



**Religious Tourism and the Economic Development of Calabar Municipal, Cross River
State, Nigeria**

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate religious tourism and the economic development of Calabar Municipal, Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study, a null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. A review of related literature was carried out based on the variable of this study. The survey research design was considered useful for the study. The research adopted multiple sampling approaches. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 232 subjects used as sample in each ward in the Local Government Area. A twenty-item modified four (4) points Likert scale questionnaire titled Religious Tourism and Economic Development Questionnaire (RTEDQ) was the instruments used for gathering data for the study. To test the hypotheses formulated for the study, Pearson's product moment correlation statistical tools was used for data analysis. The hypothesis formulated was tested at 0.05 alpha level. The results from data analysis and hypothesis testing indicated that there is a significant relationship between religious tourism and the economic development in the study area. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that the State government should ensure investment in basic infrastructure such as roads, better airports facilities and good transport system.

Keyword: Religious, tourism, Calabar Municipal, Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria.



Introduction

Tourism is a collection of activities and industries that confers a travel experience of which transportation, accommodation, eating, drinking, establishments, retail shops, entertainment business and hospitality services are provided for individuals or groups travelling away from their homes for leisure, recreation or business purposes. Religious tourism is a temporary movement of people away from their place of residence to experience destinations that host sacred sites or shrine (Onnoghen, et. al., 2023). Tourism comes with a multiplier effect that rubs on other sectors of Nigeria's economy, namely: financial institutions, hospitals, transport, agriculture, environment and aviation (Ezenagu, 2013). Tourism is the main foreign exchange earner and the main source of job creation in the country. And so, income and prices are generally linked to the variables of demand for tourism. Religious tourism has been a labour-intensive service industry can create income for the host community through the expenditure made by the tourists on goods and services purchased at the destination (Inskeep 2005). Negi (2009) pointed that expenditure by the religion tourists at the destination does not stop moving after it is spent until it revolves the economy of the entire destination (Taylor, 2007). This implies that part of the money spent by the tourist in a destination becomes income for the people living in that region. Part of this income is spent which generates income for others to spend.

Calabar Municipal has the potentials to become one of the leading tourist destinations due to her rich cultural heritage, tourism sites, cuisines, attractions etc. and traces of the different types of tourism being found in it, has stimulated the development of a variety of allied infrastructure and facilities such as Calabar International Convention Centre (CICC), National Museum, Calabar, sport stadium, airport et., owing all the above listed tourism locations and facilities, one wonders if tourism contributes to the economic development in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area of Cross River state. Tourism is the number one employer of labor in the world and jobs created by tourism spreads across the economy in areas of construction, telecommunications, retail and manufacturing, thus, creating jobs in large number for young people, women, and minorities whether in small or medium size companies (Akpan & Obang, 2012). It based on the above background that the researchers intend to investigate the relationship between religious tourism and economic development in Calabar Municipal, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Religious travel (RT) is one of the brands of tourism travel industry (Vijayanand, 2012). Religious tourism is defined as the temporary movement of people away from their place of residence to experience destinations that hosts sacred sites or shrines (Hitrec, 1990). On a precise note, when one talks about religious tourism, reference is made to travel encouraged by the need to boost once faith (Vijayanand, 2012). This implies that religion tourism explains travels to sacred places (Padin, 2016; Collins-Kreiner, 2006). Collins-Kreiner (2006) argued against the above submission regarding the main reasons for engaging in religion travel. The author explains that religious travels can be motivated by the quest for humanitarian causes, including meeting of new friends. The uniqueness of religion tourism is its efficacy of appealing to people of different categories globally. This brand of tourism showcases various holy sites and other attractions across religion lines capable of attracting millions of pilgrims for various reasons, major among which is the search for spiritual edification and enrichment.



It was reported that annually, religion tourism attracts over 5 million Muslim faithful to Haji (Collins-Kreiner, 2010). About same number of Catholic worshippers' visits Lourdes in France for spiritual sacrifices (Holloway & Valins, 2002). The authors further reported that River Ganges in India attracts about 28 million Hindus. This information attests to importance of religion and spirituality as the key determinant of the true identity of man (Holloway & Valins, 2002). The above information was upheld, hence, the World Tourism Organization reported that an estimated 300 to 330 million pilgrims visit the world's key religious sites every year at estimated value of US\$18 billion (Vijayanand, 2012; Shinde, 2007a). Major faith-based destinations such as Israel, Italy and Saudi Arabia have developed large industries that provide services for people on pilgrimage (Vijayanand, 2012).

Holloway and Robinson (1995) stated a tourist spends income earned in their respective places of domicile at the destination visited. As it applied to the present study religion tourists spends money made in their residence at the various destinations visited. This is an important economic attribute of religion tourism. Religious tourism is therefore found to generate more revenue in a way as no other kind of tourism does. It has a distinct edge over other kind of tourism due to the pull of huge crowd religion tourists (Mill, 1990). Religion tourism is therefore a platform for money transfer from income generating countries to income receiving countries. However, measuring the accuracy of the income sourced through religion tourism to a destination is not easy but estimating the multiplier effect of tourists spending on the destination is a common approach. This is predicated on the fact that tourists spending at the destination multiplies as it flows through the various segments of the economy of the destination visited (Holloway & Valins, 2002). The first expenditure of religion tourists is received as income at the destination by the tour operators at the destination, shopkeepers, hotels, and taxi drivers (Mill, 1990). Thus, religion tourists spending at the destination generates income in multiple times hence; having multiplier effect (Mathieson & Wall, 1982) on the destination and more-so, on the host county economy (Fleischer, 2000; Evans, 1998). This implies that religion tourists' expenditure at the destination is the extra income produced in an economy (Cooper, 1993). This extra income is again invested directly or indirectly thus, a different rounds of income generation.

Religious tourism been a labour-intensive service industry can create income for the host community through the expenditure made by the tourists on goods and services purchased at the destination (Inskeep 2005). Negi (2009) pointed that expenditure by the religion tourists at the destination does not stop moving after it is spent until it revolve the economy of the entire destination (Taylor, 2007). This implies that part of the money spent by the tourist in a destination becomes income for the people living in that region. Part of this income is spent which generates income for others to spend. Employment generation to the host communities is another economic significance dimension of the religion tourism (Vijayanand, 2012; Inskeep, 1991) hence; contributing both directly and indirectly Taylor, (2007). Businesses such as hotels, restaurants, transport companies, and travel agents, among others flourish in religious tourism destination as the services of these businesses are highly needed for enhanced memorable experience of the tourists (Mathieson & Wall, 2002). These businesses cannot exist without employees who were employed in these companies to offer their specialized skills by supplying the requirement of the religion tourists in exchange for an agreed wages/salary.



Nigeria is exploring religion in the development of her tourism industry (Bello et al., 2008), especially with the proliferation of hotels and other forms of hospitality businesses that caters for religion travelers. Recently, important religion tourists across the world had been attracted to Nigeria to seek for spiritual solutions hence, strategically positioning religion as an attractive force for tourists and religion tourism development. The three major religions in Nigeria, Christians, Islam and Traditional had consistently drives religion tourism promotion, through various touristic festivals and programmes. Pentecostalism is seriously promoting religion tourism development in Nigeria due to the upsurge of evangelical activities including; crusades, seminars and festivals held in various part of the country. Among destinations that attract religious tourists to Nigeria on the Christian based religion activities is the Omega Fire Ministry Inc., Auchi, Edo State. According to the church source, over 44, 000 religion tourists visits Omega Fire ministry site, Auchi for a monthly programme tag Fire night. According to the church source, the church hosts about 12, 000 worshipers globally every Sunday aside the mid-week service that hosts over 5,000 worshipers per week. The above information affirmed that religious practices at Omega Fire Ministry (OFM), Auchi have the capacity to contribute to the economic development of Auchi town.

Shinde (2003) proposed a model that explained the interaction between religion tourism and economic development of the host community including; it's associated impacts. Economic development in this contest is measured with various religiously oriented businesses and facilities that surround the holy sites such as souvenir shops, travel agencies, hotels, eateries, hospitals that provide health services for the host community and the tourist (Evans, 1998). In particular, the sale of religious souvenir items, for example sacred water, icons and candles and other religious items brings in considerable revenue. Pearce (2007) stated that, Religion tourism is essentially about people and places, the places one group of people leave, visit and pass through, the other group who make their trip possible and those they encounter along the way. These groups of people need some essential amenities such as the hotel industry which provides facilities and services such as accommodation, communication, laundry, meals, etc. in other to prolong their stay at the destination visited.

Dwyer (2002) argued that lack of entrepreneurship skills among the domestic investors to involve themselves with the religion tourism industry, coupled with reluctance by domestic financial institutions to make funds available for tourism developments, have led to FDI to fill this gap. Today, the development of the hotel industry has been rapid and wide spread in the last half century due to the increased number of travelers and tourists. This industry is making heavy investments in new facilities for already existing hotels, including more parking areas, swimming pools, and new buildings with larger guest rooms being constructed to accommodate tourists. The World Tourism Organization 2006, estimated that the world hotel room inventory grows by about 2.5% per annum. It is apparent from the above discussion that religion tourism brings investment in the local economy and facilitates infrastructural development and the benefits of which can be enjoyed not only by tourists but also the local communities as well. The index from the above information shows that religion tourism has a positive correlation to investment contributions to host community.

Religious tourism has the efficacy to enhance infrastructure development of any tourist destination (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). Infrastructure development in the context of tourism



explains those utilities and amenities that are useful to both the tourists and local population (Akai, 2010). This implies that increase in religion tourists' arrivals to a destination increases the demand for infrastructure facilities. Hence, both the government and the organised private sector need to synergise to invest in planning and provision of the state-of-the-art tourism infrastructure. Smith (1977) supported the above information, hence affirmed that tourist infrastructure established in the destination creates touristic product experience among the tourists and the locals. Goeldner et al., (2000) affirmed that religion tourists' general impression about the image of the destination is created on visit to the area. It is therefore pertinent to state that the state of public infrastructure at the destination contribute to quality tourist experience and subsequently branding the image of the destination. The infrastructural dimension is thus a necessary element for religion tourism development hence the basic elements for attracting visitors to a destination. Laurent and Kapferer (1985) asserted that infrastructure is a big part of the religion tourist equation (Akal, 2010). Inhabitants of developed countries, from where the majority of religion tourists originate, are used to modern transport infrastructure that enables high quality service hence; prefer to maintain the same comforts as at home while at the destination (Cohen, 1979; Mo, Howard & Havitz, 1993). Authors find out that religion tourists prefer to travel to countries that have better infrastructures compared to their home country. This implies that if religion tourists' preference for a destination is inhibited by inefficient public infrastructure, the likelihood that they will seek alternative destinations may increase.

An exploratory study was conducted by Acha-Anyi (2018). The study aimed at examining the impact of religious tourism and its prospects on local economic development nexus in Atteridgeville Township. The study utilized a sample size of 93 respondents. Data from these questionnaires was captured on a Microsoft Excel spread sheet and descriptive statistics obtained using the Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23. The results of this study affirm the conclusion that there is a potentially viable nexus between religious tourism and Local Economic Development in the Atteridgeville community. The study of Onnoghen, Unimtiang, Ogban, Ogbaji, Iyam and Oham (2023) investigated medical tourism and the economic development of Calabar Municipal, Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study, a null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. A review of related literature was carried out based on the variable of this study. The survey research design was considered useful for the study. The research adopted multiple sampling approaches. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 232 subjects used as sample in each ward in the Local Government Area. A twenty-item modified four (4) points Likert scale questionnaire titled Medical Tourism and Economic Development Questionnaire (MTEDQ) was the instruments used for gathering data for the study. To test the hypotheses formulated for the study, Pearson's product moment correlation statistical tools was used for data analysis. The hypothesis formulated was tested at 0.05 alpha level. The results from data analysis and hypothesis testing indicated that there is a significant relationship between religious tourism and the economic development in the study area. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that the State government should ensure investment in basic infrastructure such as roads, better airports facilities and good transport system.



Ncube and Chikuta (2020) conducted research aimed at assessing the perceived economic impact of religious tourism in Zimbabwe. The research adopted a qualitative research design that was descriptive in nature. The study population consisted of all registered tourism-related businesses in Harare which amounted to a total of 21 respondents. Questionnaire was the main source of data collection in the study. The research findings revealed that there are a lot of religious tourism activities that take place in Zimbabwe, particularly Harare and normally take the form of pilgrimages, religious conferencing, healing and deliverance nights, and worship. The perceived economic value derived includes employment creation for the locals, an increase in foreign currency generation, and an increase in sales revenue. The research findings also show that for religious tourism to be economically sustainable there is a need for government involvement, re-packaging of the product, and investment in local infrastructure.

Yalghouzaghaj and Shorbolagh (2013) also conducted research on the impact of religious tourism on the economy of countries (case study: Iranian religious tourism). The study derived its data from books, articles and journals from libraries and online sources. The result of the study revealed that religious tourism contributed immensely to the economy of Iran especially in creating employment for the citizens of its country.

There are noticeable gaps observed by the researchers in the reviewed literature which the findings of this study tend to address. The gaps include underdevelopment, lack of awareness of the relevance of tourism to respondents, low interest of governments in appraising the potentials of tourism in their various countries and fear of residents on the negative impact of tourism. The study intends to fill all these gaps. The observation of the researchers was that, there are numerous literatures on the variables under study and the literature available were not based on the study area. The study serves as a base or a guide for other researchers who may be interested in the topic. The findings of this research work added to the available literatures on the phenomena under study especially in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Research Question

The following research question was posed to direct the study:

How does religion tourism relate to economic development in Calabar Municipal?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated to guide this study;

There is no significant relationship between religion tourism and economic development in Calabar Municipal.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is the survey research design. It involves the collection of data to accurately and objectively describe existing phenomena. This design is employed because the study intends to gather information ready existing among the population under study. Moreover, adopting the survey helps the researcher to gather required data from the sampled respondents and generalize it to a large population. The area adopted for this study is Calabar Municipal of Cross River State. Calabar Municipal lies between latitude 04° 57' 06"North



of the equator and longitude 08° 19' 30"East of the Greenwich Meridian. In the North, the Municipal is bounded by Odukpani Local Government Area in the North-East by the great Kwa River. Its Southern shores are bounded by the Calabar River and Calabar South Local Government Area. It has an area of 33 1.551 square kilometres. It also has ten wards. Two ethnic groups form the indigenous population. These are the Quas and the Efiks. However, because of its cosmopolitan status, there abound people from all parts of the state and Nigeria in the city.

Calabar Municipal climate can be described generally as tropical within the equatorial hot-wet climate of southern Nigeria which is characterized by heavy amount of rainfall because of the south west wind that blows from Atlantic Ocean. Two seasons dominate the area; the wet and dry seasons. The wet season commences from late April, peaks in July/August and declines gradually till December/January. The study area is endowed with many tourist sites/attractions such as National Museum, Hope Waddel Training Institute, U.J Esuene Sport Stadium, West African People Institute (WAPI), Nigeria Port Authority (NPA), Export Processing Zone (EPZ), Pandrillus (Drill Ranch), CERCOPAN, Calabar International Convention Centre (CICC), Tinapa Business Resort, Millennium Park/cenotaph, Garment Factory and Peace Park etc. The targeted populations for this research are adults living in Calabar Municipal of Cross River State. The researcher considered males and females above the ages of 18 years to participate in the research because of their ability to understand and their knowledge of current trends. Calabar Municipal has a total population of 371,022 people from 2019 population estimates.

The sampling procedure adopted for this study is the simple random sampling technique (SRST). Simple random sampling technique is a means by which researchers give members of his or her population equal and independent opportunity of being selected. The simple random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) streets from Calabar Municipal Local Government Area, this was done using the hat and draw method. Here, the names of the streets were written on papers and folded in paper balls and put in a container. The researcher blindly picked one ball at a time until the 10 streets for the research was completed. In selecting the respondents that would be used for the study, the proportional simple random sampling technique will be adopted to select 0.5% of respondents in each of the selected streets. Finally, the researcher will adopt the accidental sampling technique to administer her questionnaire to the respondents in the selected communities. Only those willing to participate in the study will be given the opportunity to do so. These techniques will be adopted to avoid possible bias. The sample of this study comprise of 232 respondents selected from 10 streets in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area. They consist of both male and female residents in the sampled streets. After collecting the questionnaire, scores will be assigned to each item according to the sections. The four Likert scale will be employed in this study. The scale is as follows; Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree = 3; Disagree (D) = 2; Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1.

Results

Hypothesis Testing

There is no significant relationship between religious tourism and economic development in Calabar Municipal.

This hypothesis was tested using Pearson product moment correlation analysis. This is because the independent and dependent variables were both measured continuously. The result of the analysis is as presented in table 1.

Table 1: Result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between Religious Tourism and Economic Development of Calabar Municipal Local Government Area of Cross River State

Variables	N	\bar{x}	S.D	r-value	Sig.
Medical tourism	230	11.20	2.447	.187**	.004
Economic development	230	15.11	1.363		

**Correlation is significant at .01 level, $df=230$, critical $r=.158$.

The result presented in table 1, shows the correlation between religious tourism and economic development in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area. It showed a calculated r-value of .147 which is statistically greater than the critical r-value or .158 at .05 level of significance with 230 degrees of freedom. As a result of this, the null hypothesis was upheld while the alternate hypothesis was rejected. The implication of this is that religious tourism has a significant effect on economic development in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Discussion of findings

The hypothesis states that religious tourism has no significant effect on economic development in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area of Cross River State. This hypothesis was however rejected on the ground that the calculated r-value of .147 was found to be significantly less than the critical r-value of .158. The implication of this result is that religious tourism has no significant effect on economic development in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area of Cross River State. This finding is in tandem with a study by Acha-Anyi (2018) which aimed at examining the impact of religious tourism and its prospects on local economic development nexus in Atteridgeville Township. The study found out that religious tourism has low impact on economic development but affirmed that there is a potentially viable nexus between religious tourism and Local Economic Development if there is government intervention. Ncube and Chikuta (2020) research on the perceived economic impact of religious tourism in Zimbabwe disagrees with the findings of the present study as it found that religious tourism contributed to employment creation for the locals, an increase in foreign currency generation, and an increase in sales revenue. But recommended that for religious tourism to be economically sustainable there is a need for government involvement, re-packaging of the product, and investment in local infrastructure. Yalghouzaghaj and Shorbolagh (2013) also disagrees with the present study as their findings proved that religious tourism contributed immensely to the economy of Iran especially in creating employment for the citizens of its country.



Conclusion

Following the results that emerged from the analysis of data collected for this study, the following conclusions were made: There is significant relationship between religious tourism and economic development in Calabar Municipal Local Government Area of Cross River State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and the conclusion made thereof, the following recommendations were made:

1. The state government should provide adequate security for both domestic and foreign tourists, tax incentives to hotels and tourism related industries.
2. The state government should ensure investment in basic infrastructure such as roads, better airports facilities and good transport system.

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