

# **Influence of Festivals and Recreational Facilities on Tourism Development in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State.**

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## **Abstract**

This study examined the influence of festivals and recreational facilities on tourism development in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State. This Ex-Post Facto research involved two hundred respondents consisting of tourism operators, tour guides and tourism research officers selected through stratified random sampling technique. A questionnaire constructed by the researchers was used for data collection while Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical analysis was used for data analysis. The research findings revealed that there is a significant influence of festivals and recreational facilities on tourism development in Calabar Municipality. Based on these findings, it was recommended that cultural and Christmas festivals should be expanded to cover every local government in the state in order to expose the rich tourism potentials of the state as well as promote tourism development across the state. It was further recommended that recreational facilities should be fully developed in Calabar Municipality and other parts of the state as a means of attracting visitors both locally and internationally to such facilities, in order to promote tourism development.

## **Introduction**

Tourism has emerged as one of the world's major socio-economic sector and has been steadily expanding at an average rate of 45 percent annually during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has since become the world's fastest growing industry accounting for about 7 percent of global captive investment. It is predicated by tourism experts that this investment would reach \$1.550 billion by the year 2010 (Cole, 2008). It is in recognition of this that the Cross River State government is investing a lot of money into the development of tourism. The government is committed to achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for economic development in the shortest possible time. Tourism development is part of government's strategic plan to emerge as one of the foremost tourists' destination in Africa in the nearest future (Obeten, 2011).

The rising profile of the state in the tourism sector is clearly a predicate of the recognition by the present administration that tourism is potentially one of Nigeria's fastest growing industries (Inah, 2008). It is seen as a major feature for promoting social and economic development for the benefit of her citizens. Secondly, the decision to develop tourism in Cross River State was informed by the existence of physical and social tourism environment in the state. In addition, tourism is seen as a virgin source of revenue, and indeed a vibrant sector for repository income, foreign exchange and the private sector (Oji, 2009).

Celebrations and dances are integral part of native customs and traditions which help to boost the tourism potentials of the areas that practice them. These festivals (especially the Calabar Christmas festival) have over the years attracted the presence of eminent personalities who attend such occasion for pleasure and leisure due to the unique features of such cultural festivals (Dave, 2010).

Cross River State has witnessed a rapid development in recreational facilities. The cultural centre is located in the heart of the city between Mary Slessor Street and Barracks road Calabar. The building is a monument that catches the sight of tourists with admiration. The facilities at the cultural centre have been upgraded with the provision of modern infrastructure and artifacts at the main bowl and mini theatre wings of the cultural centre complex (Eteng, 2009).

Tourism has become a worldwide industry, which is at various stages of development from country to country. It is today recognized as one of the top three constituents of world trade, coming third after petroleum and motor vehicle industries. Indeed, tourism is one of the world's leading growth industries and is largely a business of human relations. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the tourist was conceived as a holiday maker or a traveler for pleasure, a fun seeker and lover of frolics (Simeone, 2010).

## **Statement of the Problem**

The Cross River State government has mapped out some strategies to conceptualize and implement an integrated tourism master plan that will give a unique tourism flavor to visitors and residents of the state. The unique festivals and recreational facilities that abound in Calabar Municipality have not been fully developed to international standards and adequately utilized in order to enable them showcase the rich tourism potentials of the area. This under development as in the case of festivals and recreational facilities could be traced to inability of both the government and private sector to invest sufficiently in these tourism sub-sectors. This could also be

linked with inadequate information on the tourism potentials that are inherent in the development of festivals and recreational facilities. To a large extent, little is known about the vote of this festivals and investment in recreational facilities in the development of tourism. This study therefore examines the influence of festival and recreational facilities on tourism development in Calabar municipality of Cross River state.

## METHODOLOGY

### Design

In this study the researchers made use of the Ex-Post Facto research design, which is meant to examine phenomena after they have already occurred. The purpose of this study can be achieved using the Ex-Post Facto design because the manifestation of the independent variables have already occurred and are inherently not manipulable,

### Population

The population of this study consisted of all tourism practitioners in public and private tourism organizations covering the Cross River State Tourism Bureau, Remlords Tours, and Calabar Carnival Commission all located in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State.

### Sample

The sample for this study consisted of two hundred respondents consisting of tourism administrative staff, tour guides, and research officers selected from public and private tourism organizations in Calabar Municipality through stratified random sampling technique.

### Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. A closed-ended questionnaire was constructed and administered to the respondents to enable them choose the alternatives that best describe their opinions. The questionnaire contained two parts. Part 1 contained items on respondents' demographic data, while part 2 contained items measuring festival, recreational facilities and tourism development with each variable represented by six items in the questionnaire.

### Data Analysis

#### Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between festivals and tourism development. To analyze this data, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was utilized. The result of this analysis is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between festivals and tourism development.**

N = 200				
Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	Cal-r
Festivals	2936	8620096		
			7833248	0.548*
Tourism development	2668	7118224		

#### Significant at .05; df = 198; Critical r = .138

The result in Table 1 indicates that the calculated r-value of 0.548 is higher than the critical r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. The result is significant and the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between festivals and tourism development in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State.

#### Hypothesis Two

Recreational facilities do not have significant relationship with tourism development. To analyze this data, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was utilized. The result of this analysis is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between recreational facilities and tourism development.**

N = 200				
Variables	$\frac{\sum x}{\sum y}$	$\frac{\sum x^2}{\sum y^2}$	$\sum xy$	Cal-r
Recreational facilities	2824	8620096		
			7534432	0.604*
Tourism development	2668	7118224		

**Significant at .05; df = 198; Critical r = .138**

The result in Table 2 indicates that the calculated r-value of 0.604 is higher than the critical r-value of .138 at .05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. The result is significant and the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that recreational facilities have significant relationship with tourism development in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State.

### Discussion of findings

The result obtained from analysis and testing of hypothesis one indicates that there is a significant relationship between festivals and tourism development. The result of this hypothesis is in agreement with the findings of Ewa (2006) which revealed that there are only a few cultures in Nigeria where one finds such an entertaining rich cultural diversity as found in Yakuur local government Area of Cross River State. The Leboku cultural festival has been upgraded to international standard and usually attracts tourists across the globe to the area during the celebration. The process of promoting this festival has also generated employment opportunities for local people. The deliberate act by government to promote cultural festivals that abound in the state has witnessed a significant improvement in the socio-economic development of local communities and the state in general.

The result obtained from analysis and testing of hypothesis two indicates that recreational facilities have significant relationship with tourism development. The result of this hypothesis is in agreement with the findings of Asu (2008) which stated that the Cross River State government's resolve to develop tourist attractions across the state in order to put the state in the world tourism map and make Cross River State a tourism destination, has witnessed a rapid development in recreational facilities. The state government has invested huge amount in the development of the Obudu Ranch Resort to international standard. The influx of visitors to the ranch has generated a lot of revenue for the government, royalty to host communities as well as income and opportunities for individuals.

### Conclusion

Following the establishment of the Cross River State Tourism Bureau (Law no.1 of 2004) to promote sustainable tourism development and sustainability of the tourism sector, the government has liberalized her economy to bring in investors in developing the state tourism potentials. There should be a deliberate effort at developing and improving recreational facilities as well as promoting indigenous festivals with the overall aim of promoting tourism development. The need to promote the development of tourism in the state has made it imperative to develop a holistic approach including the development of various tourism potentials and using the educational sector perhaps through the development of a curricula for tourism and recreation in primary and secondary schools across the state.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to improve the phenomena under study based on the findings obtained;

- i. Cultural and Christmas festivals should be expanded to cover every local government area in the state in order to expose the rich tourism potentials of the state as well as promote tourism development across the state.
- ii. Recreational facilities should be fully developed in Calabar Municipality and other parts of the state as a means of attracting visitors both locally and internationally to such facilities, in order to promote tourism development.

- iii. Government should invest on and improve the security situation in the state as a means of attracting investors and tourists' to the state.
- iv. Private sector investment in the tourism sector should be encouraged as a strategy for fastening tourism development at the grass root across the state. This could significantly complement government's tourism drive and the attainment of set goals in the sector.
- v. The school curriculum should be infused with conceptual issues in tourism.

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