

Managing Tourism Destinations for Sustainable Development in South-East Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assesses the challenges of tourism destinations for sustainable development in south-east Nigeria. The research sought to ascertain the extent to which tourism destinations have been able to put in place a system to monitor, publicly report, and respond to environmental, economic, social and cultural heritage issues in the study area. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaire that were administered on eighty (80) respondents in Oguta Wonder Lake and Ogbunike Cave in Imo and Anambra states respectively. The respondents were randomly selected across the two destinations, while the test of significance (Z-test) statistical technique was used to test the stated hypotheses. The study revealed that the tourism destinations have no system in place to promote sustainability standards that are consistent with the sustainability criteria for tourism enterprises. It was, therefore, concluded that the challenges of tourism destinations will be minimized to the barest minimum if the host communities are involved in the planning and implementation of tourism activities. This will encourage them to be positively disposed to the project while ensuring the sustainability of the destinations. Thus, we recommend that tourism destination operators should always ensure that only tourism professionals and persons with allied experience are employed to manage the destinations at any point in time for sustainability.

Key words: Destination, Development, Sustainability

Introduction

Tourism is a well established industry, a highly important component of the economic and social environments of many countries. Worldwide, there is a growing interest and deeper understanding of its multiple economic, social, cultural, and political implications, its dynamics and mechanisms. Tourism can bring a number of benefits, including jobs creation for local residents, increasing incomes and stimulation or creation of local and regional markets (Sharpley, 2009). Management of tourism destination is, therefore, a concept widely utilized in theory and practice, while the image of the destination (its sustainability destination) is of profound interest to researchers; as well as people managing the tourism industry. Destination management is a process that involves coordinated actions to benefit the destination's environment, residents, businesses and visitors. It should be carried out by local authorities and other tourism stakeholders in partnership, following the principles of good governance. This is central to

the delivering of sustainable tourism as often, actions taken within destinations are best able to influence the tourism impacts, (Saurez, 2007).

Sustainable tourism, however, is a phrase much bandied around by policy makers. As a concept, sustainable tourism's underlying principles are hopefully now well understood. It is about managing visitor impacts on the local destination area's economy, community and environment to the benefit of everybody, residents and visitors alike, both in the present and future (Climpson, 2007). According to him, these principles should apply to all tourism destinations and to all forms of tourism, whether niche or mainstream.

The roots of sustainable tourism development lie in the concerns over the environmental consequences of rapid and unplanned mass tourism development (Sharpley, 2009). Sustainable tourism development revolves around a central issue of how to manage the natural, built and socio-cultural resources of host communities in order to meet the fundamental criteria of promoting their natural and socio-cultural capital, achieving inter-generational equity in the distribution of costs and benefits, securing their self-sufficiency and satisfying the needs of tourists. Among the principles that guide sustainable tourism include, minimizing environmental impacts, achieving conservation outcomes, reflecting community values, providing mutual benefits to visitors and host communities, and building local capacity, among others (Sharpley, 2009).

Sustainable tourism destination management therefore, focuses on the comparative advantage and competitive positioning of tourist destinations enhanced by their commitment to sustainable development principles and practices. Here, emphasis is placed on minimizing the negative impacts of tourism and preserving cultural and natural resources, while optimizing tourism's overall contribution to economic development in host communities.

Statement of the Problem

The business of tourism is complex and fragmented. From the time visitors arrive in the destination until they leave, the quality of their experience is affected by many services and experiences, including a range of public and private services, community interactions, environment and hospitality. Delivering excellent value will depend on many stakeholders working together (i.e. the visitors (v), the industry (i) that serve them, the community (c) that hosts them, their collective impact on and response to the environment (e) in unity). A sustainable tourism destination management

calls for a coalition of these different interests to work towards a common goal to ensure the viability and integrity of their destination now, and for the future. However, it is widely accepted that tourism development for a destination is largely dependent upon tourism resources, both cultural and ecological that the destinations possess in terms of their quantity and quality. However, the three principles guiding sustainable tourism development (environmental, social and economic) aimed at minimizing the negative impact of tourism on the environment, conservation and preservation of natural and cultural heritage, promotion of visitor observation and comprehension about the environment, allow visitor participation and access to information, give more meaningful tourism experience, generate economic profits for local people and dictate the limits to tourism development. Indeed, a destination is supposed to be a place that can spark visitors' imagination, engage their sense, stimulate their intellect, engage their emotions and enliven their spirit.

In spite of the qualities and services derivable from the principles guiding sustainable tourism, many destinations are yet to attract tourists in large numbers and may not achieve sustainability if:

1. The destination operators do not put in place a system to monitor, publicly report, and respond to environmental, economic, social and cultural heritage issues upon which sustainable development is anchored;
2. The destination managers do not put in place a system that promotes sustainability standards, consistent with the sustainability criteria for tourism enterprises.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges of managing tourism destinations for sustainable development in South-east Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of this research are to:

1. Ascertain the extent to which the two tourism destinations under study have been able to put in place a system to monitor, publicly report, and respond to sustainability parameters.
2. Ascertain if there is a system to promote sustainability standards, consistent with the sustainability criteria for tourism enterprises.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the above stated research objectives, the study attempted to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent has tourism destinations been able to put in place a system to monitor, publicly report, and respond to sustainability parameters?
2. To what extent have the tourism destination operators been able to put in place a system to promote sustainability standards, consistent with the sustainability criteria for tourism enterprises?

Hypotheses

Based on the above research objectives and questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

- Ho₁:** The tourism destinations have not put in place a system to monitor, publicly report, and respond to sustainability parameters.
- Ho₂:** There is no system in place to promote sustainability standards that are consistent with the sustainability criteria for tourism enterprises.

Literature Review:

Nature and Framework of Destination Management and Sustainability

Destination sustainability and market longevity are two major considerations in sustainable destination management. Accordingly, as competition in the tourism market increases, an understanding of the driving forces contributing to destination sustainability is essential, and has been a fundamental step in maintaining tourism destinations, their growth, and vitality (Ritche and Crouch, 2003; Hassan, 2000).

In the tourism literature, a systematic approach to destination sustainability research has been taken. Additionally, the conceptual and analytical frameworks that can help to better understand and respond to the rapidly changing environment, have been developed and explained (Stancioiu, 2002). The management of tourism destination is a concept widely utilized in theory and practice, but the image of the destination is an important point of interest for researchers as well as people managing the tourism industry.

However, the primary elements of destination appeal are key motivational factors for tourists' visits. These primary elements are the fundamental resources that motivate tourists' destination choices, as well as being elements that planners and developers should consider for increasing destination sustainability and competitiveness. Additionally, there are supporting factors and resources for destination sustainability (Ritche and Crouch, 2003). The extent and condition of these factors, such as

infrastructure, accessibility, facilitating resources, and enterprise are critical for destination business success. Particularly, Ritche and Crouch (2003) have discussed the dimensions of sustainability that can be a framework for measuring overall sustainability. The factors should be identified and developed so that those that have influence on the sustainability and the prosperity of the tourism destinations can be determined. Then, the most appropriate indicators of success regarding the performance of tourism destinations should be determined.

Sustainable Destination Management

Destination, defined as a tourist product and then as a specific supply involving a set of resources, activities and actors in territory, is the main competitive unit in the tourism sector. Sustainable destination management is seen as the joint management of a destination in consideration of the concept of sustainable development, and can be seen as the key tool for accomplishing sustainable tourism development (Wollnik; 2011).

In his study, Wollnik (2011) tackles the status quo of sustainable destination management in developing nations. The fact that the tourism sectors in most developing nations are still at a grassroots level must be understood as a huge chance to choose a 'right' pathway of tourism development, bearing in mind that misguided developments cannot easily get adjusted in future. His analysis focuses on five categories of sustainable destination management:

1. Organization of destination,
2. Destination planning and development,
3. Destination marketing,
4. Human resource development, and
5. Environmental planning.

Tourism Destination Sustainability Models

Sustainable Destination Management: The VICE Model

The VICE model provides a framework for the different stakeholders to work together to improve sustainability in a destination. The VICE model identifies sustainable destination tourism as the equitable interaction between visitors, the "industry" that serves them, the "community" that hosts them and their collective impact on, and response to the 'environment' where it all takes place.

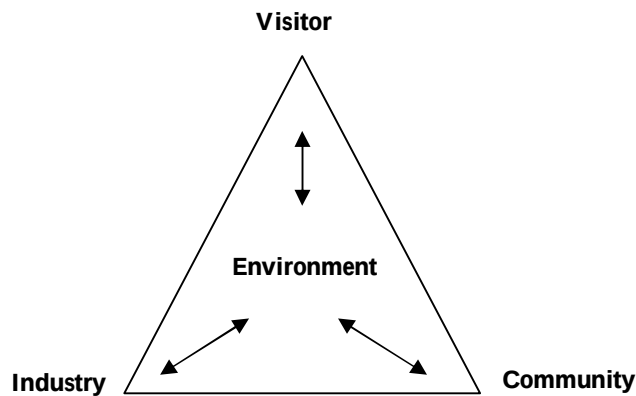


Figure 1: The VICE Model
Source: Climpson (2007)

It is the job of the sustainable destination manager to make sense, of their own specific set of local VICE circumstances and, through an array of collective partnerships, create a destination management plan which; welcomes, involves and satisfies visitors, achieves a profitable and prosperous industry, engages and benefits host communities, protects, reflects and enhances the local environment.

The VICE equation can be applied in many ways. For example, it can be used as a simple check against the future viability (sustainability) of any tourism decision by asking:

- How will this issue / decision affect the visitor?
- What are the implications for industry?
- What is the impact on the community?
- What is the environmental effect?

If a positive answer to all four questions cannot be found, the proposition is likely to be unsustainable.

The Benefits of VICE Model

The Vice concept used locally, regionally and nationally is a possible means of making tourism a catalyst for regeneration everywhere and recapturing a sense of local community control, financial independence and pride. This could improve both the local quality of life and the visitor experience in every destination. However, this is a complex mission which will take a long time to achieve and a lot of organizing bottom up and top down at every level.

The model integrates the basic work areas of destination management (e.g. research and quality) with the four basic stakeholder groups representing visitors, industry, community and environment. The consistency comes from the overall approach (VICE) and the common method of measuring the performance output/indicators of the overall plan. Flexibility develops through the various means employed to integrate destination management and the four stakeholder groups and in the detail of the objectives and proposed actions which come out of this process.

Destination Management Services

Each destination management service will have its own approach to the way it organizes its work and in the way it engages its own stakeholder groups. The model (see below) lists the broad areas of responsibility likely to be of significance to the work of any destination management service.

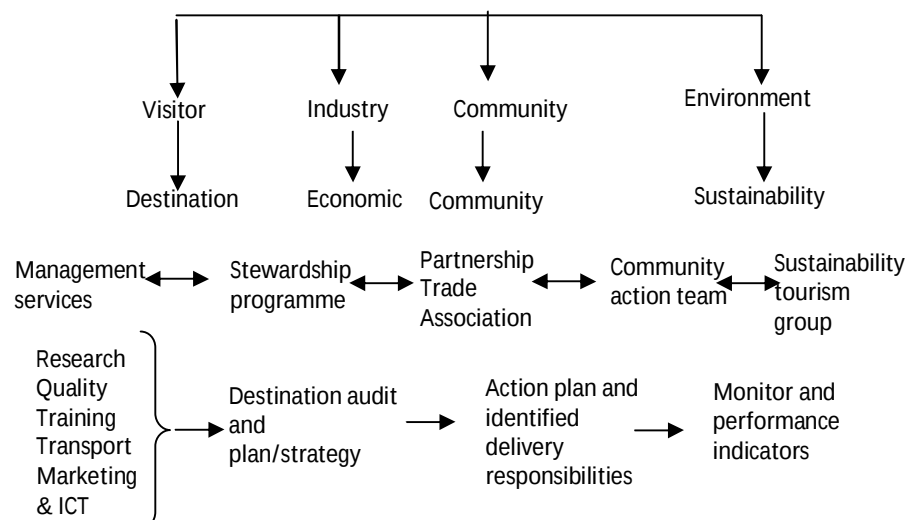


Figure 2: Local Destination Management Model

Source: Wahab (2000).

The problem for most tourist destination managers is that resources and/or organizational structures normally make it difficult for them to coordinate this wide range of activities even within their own organizations. It is likely that initially, it will be possible to engage in all the work areas listed in the model, so fit in what already exists. If work areas such as event management, public buildings and museums, fall under the destination managers' responsibility, they should also be included. The important thing

is to find out ways to integrate all areas of work with those responsible for each related activity and the four stakeholders groups (Visitors, Industry, Community and the Environment) who together will help deliver a destination management plan.

There are many ways to organize stakeholders into the four VICE groups and this depends on the nature of the destination, the level of commitment/resource provided by the local authority/agency /landowner and the current state of local tourism. In other words, they cannot all be engaged in the same way. There is also the confusion that some people can be in more than one group; for instance, visitors can include large numbers of local residents. Overall, however, the public sector and industry will directly benefit by encouraging community and environmental interests to help influence the overall visitor experience and the way in which the destination area is managed. In making any destination management plan work, the stakeholders are therefore divided into two types:

- Public Sector, agencies, landowners and industry, who must lead and set an example by taking co-ordinated action and facilitating the participation of the remaining stakeholders.
- Visitors and local residents, who should not be expected to initiate action of their own, but whose engagement and participation is still essential for the success and sustainability of any plan.

When starting from scratch, it is important to begin with local industry. The most effective means is to establish a single cross-sectoral industry partnership / association. This will take a huge effort for a couple of years but the benefits, if successful, are enormous.

Sub-Regional Model

No destination is an 'island' and there is much to gain by working with neighbouring or like-branded destinations. So the local model links to a sub-regional model, which in turn can link into the regions and beyond. Assuming the destinations that make up the sub regions are all using the VICE model, then each destination plan/output is collectively fed into the policies and actions of the sub-regional steering/strategy group. This provides the continuity of the VICE (sustainability) concept in all sub-regional tourism management and development activity.

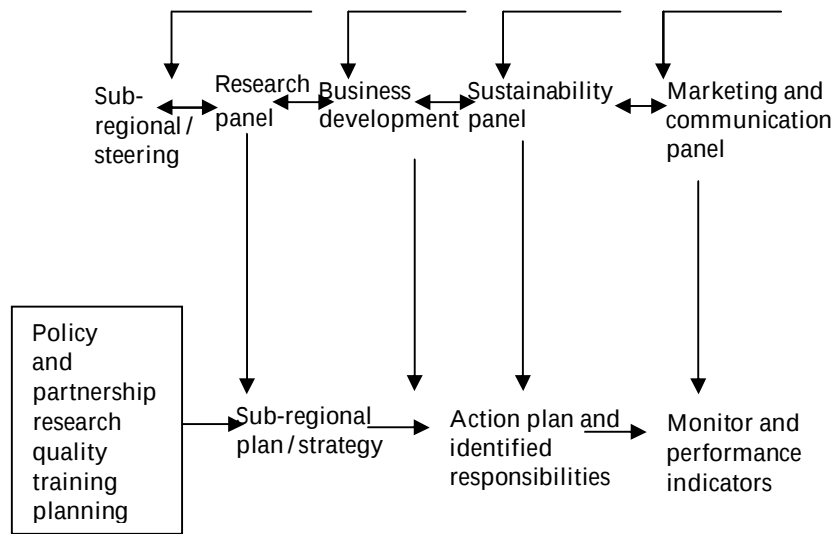


Figure 3: Sub-regional Destination Management Model

Source: Probha, S.R. (2007)

The implication of the above model is that it is important to feed-up, down and across, creating benefit for all destinations in the partnership, and to link them with neighbours. There is no doubt that, from the experience of destinations that already work in this way, that a collective sub-regional approach allows many of the bigger issues to be tackled far more effectively by using economies of scale and collective resources. This is particularly important for smaller individual destinations given the continuing focus on regional governance, (Climpson, 2005).

A Broader Notion of Sustainability

Sustainability in tourism is more than putting your 'green' credentials on display. Sustainability also involves economic and social aspects, (Wheelen and Hunger, 2002). Economic sustainability needs no explanation. The notion of social and cultural sustainability is less obvious; i.e. the role that tourism plays in local communities; its integration with the needs and aspirations of residents and its enhancement of natural and social heritage.

This wider approach to sustainability, especially in relation to destination management, has been considered by most tourism stakeholders. South Australian Commission (SATC) publication (2000) stated that "maintaining and projecting an attractive tourism destination is largely dependent on three (3) major factors:

1. Positive destination image and experience.
2. Safety and security of the destination.

3. Fundamentally, the overall environmental quality.

On this basis, the role of local government has a profound influence on the success of its local tourism industry, and plays a part in conserving the very asset on which its future depends. Furthermore, the tourism industry is in an excellent position to build public “awareness of sustainability issue because of its considerable interaction with the visitors, tourism operators, the environment and host community, which also provides opportunities for local government to contribute to sustainable tourism.

Methodology

The population of the study were drawn from one hundred (100) tourism stakeholders of which sixty-one (61) are from Imo State and thirty-nine (39) from Anambra State in south-east Nigeria. Specifically, the target population includes groups that engage in tourism or related activities, such as State and local communities, tourism authorities, local tourism agencies, visitors among others, in the areas of study. A sample size of eighty (80) was drawn through simple random sampling and structured questionnaires were administered on them with a return rate of 65 (81.25%). The hypotheses were tested using the test of significance (Z test) statistical method.

Table 1: Contingency Table for Hypothesis 1

Options	Strongly Agree	Agreed	Disagreed	Strong Disagreed
Top Management stakeholders	1	3	7	6
Destination managers	1	5	8	8
Employees	1	4	11	10
Total (x)	3	12	24	26
$\sum x$				65

Applying Z- test statistic;

$$Z_{cal} = \frac{\bar{X} - \mu_0}{S/\sqrt{n}}$$

$$\text{Where; } \bar{X} = \text{sample mean} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

μ = Population Mean

S = Standard Deviation

n = Number of variables

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum \bar{X}}{n} = \frac{65}{4}$$

$$X = 16.25$$

$$\mu = \frac{N \times \bar{X}}{n}$$

$$\mu = \frac{65 \times 16.25}{100}$$

$$\mu = 0.65 \times 16.25$$

$$\mu = 10.5625$$

Standard Deviation = S

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{(X - \bar{X})^2}{n-1}}$$

Table 2: Standard Deviation Table for Hypothesis 1

X	$(X - \bar{X})$	$(X - \bar{X})^2$
3	-13.25	175.5625
12	-4.25	18.0625
26	9.75	95.0625
24	7.75	60.0625
$\sum x$ 65		348.75

$$\therefore S = \sqrt{\frac{348.75}{4-1}}$$

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{348.75}{3}}$$

$$S = \sqrt{116.25}$$

$$S = 10.781929$$

$$S = 10.7819$$

$$\therefore Z_{cal} = \frac{16.25 - 10.5625}{10.7819 / \sqrt{4}}$$

$$Z_{cal} = \frac{5.6875}{10.7819 / 2,}$$

$$Z_{cal} = \frac{5.6875}{21.5638}$$

$$Z_{cal.} = 0.2638$$

Assuming a 5% level of significance and 95% confidence interval;
Z-tabulated at $\alpha = 0.05$, is = 1.96

Decision Rule

Accept H_0 if $\alpha > Z$ -calculated or Reject H_0 if $\alpha < Z$ -calculated.
Therefore since $Z_{cal.} < Z_{tab.}$, (i.e) $(0.2638 < 1.96)$, we accept the null hypothesis (H_0) and conclude that the tourism destinations have not put in place a system to monitor, publicly report, and respond to environment, economic, social and cultural heritage issues.

Table 3: Contingency Table for Hypothesis II

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Top Mgt Stakeholders	1	3	10	7
Destination managers	2	4	6	6
Employees	2	5	10	9
Total (X)	5	12	26	22
$\sum X$				65

Applying Z test statistic

$$Z = \frac{\bar{X} - \mu}{S / \sqrt{n}}$$

$$\therefore \bar{X} = \frac{\sum x}{n} = \frac{65}{4} = 16.25$$

$$\mu = \frac{n \times \bar{X}}{n}$$

$$\mu = \frac{65 \times 16.25}{100}$$

$$\mu = 0.65 \times 16.25$$

$$\mu = 10.5625$$

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{(\bar{X} - X)^2}{n-1}}$$

Hence, S is computed thus:

Table 4: Standard Deviation Table for Hypothesis II

X	$(X - \bar{X})$	$(X - \bar{X})^2$
5	-11.25	126.5625
12	-4.25	18.0625
26	9.75	95.0625
22	5.75	33.0625
$\sum x$ 65		272.75

$$\therefore S = \sqrt{\frac{272.75}{4-1}}$$

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{272.75}{3}}$$

$$S = \sqrt{90.916667}$$

$$S = 9.5350$$

$$\text{Thus, } Z_{\text{cal.}} = \frac{16.25 - 10.5625}{9.5350 / \sqrt{4}}$$

$$Z_{\text{cal.}} = \frac{5.6875}{9.5350 / 2}$$

$$Z_{\text{cal.}} = \frac{5.6875}{4.7675}$$

$$Z_{\text{cal.}} = 1.1930$$

The critical value of Z is given at $\alpha = 5\%$ or $0.05 = 1.96$

Decision Rule

Accept H_0 if $\alpha > Z_{\text{cal.}}$ or Reject H_0 if $\alpha < Z_{\text{cal.}}$. Therefore, since $\alpha (1.96) > Z_{\text{cal.}} (1.1930)$, we thereby accept the null hypothesis (H_0) and conclude that there is no system in place to promote sustainability standards that is consistent with the sustainability critical for tourism enterprises.

Discussion and Conclusion

From the hypotheses tested, it was observed that the tourism destinations have not actually put in place a system to monitor, publicly report, respond to sustainability parameters, namely environmental, economic, social and cultural heritage issues. There is also no system in place to promote sustainability standards that are consistent with the sustainability criteria for tourism enterprises. What this means is that they do not have planned sustainability process delivery and therefore do not have the anchor for sustainable destination management. The broad implications of this to visitor expectations and experience, return on investment and community development are better imagined. The study further noted that the vice model or concept is a possible means of making tourism a catalyst for regeneration everywhere and recapturing a sense of local community control, financial independence and pride. Finally, it was observed that the tourist destination managers in the study areas lack the resources and/or organizational structures with which to coordinate a wide range of activities that promote sustainability even within their own organizations.

Given the above scenario, therefore, we conclude that the challenges of managing a tourism destination will be minimized to the barest minimum if

the destination managers are well trained and equipped with valuable resources and institutional structures, and if the host communities are involved in the planning and implementation of tourism activities as that will encourage positive attitudes and give more support to the sustainability of the destinations. Indeed, good tourist destination management is often anchored on strategic management and marketing, taking into consideration, specific theories, models, techniques and principles, while implementing strategic means that involve all internal and external stakeholders, in order to assure brand equity and valuable tourist experience. It was also concluded that the success of the tourism product depends on how well the experimental contents was designed, packaged and delivered to the tourists. This is because the tourism industry is closely bound to ensure a high standard of customer service and a quality visitor experience, but the destination managers in the study locations have failed to integrate these guiding principles into their system. There is no gainsaying the fact that maintaining and projecting an attractive tourism destination is largely dependent on positive destination image and experience, safety and security of the destination, and fundamentally the overall environmental quality. Thus, we recommend that, tourism destinations operators should always ensure that tourism professionals and persons with allied experience are employed to manage the destinations at any point in time for sustainability.

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