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Assessment of Tourism Potential for Sustainable Development in the Coastal Communities of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

by

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Abstract

Nigeria stands a great chance of surviving the current economic meltdown facing the entire globe if it could focus more on tourism by forging a symbiotic partnership with foreign countries for culture and tourism in developing and marketing their potentials to boost patronage of local and foreign tourists. This research sought to assess tourism potential for Sustainable Development in the Coastal Communities of Akwa Ibom State. The study was descriptive in nature and adopted multi-stage sampling techniques involving purposive and snow ball with each of the LGA being used as a cluster with thirty five (35) respondents selected from each of the clusters, while the remaining fifteen (15) respondents were chosen from the same population, based on their fair knowledge of the subject matter which makes a sampled population of 400 respondent. The result shows that indeed the estuarial corridor of Akwa Ibom State is richly blessed in tourism potentials and can develop tourist industry. As such, the researchers recommend a declaration of state of emergency in the tourism sub sector of the State economy. This will lead to holistic development of tourism infrastructure across the State and a comprehensive tour guide and calendar of tourism based cultural festivals. Also, the researchers recommend the development and production of a standard Tourism Development Master-plan for Akwa Ibom State.

Key words: Tourism Potential, Coastal Communities, Tourism, Sustainable Development,

1. Introduction

Tourism potentials according to Pendit (1999) cited in Arlita (2015) refers to a variety of resources in a particular area that can be developed into tourism destination. People like to spend good times with families and friends while at the same time exploring various tourist places across the globe which is natural or man-made (Ekong and Imikan, 2016). In other words, tourism potential are variety of resources owned by a place and could be developed into a tourism destination, being exploited for the benefit of the economy and still paid attention to other aspects. Similarly, Mariotti (2010) describes

tourism potential as all that is found in tourist destinations, becoming tourist attractions and alternative resources expected to boost the economy in a way that encourages efforts in preserving the natural resources and management of the biodiversity in an integrated way. Nature has been benevolent to all its creation. Unimaginatively, there is no part of the world which has not been blessed with tourism attractions.

Globally, many nations have become heavily touristed. Among the first ten of these destinations in the world, have been Eiffel Tower in Paris which was opened officially to mark the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution with 300 metres tall man-made structure, contributing a fifth of French gross domestic product (GDP) and receives in average 7 million visitors annually. For now, it is the most visited tourism site in Europe. Others include the Great Wall of China which stretches over a distance of 13,000 miles constructed primarily for defence (Wang, 2011). Although many scholars also believe it was equally for land grab, it is credited as the only terrestrial structure viewed from Space through radar imagery with not less than 10 million visitors annually. Notwithstanding its location in a desert, The Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt which was constructed within 20 years (2560 BC to 2540 BC) known as the world's tallest man-made structure for 3,871 years with its original height of 146.5 metres (481 ft) until the erection of Lincoln Cathedral, England in 1311 AD which is 160 metres (525 ft) tall. It is most amazing that, neither the corroding showers of the climate nor the flight of time spanning over 5 thousand years have been able to destroy these magnificent creation of man, such that they are the only surviving structures of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient World.

In Sub Sahara Africa, CNBC (2016) reported that the first three most visited sites and cities are all in South Africa. These are Johannesburg which witnessed an estimated 3.6 million visitors in 2016. The tourists spent \$1.73 billion during the visits. Next, is Cape Town, which hosts Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela, spent 18 of his 27 years jail term. Here, in Cape Town generally, 1.4 million tourists spent a total of \$1 billion in same year. Durban, South African is third, where she had 831,051 visitors in 2016. Accra, Ghana, is the first West African city and fourth in the top ten most visited cities in SSA. In 2016, 761,872 tourists visited Accra, which among others, is blessed with Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park. Fifth on the list is Lagos, Nigeria with its rich beach resorts. In the same year, this most populous African city hosted 711, 209 visitors who spent USD 163 million (CNBC, 2016).

However, owing to the absence of strategic managements or lack of interest in tourism development by some countries, some destinations have become more preferred, popular and most visited than others. And in most cases, tourists travel long distances to visit developed sites which in some cases are not as magnificent as the ones they have back home. Ekong and Imikan (2022) acknowledged that tourists' satisfaction could be achieved with availability of tourism resources and community involvement in extending their responsibilities. There are numbers of things in this city of ours and its environs which we have not even heard of, much less seen; yet, if they were in Greece, Egypt or Asia, we would have heard all about them, read all about them, and desired to see. The foregoing is the exact situation with Nigeria as a destination for tourists. This is equally true of Akwa Ibom State, which is highly blessed with several tourism attractions, but

owing to the presence of the “Dutch disease” (petrodollars) in Nigeria, which now appears as a resource curse, this fastest growing sector of the global economy (WTTC 2013; WTTC, 2019; Reed, 2019) has remained unattended to over the years.

In specific terms, Nigeria is pregnant with enormous tourism potentials, and needs immediate collective midwifery, for Nigeria’s quick rebirth into the world of tourism. Some of Nigeria’s tourist destinations include; the Yankari Game Reserve and its Natural Spring, Bauchi State, Obudu Cattle Ranch and Mountain Resort, Agbokim Waterfalls, all in Cross River State. Osun State has Erin Ijesha Waterfalls while Ekiti State boasts of Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort. A few others include, Olumo Rock, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Zuma Rock in Abuja/Niger State border, National Theatre, Iganmu and Takwa Bay Beach, all in Lagos, and the strongly preserved Nigerian cultural heritage for cultural tourism which Africa stands tallest in the world, among others. Akwa Ibom State, the study area, is abundantly blessed with tourism potentials, as it appears as though tourism which started in the Garden of Eden, finally emptied into the state, when ‘Ibom,’ a descendant of the Biblical Gibbom (The Mightiest of The Mighty), founded Ibom village,’ the ancestral home of most of the Okop-Useme people of Nigeria (Ukpong, *et al.* 2001; Esema, 2002). It was here in Ibom village, that Inyang-Ibom (The Sea of Gibbom), otherwise called “Akwa Akpa (The Great Sea), toured the earth to visit the sun, from where the sun, escaped to hang where it is today in the sky (Amaku, 1949). This tourism by the seas simply captures the account of the Biblical Flood of Noah, and how Ibom people tell it in their own way; through folklore, arts, music and dance. Thus, in this way, the cultural heritage of the people is theatrically preserved for the succeeding generation.

Despite this enormous tourism potential in the area, the tourism industry is experiencing a decline in practice and as such do not promote sustainable tourism development in the area. In light to bridge the gap, there is need to assess the tourism potentials in the area. Therefore this study sought to assess the tourism potential for sustainable tourism development in the coastal communities of Akwa Ibom State.

2. Study Area

Constituting the research area are eleven of the coastal LGAs of Akwa Ibom state; Ibiono, Itu, Uruan, Okobo, Oron, Udung Uko, Mbo, Ibeno, Eastern Obolo, Ikot Abasi and Ukanafun and it is located in the South-South geographical region of Nigeria, situating between latitudes 5°14'0" North and longitudes 7°40'0" East in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria with approximate land area of 3,372.13km² which is more than a third of Akwa Ibom state land space. The study area situates between the Lower Cross River Basin on the East and Qua Iboe Basin in the West shares interstate boundaries with the Aros of Abia State in the North, Efiks of Cross River State in the East, as well as the Andonis and Ogonis of Rivers State in the West lying along the Nigeria-Cameroun-Equatorial Guinea maritime corridors. The National Population Commission projected population for the study area in 2016 is 1,646,300 (NPC, 2016).

Contextually, Akwa Ibom coastline spanned a distance of over 129 kilometres, which covers the area of study is adorned with wowed tourism potentials, beginning from

Ibiono through Itu and Uruan in the north east of the State, to Okobo, Oron, Uduang Uko, Mbo and Ibeno on the south, through Eastern Obolo, Ikot Abasi and Ukanafun on the southwest and northwest respectively. A land splendid in fauna and flora, where whales, dolphins, seals, sharks, and many others leave the seas to welcome tourists to the beaches, where the warm easterly-running Guinea current crisscrosses the chilly northerly-flowing Benguela Current, which experts are consensual that, the meeting of these two oceanic currents, is responsible for the endowment of Akwa Akpa Inyang-Ibom (former Bight of Biafra) as the richest fishing habitat in Africa and third in the world (Odiong, 2008). However, it is pertinent to state that, with Akwa Ibom state strategic location on the Gulf of Guinea as a major gateway on the maritime corridor between West and Central Africa, Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, appears a major hub for the promotion of niche markets such as Coastal tourism, Cultural tourism, Heritage tourism, Wildlife tourism, among others (Eyo, 2019; Eniang, 2020). Akwa Ibom State is a tropical rain forest zone with two seasons - rainy seasons (March/April-November) and the dry season (November-March). The socio-economic activities in the state revolve round their resources. Hence, they are mostly farmers, traders and civil servants.

3. Materials and Methods

The study is descriptive in nature and uses survey research design. The researcher incorporated both qualitative and quantitative statistical methods of data collection and analysis. The respondents were selected using multi-stage sampling techniques involving purposive and snow ball with each of the LGA (Ibiono, Itu, Uruan, Okobo, Oron, Uduang Uko, Mbo, Ibeno, Eastern Obolo, Ikot Abasi and Ukanafun) being used as a cluster with thirty five (35) respondents selected from each of the clusters, while the remaining fifteen (15) respondents were chosen from the same population, based on their fair knowledge of the subject matter which makes a sampled population of 400 respondent using the Yamani's (1967) Scientific formula. The questionnaire forms were administered to various clusters using simple random sampling method. A total of 400 questionnaire forms were distributed and completely filled and returned. Data were analyzed descriptively using frequency and simple percentages.

4. Results and Discussion

The result as shown in the table above reveals the most patronized tourism potentials in the state Mary Slessor Memorial Cairn 30 (7.5%) the Queen's beach in Itu 40 (10%), Ibom Hotel and Golf Resort 50 (17.5%) Ahta-Oro stool 40 (10%), National Museum Oron 50 (12.5%), the battleground of King Osung Atanang 50 (12.5%), High priest Okpo Obribong site 5(1.25%) and Ibeno beach 80 (20%), Eastern Obolo beach 10 (2.5%), the bridge of no return 20 (5%) while the Blue river 5 (1.25%) of the total number of respondents visited the blue river.

Table 1: Most patronized tourism potential in the study area

S/N	Conceptualization of Variables	Frequency	Percentages %
1.	Mary Slessor Memorial Cain	30	7.5
2.	The Queen's Beach in Itu	40	10.0
3.	Ibom Hotel and Golf Resort	70	17.5
4.	Ahta-Oro stool/Obio Ufre	40	10.0
5.	National museum Oron	50	12.5
6.	The Battleground of Osung Atanang	50	12.5
7.	High priest Okpo Obribong site	5	1.25
8.	Ibeno Beach	80	20
9.	Eastern Obolo Beach	10	2.5
10.	The Bridge of no return	20	5.0
11.	Blue River	5	1.25
	Total	400	

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

The result revealed that lack of sustainable blueprint for rural development is one of the challenges of tourism, which 100 (25%) of the respondents was in support. 50 (12.5%) of the respondents said it was lack of basic education, with 20 (5%) of the respondents saying, it was lack of local language proficiency on the part of the clientele. Also, 50 (12.5%) of the respondents claimed it was poor infrastructure. And, while 100 (25%) of the respondents said it was lack of government support, 50 (12.5%) of the respondents, heaped it on insecurity.

Table 2: Identifying the Challenges that Slow Down Tourism Development

S/N	Tourism Challenges	Frequency	Percentages %
1.	Lack of sustainable blueprint for rural Development	100	25.0
2.	Lack of basic education	50	12.5
3.	Lack of local language proficiency on the clientele	50	12.5
4.	Poor infrastructure	50	12.5
5.	Lack of government support	100	25.0
6.	Insecurity	50	12.5
	Total	400	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

These findings enjoy consanguinity with existing literature (Goeldner, *et al.* 2000) that there is no part of the earth which has not been endowed with tourism potentials. It also affirms Olawuyi and Alabi (2018); Imikan, Ekong and Okoroji (2022) and Ekong and Imikan (2022) which declares that the blessedness of Nigeria in tourism potentials, are without limits. And, in this context, the research findings are copiously evidential that quantum tourism potentials abound in the area of study. The findings agree with Ekpo (1994), Eyo (2019) and Eniang (2020) that indeed the estuarial corridor of Akwa Ibom State is richly blessed in tourism potentials and can develop tourist industry.

Contextually, this work identifies various tourism potentials as huge revenue spinners for government, if developed and managed appropriately to provide employment opportunities to the teeming youth (UNWTO, 2010; WTTC, 2019) and as supported and shown in table 1, It is appalling that despite the alarming rate of unemployment in the

country, some of these tourism destinations in our various rural communities, remain unutilised. In Ibiono where the first European female missionary to Africa Mary Slessor lived and fought to stop the killings of twins and their mothers is to be found Mary's resting place since 1915 called Mary Slessor Memorial Cairn, located at Use Ikot Oku. It is built in the shape of an anthill, an aspect of nature she admired deeply. A more modern replica of the same memorial cairn has also been erected in her honour, in her native home of Dundee, Scotland. This twin's mother of Africa has also been honoured by her native country, Scotland, where Scottish Ten Pounds note (£10, 00) carries her image with the reverse side carrying the map of her missionary journey in and around the Ibibio country and Old Calabar Kingdom (Eyo, 2019). This missionary map automatically serves as a compass directing tourists to Akwa Ibom State to savour the State's tourism products.

Itu Local Government area (LGA) which derives its name from manatee (itû) is found the Presbyterian Church building, Mary Slessor Hospital, Obot Itu which Mary Slessor supervised the construction to the completion in 1905. Besides being the first and oldest Presbyterian Church in Nigeria outside the earlier ones in Calabar, it is the oldest permanent building in Ibibio country. Itu also hosts a Queen's Beach where Queen Elizabeth II landed during her 1956 maiden tour of Nigeria (Eniang, 2020). Attached to the beach, are the oldest Quay and Rail Loading System in Old Calabar. Her Majesty was here to pay a posthumous homage to Mary Mitchell Slessor, her fellow British compatriot, who served humanity from Itu District. An instant welcome song titled "Queen Elizabeth" composed and rendered by the women of Itu to welcome Her Britannic Majesty remains a very popular collection in the people's folklore up till this day (Eyo, 2019). Itu is also, where some European sparrows migrate to, during winter, and from where they return to their original home in Europe (Eniang, 2020). Also in Itu is the Sclater's Guenon Monkeys, which speak close to how humans do. Perhaps, this is why Itu (Itam) tradition, forbids monkey eating as a totem. Among others, the Rolling Hills of Itu is a tourist's best bet.

Along the coastline comes Uruan LGA, as the next destination for tourists. Uruan, is awash with many beaches and ports at Ikpa, Nwaniba, among others. These beaches played crucial roles and served as transit routes for the shipment of slaves during the era of slave trade. Its major ancient port at Ikpa was the main coastal gateway into Uyo. Located here today, is the most developed tourism site in the State, the Ibom Icon Hotel & Golf Resort. From Uruan, while heading towards the Atlantic Ocean is Okobo LGA on the long coastal stretch of Akwa Ibom State. Okobo hosts the oldest ancestral shrine (Obio-Ufreh) of the Oro people. One of the artifacts in the custody of the shrine is a regal Wooden Stool scientifically determined to have been carved over 600 years ago (Eyo, 2019). This Wooden Stool was first sat on during the Middle Ages by the first Ahta Oro (Oro supreme monarch) known to history Ahta Aya Ahrah I. This Regal Stool, he sat on is the same with what the contemporary Ahta-Oro sits. This well calved wooden Stool remains one of the oldest surviving artefacts in the Lower Cross River Basin. Equally Okobo is one of the hosts of the Obong Victor Attah International Airport, the home base of Ibom Air. Okobo, which also hosts the largest crayfish beach market in Africa in

addition to her twinning communities in Bakassi peninsula, is the birthplace of the Roman Catholic Mission in what is now Akwa Ibom State, in 1907.

Most tourists everywhere, like visiting museum to cap up their tourism experience. Luckily, Oron hosts a heritage and ethnography museum established by the British in 1958. The Oron Museum was established to preserve about a thousand known ancestors' figures (ekpu obio) of Oron people, scattered in many private family shrines within Oro speaking area. These collections of some of the oldest and finest surviving wooden carved works in Africa were produced from hardwoods such as *Coula edulis* and *Pterocarpus soyauxii*, which are resistant to termite attack and corroding showers of weather. One among these wooden figurines, named 'Ekpu Odu Oro' by the people, is said to be more than 900 years old. Besides these figurines, the museum hosts a number of other craftwork, ethnographic items and some relics of the Nigerian Civil War, such as Ojukwu's bunker. Also in Oron is situated Parrot Island on the Oron channel, Akwa Ibom State, where Hanno the Sailor and his Phoenician team ended the first attempt to sail round the world in 600BC. They were said to have been sponsored by Necho II, Pharaoh of Egypt (mentioned in 2 Chronicles 35:22) to go round the world and bring back to him the geographical knowledge of the world for a possible colonisation of the whole world. This expedition, terminated at parrot island, Oron Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria from where the exploratory team returned to Egypt through the Pacific owing to the volcanic eruption of the Cameroon-mountain (Eyo, 2019).

Imperialism has been known to man since the corridors of time, and resistance thereto, is neither new to human historicity. Such resistance in Oro country resulted in Udung Uko LGA becoming the theatre of the first British military expedition in Old Calabar Kingdom where her titular King Osung Atanang was forced to suffer the first political martyrdom in Old Calabar Kingdom in 1897 (Uya, 1984). From 1895 when Native Administration started in the area following the establishment of a Native Court at Ukpata, the Oro man was not happy that the court was manned largely by persons of non Oro origin and this laid the foundation for the worst that was to come in 1897. Having directed that a colonial agent be put to death, a fierce battle which involved the use of canons (Otembe) broke out and King Osung Atanang was captured and made to pay the supreme sacrifice. This event led to the founding of Usung Village in Udung Uko as the locals immediately moved in to occupy the space which the invading colonial army from Calabar had camped. The casings for the cannons used in this war survive until this day at Usung Udung Uko beach a great beckoning destination for tourist.

Statistically, results from table 1 reveal that the most visited tourist's attraction in the study is Ibeno Beach, thus agreeing with established literatures in this study, that coastal tourism, remains the most patronised of all tourism niches (Hoffman, 2012; Oruonye, 2013; Singh, 2016). The findings show that, tourism would have generated huge revenue to the federal, state and local governments in Nigeria, were it not for hydrocarbon deposits and the attendant petrodollar driven economy of the country. The inference here is that government at all levels in the country, should not run a mono-economy dictated by the pendulous global oil market, rather, they should diversify into other sectors, such as tourism, as presented in table 1. This agrees with Edghill (2019) avowals that rural

tourism is the way out for developing nations, corroborating Oruoenye (2013) findings that poor nations such as India, Nepal and others (Sharpley, 2009) have bettered their lots through such diversification.

Mbo LGA becomes the next destination with several untapped tourism potentials and blessed with many historic sites and events of tourism importance. Mbo is the birthplace of the world's most popular Church song sang at least 10 million times annually "Amazing Grace". This song was first composed and sang by John Newton on Sunday the 10th of March, 1748 (Eyo, 2019). On that day, a ship named Greyhound which had arrived previously from Liverpool, England set sail from the Port of Calabar ladened with slaves heading towards the Caribbean. Aboard the Ship Greyhound was a certain slave master John Newton who represented his father John Newton Snr during the trip. Lamentably, Ship Greyhound ran into a stormy water body within Mbo territorial waters at a confluence spot where the Cross river current meets with the Widenhalm creek at a point geographers call, Tom Shot breakers (Aya Effiat). And in the process despite quantum jetsam, Greyhound suffered wreckage forcing ship owners and slave masters to unchain all slaves so that anyone who can swim can glide to safety at the nearby Effiat shores. Surprisingly, John Newton didn't know how to swim but as fate would have it, some of the slaves picked from the coast swam John Newton to safety. Unbelievable! John exclaimed, and suddenly burst into praises, from where he sang the song Amazing Grace for the first time "*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound; that saved a wretch like me; I once was lost but now am found; was blind but now I see*". Mbo is also the home to High Priest Okpo Obribong Okpo, a non-Jewish legend of the African extraction who had a sky burial as did the Biblical Enoch and Elijah. Okpo Obribong Okpo, a native of Eyo-Uwue Okpo in Udesi Community of Mbo LGA., was a major indigenous Prophet cum spiritual healer of his time. Contextually, and besides his spiritual calling, he spared no time in protecting feathered creatures of all kinds from being preyed upon and for which reason his remains were physically raptured by births into the sky in the full glare of the mourning crowd (Eyo, 2014). Also in Mbo is found the longest and busiest stretch of the Akwa Ibom length of the coastline.

In that order, comes Ibeno, the original home to the gospel of Christ based on Qua Iboe Mission (United Evangelical Church) through the instrumentality of an Irish Christian Missionary, the Reverend Samuel Alexander Bill in 1887. Its long sandbars adorned with beautiful beaches are rich in sharks, barracudas, dolphins, whales, and so forth. Wildlife scientists are consensual to the effect that the coastal region of the area, is most suitable for whales' breeding; that pregnant whales travel all the way from the North Pole to this area to put to births; train the young ones on swimming before sailing back to their original habitat (Eniang, 2020). Eastern Obolo is another tourists destination with it rich beaches, culture and history. An unknown sea animal comes visiting this coastal community once in every twenty years. During the visitations, the people stage festivals to celebrate the August visitor, believing that it is their season of fertility. The rich collections of bronze works or Isi-Ebikan ancestor faces of Obolo people are largely found in the British Museum of History (Ejituwu and Okoroafor, 2016). Their rich music, dance and regatta culture are inviting tourism products.

On the coast of Akwa Ibom State is Ikot Abasi endowed with historic tourism potentials. Here, sits the Bridge Of No Return built originally in 1795, a floating jetty built by European supercargoes to convey slaves into waiting ships and shipped about 7% of the slaves across the Bight of Biafra to the New World. It has three underground holding compartments with the capacity to house 30 persons in normal situations. Unfortunately, it became custody where not less than 150 stubborn slaves were kept at any given time while awaiting shipment. This destination was named “The Bridge of No Return” because once slaves stepped on it, they were not expected to look back, and they were in no way going to return again. Luckily today, the story has changed, because, anyone can now step on it, look back as well as look around, and do return at will again and again. Also in Ikot Abasi, stands Lord Lugard House and Amalgamation Building where he signed the Amalgamation Treaty in 1914. It was at Ikot Abasi, that the first Governor General of Nigeria, Sir Frederick John Dealtry Lugard signed the Unification Treaty which brought the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria into one united Nigeria. Even the office equipment he used, though in bad shapes are still being preserved in the very office he used during his tours of the eastern flank of the Southern Protectorate. Notwithstanding the lack of governmental attention, these structures and facilities are now tourism products, enjoying very minimal patronage from tourists.

Equally, the theatre and the Museum of the 1929 Opobo women uprising in Nigeria are here where, many women suffered martyrdom for protesting against colonial subjugations following impositions of various degrees of taxations on women. They were led by Madam Adiaha Udoma, who lost her life among others. Another dazzlingly wowed tourism wonder of the Akwa Ibom coastline is the Ukanafun bluish river, which refuses to mix with other crisscrossing rivulets and water bodies. While scientific explanation for this rare natural occurrence, are still being awaited, many tourists keep trooping to this destination of wonder to see things for themselves, regardless of the site’s underdevelopment to meet tourists expectations. Indeed, a very delightful work of nature.

Furthermore, table 2 collaborates with the work of Keane (2000) and Onah (2006) that lack of sustainable blueprint for and near absence of government support towards rural development are the major hindrances of coastal tourism development in the study area. The findings all reveal various tourism challenges as shown in table 2 thus asking for relevant structures in and outside government, to look into these challenges and have them addressed (Olawuyi and Alabi, 2018) especially as they affect lack of basic education and local language proficiency on the part of the clientele, poor infrastructure (Awasthi, 2018) and insecurity (Singh *et al.* 2016). This is the worst anomie facing tourism renaissance in Africa and the developing world. And, in specific terms, tourism and security are twins, without security, tourism becomes a mere model of an anticipated future.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that coastal tourism could stimulate economic growth and sustained tourism development in the coastal areas to increase the viability of underdeveloped regions, and to improve the living standards of local populations. The study advises that this is possible when the locals take responsibility to take a walk out of poverty through tourism economic development. But in doing so, the study warns that development is not just an economic aspect but must be judged by its impact on people, it must encompass more than the material and financial side of the lives. Therefore, the study notes that development should be perceived as a multidimensional process, involving the reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social systems. Therefore, Akwa Ibom must understand that a people's manifest destiny is determined by the values which govern their today's decision. As a matter of fact, such decisions among others, if Akwa Ibom State is desirous to join the civilise world in meeting the demanding competitive paradigms in poverty reduction; correcting the weaknesses of the revenue allocation system which relies heavily on revenue from crude oil should encouraging private investment in tourism infrastructure. As such, the researchers recommend a declaration of state of emergency in the tourism sub sector of the State economy. This will lead to holistic development of tourism infrastructure across the State and a comprehensive tour guide and calendar of tourism based cultural festivals. Also, the researchers recommend the development and production of a standard Tourism Development Master-plan for Akwa Ibom State.

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