where it serves as foreign exchange. Countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, China, USA, Britain, France, South Africa, Uganda, and Kenya are all tourist destinations. They are driven by the development of such environments where tourists tend to visit for holidays; to many organizations, they use such places as environments where they can host both local and international conferences. Tourism activities around the world therefore promote interpersonal relationships among people, and the development of such relationships which serve as an avenue for peace and unity, as well as the results derived from the economic point of view from such relationships.

In view of this fact, some countries take time to develop avenues that can provide information for tourists around the world to visit their country. It has been observed on many international news channels/stations where countries invest huge amount of money in advertising such information. It is meant for people to visit as a place for tourist destination. Malaysia has invested in that direction both on local and international television channels such as CNN, BBC in order to give vital information on their rich culture and endowed environments for tourists around the world, especially with their beautiful song that ends with "Malaysia truly Asia".

According to Lepp, Gibson and Lane (2014), Uganda has demonstrated same efforts in providing information for tourists around the world through their official website where people can actually access free information on such destinations in their country. Such efforts are carried out for the purpose of enhancing

travel motivations for tourists who have little knowledge on such destinations. This also helps in removing fears and the unknown which the tourists may face before embarking on such travel.

In understanding the impacts of tourism, many countries open access to people to come into their countries for tourism activities, which connotes positive significance to such openness. Qiu, Li, Huang and Dang (2013) in their work, gave an analysis on such openness and its impact to the development of tourism activities in Taiwan Strait, where the mainland Chinese tourists were allowed to gain entrance into Taiwan for the purpose of tourism. These promoted and increased the level of peace-building between the people and intergovernmental relations. Tourism impacts are thus seen not only in terms of economic benefits but also in social and cultural aspects. This is why this paper focuses on the Obudu cattle ranch as a tourist destination in Nigeria.

The rich environment of Obudu community through the cattle ranch has provided an avenue for tourists across the world to visit Nigeria where they can engage in many tourism activities in the said community. The rich plateaus of Obudu have also demonstrated a sense of good environs for both local and international tourists who see it as a destination where occasions can be hosted. As a result of the beautiful environment, other business men/women and groups have also invested in Obudu community through the establishment of hotels where tourists can stay as a provision for their accommodations during the period of their holidays, meetings and conferences as the case may be. This has boosted the development of the Obudu community which we want to showcase as an example for other places that are wasting to emulate from, even in other parts of Nigeria which could be developed for tourism benefits.

There are many of such places that are neglected in Nigeria and other African countries where they could be transformed into modern/developed environments, through the establishment of infrastructure base for the purpose of promoting tourism activities that would yield positive results for the people and the government. We therefore, make bold steps to use this paper as a wakeup call to government and nation-states, especially in Africa to do business in tourism beyond the economic benefits, as well as another means of peace-building in Nigeria and other countries where unity and political stability can be sustained among the people and intergovernmental relations.

Literature Review

The Obudu Cattle Ranch has been discovered to be a very important instrument to poverty alleviation, attainment of the millennium development goals (MDGs) and sustainable development (Olorunfemi & Raheem, 2008 cited in Tunde, 2012). These tourism initiatives of the Nigerian government is ordered as one of the programme initiatives that contributes to national development (Tunde, 2012). In line with poverty alleviation, Babalola and Ajekigbe (2007) in their work, brought out the need for using Archaeo-Tourism development as a means of poverty alleviation in Nigeria having understood the issues and problems facing the people such as poverty, which needs to be eradicated. This is seen from the perspective of generating employment opportunities for the people through the development of archaeological potential to tourism resources. However, this present work is limited to the knowledge on the benefit of Obudu cattle ranch which forms the gap to be filled in this work.

Liang (2014) notes that, the case of island destinations as seen in Asia are promoted differently, thus, giving it a different perception by tourists with the view of understanding the level of such tourism development in different locations. Furthermore, when tourists travel to a certain destination, they retain memories of what they have encountered. Brown (2014) examines the memories of tourists who visited the destination of the Berlin to have an encounter in a memorial for the victims of Nazism in Germany.

Awaritefe (2005) reveals the differences between image and nature as a tourist destination using Nigeria as a case study. The work also showcases some of the various nature destinations in Nigeria such as the Jos plateau, the Lagos beach, Obudu ranch as well as pictures of some of the nature destinations like waterfalls. The paper therefore, has provided a better understanding of some of the tourist destinations in Nigeria but it has not focused on the Obudu cattle ranch as the main study, it has rather created a gap to be filled. Therefore, this present research seeks to bridge the gap therein and provide a better understanding on the impact of the Obudu cattle ranch to both the people of that community and to the government of Nigeria.

The Impact of Obudu Cattle Ranch

Economic growth and development of a country can derive its source through diverse means such as rising foreign exchange from natural resources, agricultural resources, as well as human resources which all requires transformation of such resources into desired use. For the cattle ranch in Obudu community, it has created so much impact on both the people and the government of Nigeria. This paper therefore examines such impacts as they benefit the said subject therein as discussed below.

A Tourist Destination

Nigeria as a country has been agreed to house some potential tourist centers by many analysts, noting that the sector the potential of not only contributing to foreign exchange earnings but also has the capacity to aid Nigeria's reduction of the concentration of foreign exchange sources. The Nigerian Embassy observed that, Nigeria is a potential tourist paradise which boasts of good tropical weather, variety of wildlife, awe-inspiring waterfalls, historical relics, captivating beaches and rolling hills, coupled with the warm-hearted and culturally active populace. They again observe that, the weather, vegetation, and climate render Nigeria a tourism destination of variety and contrast. The climate and weather include the semi-temperate climate of the Jos plateau, the harmattan haze of the north, and the humid weather of the south. The country's vegetation then ranges from the light shrubs of the arid north to the thick mangrove swamps of the south (Bankole, 2002). Further, it noted that there are many tourist attractions in Nigeria, spread across the six geopolitical zones and spanning different types of tourism assets such as rocks, plateaus, hills, springs, lakes, waterfalls, beaches, museums, shrines, cultural festivals, parks, gardens, game reserves, zoos, etc. It is against this backdrop, that the Obudu Cattle Ranch in Cross River state has been focused on in this study as one of such tourist attractions in Nigeria. The beauty of the Obudu plateaus which has become an attraction to many tourists and thus serve as a destination of tourism activities in Nigeria, has therefore promoted the name of the said community both locally and internationally.

Ojo, (2014) supports in his study that, the impact of tourism varies greatly and importantly, it plays a crucial role in the socio-economic and political development in destination countries by, for example offering innovative employment opportunities.

The Obudu community now stands as a choice area for people to visit for the purpose of relaxation as well as interacting with different people from different backgrounds in Nigeria and outside the country. Awaritefe (2004) reveal that, tourists respond to different environments with different experiences, and the value for them to engage in traveling for the purpose of tourism activities also create a learning opportunity. As such, a motivation for self-actualization is appreciated especially when tourists meet in an environment that is educative and can achieve their self-satisfaction. Beneath are tables showing patronage rate of Obudu Ranch Resort and Tourists preference of the Ranch Resort.

Table 1. Patronage of Domestic and International Tourist between 2001-2008 in Obudu Ranch Resort

Year	Number of visitors Nigerian	% of Total	No of Visitors Foreign	% of Total
2001	1231	1.88	253	1.39
2002	1613	2.47	373	2.05
2003	3074	4.70	536	2.95
2004	6307	9.65	921	5.07
2005	9715	14.87	1312	7.22
2006	12,091	18.50	3117	17.16
2007	14,467	21.14	49.22	27.10
2008	16,843	25.77	67.27	37.04
Total	65,341		18,161	

Source: Aniah, Eja, Out, and Ushie, (2009).

Table 2. Tourist's Preference of Obudu Ranch Resort

S/N	Reasons for preference Obudu Ranch Resort	No of Respondent	Percentage
1	Climate/weather	112	35.6
2	Scenery	68	21.7
3	Availability of facilities	78	24.8
4	Popularity of the resort	34	10.8
5	Others	22	7.0
	Total	314	

Source: Aniah, Eja, Out, and Ushie, (2009).

Figure 1: The landscape of Obudu cattle ranch



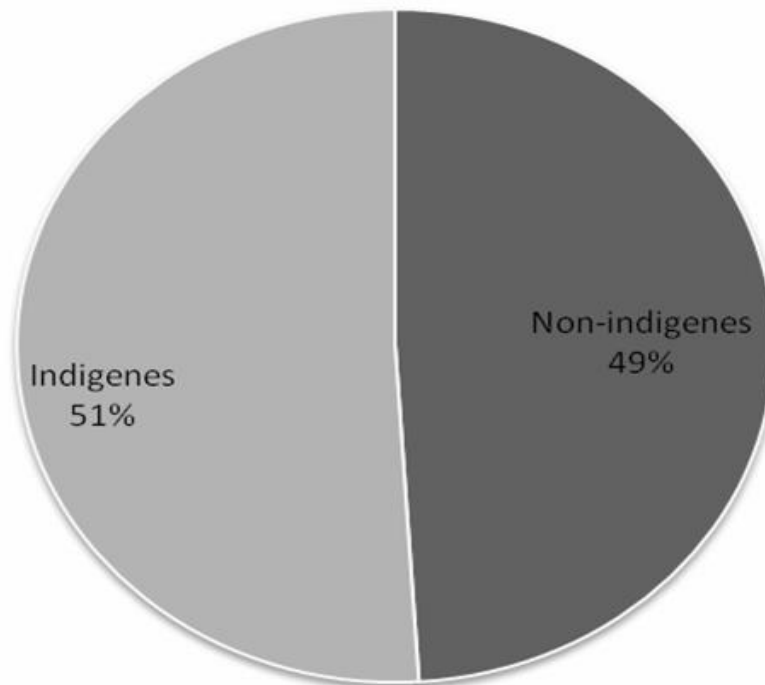
Source: Dantata (2012)

The beauty of the cattle ranch as shown in figure 1 above, presents the landscape of the Obudu cattle ranch which serve as a place for tourist attraction and relaxation. The environment is developed for tourist activities which also attracts tourist from all walks of life; to travel to the said community during the holidays and to others, to host workshops and conferences.

Provision of Job Opportunity

One of the benefits of tourism in Nigeria, specifically the Obudu Cattle Ranch, includes job creation through the establishment of hotels both in the Obudu community and at the ranch; it has provided an opportunity for employment for those working in the hotels. Some of these people are from different parts of Cross River state and other parts of Nigeria. Odugo and Ogeah, (2007) noted top benefits of tourism in Nigeria to include creation of jobs at 94% and earning higher income at 91%, thereby recommending that, government has a significant role to play by providing enabling environment for local and foreign tourism developers. Likewise, World Tourism Organization (WTO, 1998; cited in Eja et al., 2012) observed that “tourism is one of the largest industries that have contributed to the socio-economic growth of many countries especially countries where tourism is the mainstay of her economy. Also, it is noted that in spite of the fact that the tourism industry is a catalyst for promoting cultural exchange which heightens international understanding and goodwill among the diverse peoples of the world, it is again an impetus for boosting many country destination employment opportunities, foreign exchange and infrastructural facilities (ESCAP, 2002; cited in Eja et al., 2012). Therefore, the development of the cattle ranch has promoted the area not only as a tourist destination, but also as a source of job for the people living therein. The pie chart shows the employment pattern of indigenes and non-indigenes in the Obudu Ranch hotel.

Figure 2. Employment pattern of indigenes and non-indigenes in the Obudu Ranch hotel



Source: Amalu and Ajake 2012

Table 3. Occupational distribution of people involved in tourism activities at the Ranch hotel

Employment Cadre	Non-indigenes	% of Staff	Indigenes	% of Staff	Total
Food and Beverages	13	25	39	75	52
Receptionists	8	80	2	29	10
Security	61	60	41	40	102
Tour guide	4	100	0	0	4
Managers	4	20	16	80	20
Labourers	9	90	1	10	10
Waiters	6	72	2	28	8
Chef	0	0	2	100	2
Laundry	5	40	7	60	12
House keepers	12	43	16	57	28
Gardeners	6	75	2	25	8
Accountants	3	25	9	75	12
Total	131	49	137	51	268
Mean(*)	10.9	53	11.4	48	22.3
STD.Deviation (*)	16.2	32	14.5	32	28.5

Source: Amalu and Ajake, 2012

Source of Income

The development of tourism activities in Obudu has created sources of income to both the people who engage in the tourism business, as well as a source of foreign exchange to the government of Nigeria. An empirical study reveals that, in Nigeria, tourism's contribution to government revenue from levies on Hospitality Sector (registration and other charges) recorded N1.149m in 2004 while N100m was generated in 2009. Additionally, N313m was generated by company tax (National Bureau of Statistics, NBS). In 2011, it was found that the

industry contributed about N1, 232.2 billion (3.3 percent) to the GDP in Nigeria. In the report of the tourism industry, it was forecasts that the industry will generate 897,500 jobs representing 1.4 percent of Nigeria's total workforce in 2012 and that over the next 10 years, the amount is expected to accelerate from 6.5 percent per annum to N483.4 billion in 2022 (Tunde, 2012). The Obudu Cattle Ranch has been found to contribute to income significantly to the growth of Nigeria's economy.

Conclusion

The world over, tourism has contributed so much to the development of the people from the social-economic point of view. Tourism therefore, has also contributed to the development of Obudu community as well as created an avenue for income to the people and to the government. This paper therefore, recommends the development of tourism in other parts of Nigeria especially in states whose tourism potentials are wasting. It also recommends other African countries to develop tourism especially where such potentials are also neglected considering the vast benefits derived from the industry.

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