

TOURISM POTENTIALS OF ARGUNGU INTERNATIONAL FISHING AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Isa Muhammad Sama

Permanent Secretary, Establishments, Pensions and Training Department, Office of the Head of Civil Service, Kebbi State

Corresponding Author's email: isahsama94@gmail.com



Abstract

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sector of the global economy. This fact has been acknowledged by Nigerian Policy makers. But beyond policy statement, successive Nigerian governments are yet to accord the tourism industry priority attention in policy objectives. Kebbi State has a fair share of Nigeria's known endowments with different cultural, traditional and cultural attractions, most of which have largely remained under-developed. This paper argues that the most vital of these resource endowments is the Argungu International Fishing and Cultural Festival. The paper further argues that the festival has cultural and economic significance which can boost the domestic economy of Kebbi State. The festival has gained international recognition which is an added factor towards spurring tourism potentials for the state. One of the major challenges to the viability and sustainability of the festival is whether or not the Kebbi State Government has the wherewithal to place the festival under constant development as a means of retaining its highly acclaimed status as a national and international cultural asset.

Keywords: Tourism, Fishing Festival, Argungu

Introduction

Tourism is a major force in any economy in the world. It is one sector of the economy that has a global importance in this world of globalization where change is constant. Tourism tends to improve the economy of Third World countries and also have impact upon the host community. Tourism is the largest and fastest growing industry in the world. It has become a driving force in the improvement of global economies and a substantial contributor to the world revenue. Hence, the main justification for tourism development across the countries of the world generally focuses on its potential for positive economic impacts. In the 21st century, global economy is driven by three major industries namely, technology, telecommunication and tourism (Adeleke, 2006).

The belief in the potential of tourism to catalyze the economics of developing nations was based on extant research and empirical evidences and not just political inclination. Retrospectively, this campaign came to fore in 2005 at the review meeting of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the United Nations. The preposition was that tourism has enormous potentials for driving the developing countries towards achieving the MDGs. Thus, tourism was called upon to take the place of MDGs in national development to help achieve the set targets (World Bank, 2002).

Consequently, due to the importance and relevance of tourism, nearly every developing country is promoting some brand of tourism tied to its development.

Nigeria is endowed with a wealth of rich and varied human, natural and cultural resources which are a great asset to the country's tourism development. The country is equally endowed with diverse ecological resources and fascinating natural features in the form of Lakes, Waterfalls, unique wild-life, beautiful beaches, inselbergs or isolated rocky hills and a good location along the West African Coast. Other natural attractions include a pocket of mountainous areas with temperate-like climate with vast tracts of unspoiled nature ranging from tropical forests, magnificent parks and protected areas. In addition to these features, Nigeria's cultural assets are among the most attractive and exciting in the world, with over 250 ethnic groups within its geo-polity and each identified with a unique cultural heritage which includes many national museums, ancient slave sites, palaces and shrines, well-preserved local customs, a rich variety of handicrafts and the authentic, unpretentious and friendly population (Awaritefe, 2007). However, despite the presence of these national tourism assets in the country, Nigeria is yet to accord tourism a priority attention in policy objectives.

This paper is divided into five sections, section one which opens with the introduction, is an attempt to outline the importance of tourism not only in Nigeria but the world over. This section equally clarifies the conceptual issues in tourism and tourism development. Section two illustrates Nigerian tourism potentials and examined the significance of Argungu Fishing and cultural festival to the growth and development of Kebbi State. The section presented a brief historical description of the fishing festival and its cultural significance in both national and international contexts. Section three states the economic, social and cultural benefits of Argungu international fishing and cultural festival, its international recognition as well as its international appeal. Section four examined the issue of sustainable development and relate same to the sustainability of the fishing festival in both its present and future contexts. The issues of sustainability and/or viability of the fishing festival is of paramount importance as it relates to the survival of the fishing festival. This section equally examined the problems and challenges of the fishing festival in the light of the socio-economic and political conditions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The fifth and final section presented the conclusion and recommendations proffered as solutions to the identified problems raised by the paper.

Conceptual Issues in Tourism and Tourism Development

Tourism is important, and in some cases, even vital for many countries. It can be regarded as a service industry that takes care of visitors when they are away from home. Others view tourism as those who travel some kilometers away from home in paid accommodation or travel for the purpose of pleasure or leisure. While in actual sense, tourism is more than a service industry and traverse so many facets in human endeavors (Umar, 2004). According to the World Tourism Organization, tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (UNWTO Annual Report, 2013). For the purpose of this paper, tourism can be defined as a purposive movement of people from one area to another for a period of time because of relaxation, excitement, business, recreation and so forth. There are several types of tourism namely; international tourism, domestic tourism, religious tourism, rural tourism and cultural tourism among others. Okpeh and Ughegili, in their study of "Tourism and National Development in Nigeria", conceptualized tourism based on six major types. These are ethnic tourism, cultural tourism, environmental tourism, recreation tourism, business tourism and historical tourism (Okpeh and Ughegili, 2013). However, this paper focuses on cultural tourism which involves

having experience and in some cases participating in vanishing life-style that lies within human memory such as fishing, costume, festivals and folk performances, arts and crafts.

Development is a multi-dimensional process that normally connotes changes from a less to a more desirable state; it is a normative concept that has no single acceptable definition. Some scholars such as Doswell, (1997), Mabogunje (1980) and Mejabi and Abutu (2015), argue that development must be relative to time, place and circumstances and cannot be reduced to one universally applicable formula. Simply put, development denotes the continuous liftment of the condition or standards of human life in all its ramifications in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Increased economic efficiency, expansion of productive capacity of a nation's economy and technological advancement are generally accepted as necessary conditions for development. Development has equally been defined as the improvement in the material, physical, mental, spiritual and moral quality of life resulting from rising incomes, the reduction or eradication of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Other factors include increase in the provision of better food, shelter, health, education security and protection, high self-esteem or respect, increased freedom of choice and ability to determine one's own destiny (Doswell, 1997). In other words, development can be defined as a constant and appreciable amelioration in economic, political, social and cultural aspects of life of a people. It means that development has to be people centered' which is about expanding the richness of human life rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live. It is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people such as providing social amenities like quality education, portable water and medical care to mention but a few (McLean, 1996; Doswell, 1997). Development is also defined as a process of enlarging people's choices and enhancing human capabilities (the range of things people can do and be) and freedoms enabling them to lead a long and healthy life, have access to knowledge that will improve their standard of living and participate in their community and decisions affecting their life (McLean, 1996, Khalid, 2018).

However, the concept of development has shifted its focus more towards economic development, social development and environmental protection for future generations. According to Ekundayo (2014), economic development is achieved when there is an increase in real output per capita income of a country, generally measured by references to changes in gross national product (GNP) over an economic period of time. Social development can be defined as an increase in social or cultural complexity to achieve the consciously chosen goals which are designed to promote good interpersonal relationships, tolerance, mutual social benefits, love and justice for all. Environmentalists see development as a function of environment. However, the quality of the natural environment is essential for tourism development which is subject to maintenance. Sustainable development in the context of this paper refers to the living conditions where're sources are used to continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity and stability of the society. The term sustainability can be defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (McLean, 1996).

However, sustainability encompasses three components namely; economic sustainability, socio-cultural sustainability and environmental sustainability. Economic sustainability is referred to as the maintenance and utilization of economic or productive resources and keeping it intact for continuity. Thus, sustainable economic resources should not be over-used or used-off without replacement. Socio-cultural sustainability is the act of maintaining and safeguarding the rank and status of the society and their culture for the present and the future generation. Under this aspect of sustainability, all living souls are said to be equal with no difference irrespective of the

community they belong, the culture they practice, the language they speak and whatever they do. Socio-cultural sustainability can be attained and achieved if there is mutual interest, tolerance, patience, love, honesty, disciplined ethics, general acceptable rules and regulation, law and information. Environmental sustainability on the other hand refers to the maximum utilization of any tourist destination or site without establishing or causing any negative effects on; the resources, reducing visitor satisfaction, or contributing inauspicious impact upon the society, economy and culture of the area. Sustainability is guaranteed so long as there is no further deterioration of the environment resulting from the use of natural resources for tourism development (Ekundayo and Grace, 2015).

A festival on the other hand, is identified as a day or days set aside or season for rejoicing or merry making within a given community. Festival or fiestas are social in nature and invariably symbolizes the feelings of the whole community. The Argungu Fishing and Cultural Festival is a cultural tourist attraction site based on peoples' culture and traditions which has been celebrated annually. Like most other festivals, the Argungu fishing and cultural festival is marked by holiday character, signifying a period of relief from cultural constraints. The festival has always been accompanied by ceremonial fishing; eating, music, dancing and general inter-cultural exchange (Yusuf, 1982).

The Significance of Argungu International Fishing and Cultural Festival (AIFCF)

Argungu Fishing festival is probably one of the most eloquent efforts by an African people to relive and maintain a significant feature of its socio-cultural heritage. The annual festival at Argungu signifies a Nigerian's people unique efforts at reasserting its basic values and beliefs, hence its relative distinctiveness vis-à-vis the other people around it (Yusuf, 1982). The festival is probably the oldest known institution of its kind among most of the riverine people of Nigeria. In modern context, it has become the most widely attended annual in Nigeria and perhaps in Africa as a whole (Yusuf, 1982). Generally, Nigeria as a country stands to gain significantly from the annual event due to its enormous potential for economic and social development. Argungu, the host community is synonymous with the fishing festival that has brought immense glory and enormous socio-economic gains to the towns and surrounding areas. The festival has opened up Argungu to the international community and serves as platform for projecting and aggressively marketing the best Nigerian cultural heritage to the whole world. The people of Argungu and satellite communities reap socio-economic benefits as is visible in the upsurge of commerce during the festival period and the infrastructural facilities that support the festival (Abdullahi and Sama, 2020).

The festival provides ample opportunities for cultural tourism in terms of historical sites, folk arts, crafts, carvings, museum and monuments such as the Matanfada—the famous river site, where the annual Argungu fishing and cultural festival grand fishing event takes place and the Kanta Museum which is recognized as a world heritage site. According to Yusuf (1982), the festival has generally enriched several citizens from Argungu who benefited from the award of contracts connected with staging the festival. More than 4,000 persons have secured jobs on a seasonal or permanent basis with the fishing Festival Committee. Most of these employees are engaged as labourers of officials for specific entries to the festival. The prizes won by individual participants to the festival have proved to be of enormous economic value and are invested usually in marital, religious or occupational obligations. In short, the various activities connected with the festival have served to raise the average standard of living in Argungu town and its immediate environment (Publicity Sub- Committee, Argungu Fishing Festival, 1995). Similarly, the development of tourism activities like motor rally, farm tourism and souvenir industries among others facilitates the preservation of the festival as well as generate wide range of income,

employment opportunity and other benefits to the people and government of Kebbi State and Nigeria at large (Abdullahi, 2018). The Argungu motor rally would undoubtedly attract not just increased tourism, but also the automotive industry, both nationally and internationally thereby making direct contributions to the economic and technological development of the country.

There is an important social element in the Argungu fishing and cultural festival which binds participating communities together, promoting in the process, a sense of belonging and identity. This element strengthens social cohesion among the different groups concerned (including and between men and women) while providing them with a sense of belonging. The festival also provides an opportunity for interaction among people who attend and participate as a means of enhancing dialogue, while maintaining and relaying rituals and traditions to other generations. The intensive intermixture with other people has greatly influenced the basic configuration of Kabawa cultural patterns. The word Kabawa (sing. Bakabe) is a generic term used to describe the conglomeration of people living under the jurisdiction of Kabi Kingdom. According to Hogben and Green, Kabawa are a people formed at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. from the mixture between Berbers immigrants from the Sahara with a Negro populace of the Savanna (Hogben and Green, 1966). Over time, however, the Kabawa people sub-divided into four classes, namely, the Galaudawa, Mayolawa, Kundudawa and Lelabawa. The speech behaviour and dress models of the Kabawa have been increasingly modified by influences from Sokoto, Gobir, Katsina and beyond (Yusuf, 1982). According to the report of the Publicity Committee of the Argungu Fishing Festival (1995), the cultural night, which is one of the major events of the fishing festival, is a night of cultural promotions during which artists from various states of the federation as well as the neighbouring countries display the rich cultural heritage of their people, and that this event is hardly missed by many. The night features events such as dancing, singing, drama presentations, acrobatic display amongst others (Asogwa, C.B, et al, 2020).

Thus, tourism provides the opportunity for people to understand each other and collaborate with one another. Through this medium, therefore, misconceptions and prejudices held against each other are either reduced to the barest minimum or are eliminated entirely. It also exposes people to wider range of ideas and makes them more receptive to the traditions of the other people. This builds trust and expands their knowledge horizon which impacted positively in understanding other groups. As people understand and appreciate the cultures of each other more, they establish bonds that are important in fostering national harmony, cohesion and unity which paves the way for social interaction and national development (Falade & Ayodele, 1993; Muhammad, 2004). The attendance of such festivities as the Argungu fishing festival may create a fertile ground for some people to meet their spouses from other parts of the country which sometimes result in inter-ethnic marriages. By attracting people from all walks of life in the country and abroad, the festival encourages hospitality and love as it promotes culture and tourism in Kebbi State and Nigeria in general. In this respect, the festival facilitates socio-cultural understanding and national integration amongst different people from within and outside the country. The festival has become a symbol of diverse people's culture, tradition, aspiration and solidarity. It also engenders the preservation of Nigeria's indigenous culture as well as sustain the cultural heritage (Bature, 2004; Mohammed, 2004).

The Argungu fishing and cultural festival is also considered as a contributor to participant's sense of identity and is used as a means to maintain peace between disparate groups and communities amongst the multi-ethnic societies in the country by enjoying shared cultural practices together. It was one of the objectives of the fishing festival to usher in peaceful coexistence between Sokoto and Kabi peoples after a long period of rift. The festival equally aimed at unifying the country with

many different ethnic groups as well as celebrating and promoting peaceful understanding among Nigerians. The celebration of the festival is not only to show the rich culture of Kebbi people but to promote peace, unity and cordial relations among the various ethnic groups in the state. Knowledge passed on within participating chieftaincy-holding families like the Sarkin Ruwa (who manages the rivers sanitation levels) and Homa (chief of the Argungu fishermen) concerning the river's water quality and fish stocks, has been an important factor in the continuity of the festival. The skills involved in the festival's activities are transmitted to younger generation formally and informally. Training occurs, for example through apprenticeship particularly in the case of specific fishing techniques or within families by demonstration (Abdullahi & Sama, 2020). The tourism potential of the festival can also promote sports fishing with employment activities for guides and suppliers of equipment including boats and hotels as well as fishing camps. Examples of successful sports fishery development is found in Uganda where the fishing tourism industry depends on catfish fingerlings which are also found in Argungu (Abdullahi, 2018).

The festival as tourist attraction site or tourism industry is a morale booster arising from the satisfaction that it generates. It offers a sense of relief to the tourists while making them relaxed and rejuvenated. Socially, the festival season at Argungu has become a period of great excitement, pageantry and general license. Such cultural side-lines specifically serve to enliven the atmosphere and bring forth the best and most relaxed moods in everybody. Apart from symbolizing the general feelings and patterning of the Kabawa community, the Argungu festival guarantees a considerable amount of psychological satisfaction and peace of mind to many (Asogwa, B.C, et al, 2012). Summarily speaking, the Argungu Fishing Festival has over the years provided Nigerians and the International Community with a chance of appreciating and sharing the unique cultural experiences of the Kabawa. Indeed, it is not only a means of preserving cultural bonds, but also that of promoting culture and integrity of the Blackman (Yusuf, 1982).

History of the Festival

The Argungu International Fishing and Cultural Festival (The most widely attended in Nigeria and perhaps the oldest known festival of its kind) predates the "conquests" of Muhammadu Kanta of Kabi (the founder of Kabi Kingdom) in the early 16th century (airkhaleej, 2020). The festival started initially in the form of religious rites prior to the time of Surame and Gungu ancient cities of Kabi Kingdom. In other words, it began as an informal family and communal affair. The festival has undergone several changes and modifications since that period. The evolution of the festival at Argungu seems to have gone hand in hand with the socio-economic development of the Kabawa people generally. Since the 16th century period, the festival has become more elaborate and stylish. It has also since the Jihad period been progressively enriched with the fielding of more events such as Polo competition, Motor rally, Bicycle race, Agricultural Show, local style Boxing and Wrestling matches, Archery and Catapult competitions amongst others for the general entertainment of the attending public (Kebbi State publication, 2010).

During the period of Muhammadu Kanta's reign in the 16th century, the fishing festival assumed a sort of nationalistic character. The spectacular rallying powers of Kanta who used to travel in a boat receiving homage throughout his riverine empire, served to bring in bold belief the desirability as well as efficacy of a centralized festival (Adeniyi, 2011; airkhaleej, 2020). Kanta himself was known to have encouraged both localized and annual festivals as a passport to having a very firm hold on his subjects. In this respect, he worked hand-in-hand with the officials and chiefs of fishing and waters who advised him in matters of significance for the welfare of his kingdom such as during warfare, communal fishing and harvests. However, with the wide-spread acceptance of Islam among the Kabawa, most individual families in the area have increasingly

given up animist practices but continued to look up to the festival occasion for periodic displays of the traditional cult (Abdullahi and Sama, 2020). At the same time, attendance to the festival appears to have increased considerably with community representatives taking some fairly conspicuous position at the festival venue. Dignitaries from the neighbouring riverine areas regularly features as guests during the festival.

The 1934 fishing festival was the most conspicuous in attendance by a non-Argungu notable dignitary with the historic visit by the Sarkin Musulmi (Sultan) Hassan Dan-Mu'azu, the 16th Sultan of Sokoto. This was in response to an earlier invitation extended by the Emir of Argungu, Muhammadu Sama, the 28th Emir of Argungu. In anticipation of the visit, the Emir and his council decided to organize a grand fishing exhibition which will serve as a momentous symbol of the Kabawa identity. Initially, the Emir and his officials had felt that local entertainments and feats of manhood like boxing and wrestling would appear demeaning and totally unworthy of entertainment for a whole Sultan. It could also probably be due to the wide acceptance of Islamic religion during the period which discourages many traditional and customary practices. Thus, the Emir and his council decided to stage a befitting fishing festival in honour of the visiting Sultan (Interview, Bagaye, 2017; Adeniyi, 2011; airkhaleej, 2020). On the the day of the festival, many sizable fishes were caught to the admiration of the Sultan who became so impressed that he prayed for the continued success and popularity of the festival (Bagaye, interview, 2017). Thus, from that period onward, the Emir of Argungu and his council decided to make the festival an annual event. Since then, the festival has continued with additional cultural and sporting activities, attracting about 500,000 spectators from all over Nigeria and the world. The festival also attracts local and media coverage, including the Cable News Network (CNN) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (Dantata, 2007). In Nigeria currently, the Argungu international fishing and cultural festival is one of the foremost cultural festivals and it occupies a central position in the nation's cultural calendar.

The Role of Fishing Festival to the Development of Kebbi State

Tourism is an important, even vital source of income for many countries. Its importance was recognized in the manila declaration on world tourism of 1980 as an activity essential to the life of nations because of its direct effects on the social, cultural and economic sectors of national societies and on their international relations (Tourism Wikipedia, 2014). Tourism brings in large amount of income into a local economy in the form of payment for goods and services needed by tourists. It also creates opportunities for employment in the service sector of the economy associated with tourism. The industry which benefits from tourism includes transportation services such as airlines, cruise ships, taxicabs and hospitality services such as accommodation including hotels, resorts and entertainment venues such as amusement parks, casinos, shopping malls, music venues and theatres. This is in addition to goods bought by tourists including souvenirs, clothing and other supplies. Specifically, Argungu International Fishing and Cultural Festival has a unique potential to generate trade and investment directly at the local level as tourists and entrepreneurs seek new destinations. The monies generated can contribute significantly towards rural development, agricultural transformation, community development and women empowerment.

The economic potentials of the fishing festival can significantly boost the Kebbi state economy from private sector investment in accommodation, transportation, catering services, arts and crafts including souvenirs and other locally made products. The Argungu Motor Rally would undoubtedly attract not just increased tourism but also the automotive industry both nationally and internationally thereby making direct contributions to the economic and technological

development of Kebbi state economy particularly and Nigerian economy generally. Same applies to Polo Tournament, Bike and Bicycle racing which has the capacity to attract tourists from far and wide and by derivation, generate revenue to the coffers of the Kebbi State Government. Argungu Fishing and Cultural Festival has contributed highly to the infrastructural and socio-economic growth of Argungu town and its surrounding environment (Wikipedia, 2020). In addition to this, it has brought fame and acclaim to Argungu Emirate, Sokoto and Kebbi States and Nigeria as a whole. The festival has placed concerned states as one of the major reputable tourist destinations in Africa (Wikipedia, 2020).

Other activities like Archery and catapulting Competitions, Canoe and Donkey races, bare-hand fishing as well as the Grand Fishing Finale in addition mini-durbar and various handicrafts are employment generators to the local populations which have a positive impact on the domestic economy of the state. Similarly, activities such as farm tourism, souvenir industries would not only preserve the festival but equally generate a wide range of income, create employment opportunities and other social benefits to both people and government of Kebbi State. On the whole, the festival is expected to turn around the current status of tourism in the state at domestic and international levels and put Argungu in particular and Kebbi State in general, on the global map of economic and cultural exchange. In December, 2016, the Argungu Fishing and Cultural Festival was inscribed into the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO, 2016). The inscription fosters the involvement of diverse cultural activities that require and display human creativity. The inscription also provided a forum where social problems could be resolved and at the same time, contributed towards raising the visibility of the convention and the importance of intangible cultural heritage in general.

In accordance with the UNESCO document on the inscription of Argungu fishing and cultural festival on the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity, the festival shall enjoy a wider international recognition and feasibility, which will spur greater tourism potentials. This recognition is expected to translate into economic and social benefits for Nigeria in the following ways:

- i. Greater representation and transmission of the fishing festival.
- ii. Increased community well-being and economic activities, wealth and job creation, food security as well as trade and infrastructural development. It is expected that all the array of activities surrounding the fishing festival will enjoy a boost as international tourism increases. Activities like mini-durbar and the various trade and handicrafts undertaken before, during and after the event, which generates employment and other social incentives for the local population will have a multiplier effect due to the new international exposure.
- iii. Continuous academic research in cultural heritage and community development.
- iv. Direct impact on government's 6 pillars of economic reforms, social development, infrastructure, governance and security, environment as well as regional development (UNESCO, 2016).

Furthermore, the festival will enjoy international support in safeguarding measures and financial assistance to keep the festival sustainable. In Particular, in having access to international assistance from the fund of the convention and establishing or strengthening working relationship on heritage issues with other states' parties and organizations in other countries through cooperation at regional and international levels and in participating in the work of the statutory organs of the convention (UNESCO, 2016).

On the whole, there is no gainsaying the fact that the festival is very vital to the economic development of Kebbi State and Nigeria in general. The festival has become an avenue for government revenue generation, wealth creation and employment generation to the local populations. Fishermen, farmers, small and medium businesses all benefitted immensely from the festival. The festival has impacted positively on the revival of traditional industries of arts and crafts as evident in Kanta Museum which is also a tourist site. Although the festival has impacted positively on the local economy, it has also impacted negatively in the promotion of illegal sex and crimes. Most importantly, tourism can be downright demoralizing and can lead to imbibing of unacceptable foreign values such as homosexuality, prostitution, cheapening of local values and undermining the dignity of the local populace. However, it has been revealed that it is not a new phenomenon for tourist to travel and enjoy unprotected casual sexual encounters (Cooper et al. 2006, cited in Yecho and Ityouzughul, 2016). Sexual exploitation has grown as rapidly as tourism in many destinations in the third world countries including Nigeria. The issue of crime is by no means different from the negative impact of tourism. Criminally minded individuals do involve themselves in criminal activities when embarking on tours. In the same vein, it has been reported that it has been observed that some tourists are usually arrogant, ostentatious and deviant in behaviour while in tourism destinations (Bankole, 2002). This scenario creates a bad impression on tourists, hence some host communities consider them as deviants or a group of bandits looking for an opportunity to commit crime.

The Sustainability of Argungu Fishing and Cultural Festival

The idea of sustainable development has an environmental aspect embedded within it. The concept has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (McClean, 1996). In accordance with the declaration of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), human being is at the heart of concern for sustainable development.

Following from this declaration, each person has the right to a healthy and productive life in contact with nature. Thus, there are two seeming paradoxical aspects to sustainable development, namely; conservation and development. It is for instance, the concern of conservatives to preserve the wealth of species in a natural environment but at the same time to strive for the development of the society in order to attain the goal of greater welfare to the people. In essence, the condition for sustainable development amounted to each generation bequeathing to the next generation a stock of productive capacity that is capable of sustaining their material well-being. In other words, sustainable development requires that the stock of natural, manmade, social and human capital should not depreciate or decline (Mejabi, E.I, 2015). In consonance with the sustainability principle, therefore, how can the Argungu fishing & cultural festival be made sustainable? Thus implicit in the idea of sustainability is a critical element of continuity which requires that the stock of natural man made social and human capital should not be allowed to depreciate or decline but improved upon and sustained. In this respect, the age long cultural traditions of the fishing festival must be maintained and placed under constant development while devising means of keeping the festival sustainable as a national and international cultural heritage.

There are historical monuments that can be developed to become highly coveted tourism attraction centers whose history is tied to the emergence and development of Argungu as a kingdom. The ruins of Birnin-Surame and Gungu are situated currently in Sokoto State. Birnin-Surame (Surame Town) was historically the capital of the kingdom of Kabi (Kebbi) founded early in the 16th century by the famous Muhammadu Kanta, the ancestor of the present rulers of

Argungu. The Town served as the capital of Kabi kingdom from the 16th century until the early part of the 18th century, a period of about two hundred years (M.B, Alkali, 1969).

The cities of Gungu and Surame were built with very massive walls enclosing them. The walls were built-up with stones and were surrounded by ditch or moat covered with thorn bushes to make it difficult for soldiers besieging the towns to climb their walls. The total circumference of the walls of Surame have been estimated by an archaeologist, John Sutton, to be about 19 kilometers while those of Gungu to be about 9 kilometers (Augie, A.R, 1988). There is no doubt, therefore, that considering the massive earth and stone works still visible at Surame and Gungu, much human labour must have been expended in their execution. Thus, it could only be imagined, therefore, what Kebbi State stand to gain touristically and by derivation, economically through re-creating and re-building these historical relics into their original forms and carving the area for tourism adventures. The implication of the importance of the historical re-creation of these monuments to the Kebbi State economy as well as the viability and sustainability of the fishing and cultural festival can equally be only imagined.

The Argungu fishing and cultural festival features very well in the annual national calendar of festivals in Nigeria. Thus, many projects like the production of photo books and video commentaries, fundraising by local, state and federal governments are steps whose actions can ensure the sustainability of the festival. Additionally, Scientific research studies and research methodologies aimed at understanding the diversity of knowledge, cultural practices and on various aspects of the festival would inspire and encourage further initiatives that are necessary for the contribution of the knowledge and practices that are recognized by the communities, groups and individuals as part of their intangible cultural heritage.

A public-private-partnership-approach (PPP) towards the promotion and funding of the fishing festival would go a long way towards the objective of sustainability through a well-developed, public private partnership between the state government, the Emirate Council and private hospitality developers and entertainment companies especially using innovative technology to attract competition, better operational efficiency and improved services. The public sector can provide incentives such as infrastructural facilities, environment and sanitation as well as a good regulatory framework for private sector participation and effective security in order to guarantee a safe and secure environment that would make the fishing festival sustainable.

Challenges of the Festival

Security Situation: The security situation is appalling in the country and this is a great impediment to national growth and development. The activities of “Boko Haram”, kidnapping, armed robbers, farmers and herders conflicts as well as ethnic rivalries across the country are enough to discourage any would be tourists to the country. Tourism flourishes in countries that enjoy peace, political stability and can guarantee the security of life and property. Thus, the current state of insecurity witnessed in Nigeria has a very adverse effect on both the organization and conduct of the Argungu international fishing and cultural festival.

Infrastructural Development: Infrastructure serves as the life support of any tourist destination around the world. One of the major problems militating against the successful growth and development of the Argungu fishing and cultural festival is either the absence of, or collapse of basic infrastructure. Facilities such as a solid structure of road network, good transportation system, adequate water supply and constant supply of electricity as well as good sanitation are currently lacking in the fishing festival environment. Other facilities such as standard hotel accommodation, and catering services, recreational centers and entertainment services are also

lacking in the historical city. Further to this, there is low level capital investment in the tourism sector due to lack of interest by financial institutions to lend capital to tourism investors.

Conception and Packaging: In Nigeria, there is the problem of properly conceptualization of place of tourism in the context of our development agenda. Beyond policy statement, tourism development has not been accorded a pride of place in development planning. Despite the proven ability of the tourism industry to generate employment and stimulate growth, no serious attention has been accorded the sector even in Kebbi State. In the records of the fishing and cultural festivals organized by past administrations in the state, there is no statistical information on the inflow and outflow of tourists to the state, nor is there adequate record of revenues generated. The packaging of the fishing festival is a necessary condition towards attracting would-be investors, the attendance of national and international visitors and by derivation revenue generation to the state. Hence, such a tourism package must be marketable, cost-effective, convincing and attractive to meet the desired objective.

Conclusion

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the global economy to which nearly most developing countries are promoting some brand of tourism tied to its development. The belief in the potential of tourism to catalyze the economies of developing nations is not just on political inclination but based on research and empirical evidence.

Despite the position of Nigeria as one of the countries endowed with abundant human and material resources, successive governments in the country have not put much effort to harness and explore the cultural and natural resources for the benefits of the Nigerian people. In juxtaposition with the Nigerian situation, Kebbi State has the potential to become one of the best tourism attraction centers in Nigeria but its policy makers are yet to accord tourism a priority attention amongst its policy objectives. The state has a fair share of Nigeria's known natural endowments with different cultures, traditions and tourist attractions most of which have also remained under-exploited.

The paper argues that the most vital of these endowments as far as tourism developments is concerned, is the Argungu International Fishing and Cultural Festival. The fishing festival has long history going back to the year 1934 with an important social element which binds participatory communities together promoting in the process a sense of belonging and identity. This element also strengthens social cohesion among the different groups concerned while providing them with a sense of continuity. It is this important cultural significance that led to the inscription of the fishing festival on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

The Argungu fishing and cultural festival has economic potentialities which can significantly boost the Kebbi State economy. It's newly found international status brings in its wake wider recognition and feasibility which will together spur greater tourism potentials for the state. The only credible challenge to the survival of the festival is whether or not the Kebbi State Government has the capacity and indeed, the political will to place the festival under constant development while devising means of keeping it sustainable as a national and international cultural heritage.

Recommendations

The following recommendation are designed to stimulate governments at the federal, state and local levels in Nigeria to treat tourism as a preferred sector and summon the courage and political will to implement appropriate tourism policies.

- i. There is need to develop an encompassing tourism policy in Nigeria if the sector is to be sustainable, equitable and responsive so as to contribute to Nigeria's economic development. This will in turn raise both the quantity and quality of life of the people.
- ii. The Kebbi state government should take advantage of the inscription of Argungu fishing & cultural festival on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO to invest more in tourism as an alternative source of the state economy instead of depending upon dwindling oil revenues from the federal government.
- iii. Funding of tourism must be tackled. To this end, Kebbi state government should provide the enabling environment to support private sectors in tourism development. In this respect, a partnership arrangement can be worked out between the State Government and a private hospitality development company (consultant) with a specific role for Argungu Emirate Council. The arrangement should cover promotions, marketing as well as equity sharing formula between the parties to the agreement.
- iv. The collection and collation of tourism statistics and the establishment of tourism satellite account as is done across the world should be vigorously pursued. Tourism information should as a matter of significance be made available on the internet for users and investors.
- v. The issue of security is an important determinant of successful tourism development. All-encompassing security architecture must be jointly carried out between the federal, state and local authorities in Nigeria to guarantee the safety and sanctity of the festival.
- vi. Kebbi state government should create regulatory mechanism and legal frame work that will govern the conduct of practitioners within the tourism industry for instance, tour operators, travel agents, hoteliers, caterers, car hire services etcetera, with a view to protecting the industry and encourage hospitality entertainers to operate smoothly. The legal frame work should be consistent with the provision of international economic development bodies such as World Tourism Organization.
- vii. There should be collaboration between the Kebbi State Government, the Argungu Emirate Council and Research Institutions in the country to conduct researches in cultural heritage and community development. There are current research interests at Usman Danfodio University and Federal University Birnin-Kebbi, however, though commendable, further research efforts are needed in the areas of agro-bio-diversity, food security and climate change linked to the fishing festival environment. Additionally, educational curriculum could be designed for training programmes at certificate, diploma and higher degree levels on human capital objectives of the industry.
- viii. The Argungu Emirate Council and the Kebbi State Government must ensure the continuous staging of the festival on a yearly basis in order to guarantee its sustainability. This will not only generate the confidence needed by the international community to attend the festival but would also provide the opportunity for its sponsorship and necessary investment by the international financial bodies.

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