

PERCEPTIONS OF TOURISM IMPACT AMONG RESIDENTS OF LOKOJA METROPOLIS, IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines the residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism in Lokoja, and their level of support for tourism development in their areas. In October 2018, survey data were collected in communities around the Mount Patti and River Niger proximate (GRA/New layout and Adankolo) in Lokoja metropolis. Mixed methods of data collection were employed using survey questionnaires, interview and secondary approach. The survey was administered to a stratified sample of 300 residents, and 15 key informants were interviewed. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 were utilized to analyse the data derived from the survey. Descriptive statistics was also employed to summarize the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics as well as the items adapted to measure their perceptions of tourism, evaluation of tourism impacts, and support for tourism development. The study revealed that, the surveyed residents perceived tourism impacts positively, especially the socio-cultural, and environmental impacts, and are strongly in support of any tourism development agenda of the government. The study also revealed that residents' socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender) and residents' perceptions of tourism impacts (that is, whether they perceived positive/negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts) were likely to predict their level of support for tourism development in Lokoja. As expected, the study reconfirmed the usefulness of the social exchange theory and Stakeholders theory in explaining the residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their support for tourism development. Based on these findings, the study concludes by discussing its implications and provides suggestions for the future.

Keywords: Lokoja, Impact, perception, social exchange, stakeholders, development

Introduction

In recent years, numerous studies have examined residents' attitudes towards and perceptions of the impact of tourism development in their communities. The term impact of tourism has gained importance in the tourism literature. Hence, many researchers have studied residents' attitudes toward and perceptions of the impacts of tourism development, with the justification that the findings would be critical to tourism planning and management (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000). The main reason for the growing interest in this type of study is an awareness that tourism development has positive and negative effects (Ko & Stewart, 2002) and that residents support is essential for sustainable tourism development (Chen, 2000; Ramchander, 2004).

On the positive side, tourism can generate new employment opportunities for local residents (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Bujosa & Rosello, 2005; Diedrich & García, 2009), provide business opportunities for residents, increase locals' quality of life, help preserve monuments and archaeological sites (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005), and preserve residents' identity and the cultural pride (Andereck et al., 2005; Yoon et al., 2001). However, on the negative side, tourism can cause frictions and resentments between the visitors and the residents. Tourism can also have negative environmental, economic and socio-cultural effects. During the peak tourism season, public and leisure infrastructures become saturated, and traffic congestion and parking

problems occur, which often cause inconvenience to residents. Tourism can also induce inflation which ultimately increase the cost of living (McGehee & Andereck, 2004) as well as drug and alcohol problems (Diedrich & García, 2009; serious environmental damage and significant increases in waste and pollution can also occur (Andereck et al., 2005; McGehee & Andereck, 2004). This tourism-related inconvenience and collateral damage on the socio-economic fabric of the host community could cause the residents to form opposition and perpetuate negative attitudes towards tourism.

There is growing interest in understanding the residents' perceptions about tourism and its impacts, and there are several reasons for this growing interest. For instance, negative attitudes among residents could be a handicap in the development and sustainability of tourist destinations (Diedrich & García, 2009; Harrill, 2004; Sirakaya, Teye, & Sonmez, 2002). Since tourism development does not occur in isolation; rather, it occurs within specific environments with their distinct characteristics. Within these specific environments, residents' support is a key factor in tourism development (Dyer, Gursoy, Sharma, & Carter, 2007). Hence, the success of the industry depends on local attractions and the hospitability of the locals (Gursoy, Jurovski, & Uysal, 2002). Residents' hostile attitudes towards visitors could be a factor in restraining the tourism sector; however, a friendly attitude could be an impetus for tourism growth in the area. Generally, tourists tend to be reluctant to visit places where they do not feel welcome; that is, there is nothing more important to visitors than the way they are treated by residents, and once they perceived not being welcome, they will avoid visiting such places (Diedrich & García, 2009). Hence, it becomes imperative to include the local community in early planning stages of tourism development.

Monitoring residents' opinions is necessary to assess local feelings, and such monitoring should be incorporated into tourism projects. This will help stakeholders focus on what residents consider important (Dyer et al., 2007). Knowing residents' attitudes may result in policies that minimize the negative impact on tourism development and maximize the benefits (Prayag, Hosany & Odeh, 2013; Stylidis, Biran & Szivas, 2014; Vargas, Plaza, & Porras, 2011). Also, residents' participation in decision making during tourism planning and development can contribute immensely to the development of more positive attitudes towards tourism. However, despite the importance of the residents' attitudes towards tourism, state and federal governments in Nigeria are not developing effective mechanisms that favour the local population's participation in the decision-making process. Political initiatives regarding tourism sustainability and development could be more successful if residents were empowered to make their desires, goals and needs known and were given opportunities to benefit both socially and economically from tourism (Marien & Pizan, 2005). Hence, it becomes imperative to undertake a study on the feelings and perceptions of residents about tourism and its development in localities in Nigeria.

The site selected in this study is new layout and Adankolo communities in Lokoja capital of Kogi State, Nigeria. These sites were chosen for the case study because they are close to the known tourist sites in Lokoja. Such as the confluence point of Niger and Benue Rivers, sites of colonial relics and monuments and Mount Patti respectively. Lokoja is an ancient town, the first colonial Headquarters of Nigeria and presently the Capital of Kogi State. Located west bank of River Niger, Lokoja is a confluence town where the two biggest Rivers in West Africa (Niger and Benue Rivers) meet. Lokoja is a renowned heritage tourism destination in Nigeria. Despite the importance of the city to tourism development of Nigeria, no study has yet explored the tourism impacts in Lokoja. and based on the knowledge that the attitudes and perceptions of residents are vital for the success of tourism, little is known about the residents' perceptions of tourism. It suffices it to say that no published research has, so far, dealt with the residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism and their attitudes toward and support for tourism development in Lokoja. Hence, there is a need for a study that will bring to the fore empirical data concerning the

residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their attitudes toward and support for tourism development in the city. A systematic analysis of these aspects among the Lokoja residents can help the state authorities, federal government, tourism planners, community decision-makers, tour-operators, and tourism promoters to identify real concerns and issues to implement appropriate and effective policies and actions in the area, thus optimizing the benefits and minimizing the problems associated with tourism.

Theoretical Framework & Literature Review

This study adopted two theories to direct its empirical investigation. These are, Social Exchange Theory and Stakeholders theory. These theories help to pigeonhole the data obtained towards addressing the various issues observed in the study. Basically, most studies conducted thus far on residents' attitudes and perceptions of tourism and tourism impacts are predominantly based on and can be explained using the social exchange theory (Andereck et al., 2005; Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002). However, the stakeholder theory was added to provide the template to X-rate in detailed the perceptions of the residents who are major stakeholders in the tourism system.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a major theoretical perspective in the scientific study of human societies it comprises sociological and psychological perspectives concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation. It is a lens to view social change and stability through stakeholder exchanges (Kim, Jun, Walker, Drane, 2015). Since this theory allows for the examination of large-scale issues by means of the investigation of small-scale social situations (Stoite, Fine & Cook, 2001), community residents are likely to shape their tourism perceptions from the expected value exchange prior to an exchange occurring (Kayat, 2002). Based on this, the theory holds that individuals interact with others for profit, or the expectation of profit from their acceptance of an anticipated activity. The theory also suggests that people evaluate an exchange based on the costs and benefits incurred because of that exchange. An individual who perceives benefits resulting from an exchange is likely to evaluate it positively, while one who perceives costs is likely to evaluate it negatively. Thus, residents who find that the exchange benefits them and increases their well-being are more likely to have positive reactions to tourism and therefore support tourism development. Residents who find the exchange problematic, correspondingly, will oppose tourism development. Hence, in this study, the social exchange theory has been utilized as the theoretical background for guiding the study purpose.

Stakeholders theory: A Stakeholder is defined as a person or a group of people who benefits from, or who is harmed by, and whose rights are violated or respected by, the action of a corporation or entity (Freeman 1994). According to Peric, Durkin and Lamot (2014:275): "Tourism as a complex phenomenon and powerful economic force has been the subject of extensive multidisciplinary research. Hence, the stakeholder theory also being a multidisciplinary character, since it resonates well with sociological, economical as well as psychological issues can be applied to unpack the phenomenon in the sector". The UNWTO (2015) identified stakeholders in tourism destinations as tourism professionals, public authorities, as well as the press and other media. In addition, other interest groups and individuals and residents and indigenous groups, also need proper recognition as stakeholders (Macbeth, Burns, Chandler, Revitt, & Veitch, 2002). While Aas, C., Ladkin, A., & Fletcher, J. (2005:36) see 'tourism stakeholders as those individuals or groups involved, interested in, or affected (positively or negatively) by tourism', therefore effective stakeholder engagement must be applied to reduce potential conflicts between the tourists and host community by involving the latter in shaping the way in which tourism develops." The stakeholders' paradigm is premised on the fact that the perceptions and views of each group of stakeholders is a critical component of the sustainable tourism development of such destination. Robson and Robson (1996:534) see tourism as a

complex sector, in which the different roles played by different players within the sector should be geared towards meeting the varying interests of stakeholders.

In the tourism sustainability context, the categories of stakeholders deemed important for the planning, implementation and holding influences in the benefits accruable from tourism, include residents, tourists, employees, government, local business, competitors, activist groups, among others. From the stakeholder theory perspective, a very important viewpoint on sustainable tourism is the functional approach in which tourism is observed as a proactive force which, if developed appropriately, seeks to maximise positive returns to a community's overall growth while minimising the costs to the environment and culture (Peric, Durkin & Lamot, 2014). Towards STD Swarbrooke (2001) divides tourism stakeholders into five main categories: governments, tourists, host communities, tourism business and other sectors. Each group of stakeholders is a critical component of the tourism destination since the initiatives and thoughts of stakeholders are external to the strategic planning and management processes. Robson and Robson (1996) are of the view that the involvement of stakeholders in tourism has "the potential to provide a framework within which sustainable tourism development can be delivered". However, perceptions of sustainable tourism development must be considered on a case-by-case basis, given that what constitutes sustainable tourism development may well depend on the values of the stakeholders concerned. A functional approach also suggests that all parties or stakeholders interested in, or affected by, this business within a market or community should collectively manage the tourism system. The underlying issues around stakeholders and sustainable development concepts rest on the interests and goals of the role players within the system. In this sense, each group of stakeholders has different goals and interests regarding sustainable tourism development, whilst there are some goals of sustainability that they share. For instance, host community share the goal of economic and socio-cultural sustainability (Timur & Getz, 2008; Holden, 2000; Page, 1995). When the local people feel left out in the scheme of developmental issues, inadvertently hostility towards visitors replaces hospitality. For the planning and development of an effective tourist product, collaboration between the different stakeholders in a tourism system becomes imperative.

It must be emphasised here that there is limited research on tourism activities in Lokoja. It suffices to say that thus far no published research has dealt with the residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism and their attitudes toward and support for tourism development in Lokoja using the Social Exchange Theory and Stakeholders lens. Hence, the current study is intended to contribute to the obvious dearth of literature by integrating empirical evidence to the body of knowledge in this area.

Methodology and Design

To achieve the objective of this study, acceptable methods of obtaining data collection were used-quantitative and qualitative. The mixed method approach for this study entailed the triangulation of qualitative data, quantitative data and secondary data. A literature study was used to provide background to the study, which present a holistic understanding of residents' perceptions of tourism impacts at the same time placing in context what the study aimed to achieve and informed questions for interviews and questionnaire survey. Hence, the study qualitative data was obtained through in-depth interviews with some leaders and residents of the study area. Quantitative data was also obtained from selected residents through survey questionnaires.

Research Instruments

For the qualitative data, this study used survey questionnaire method for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of 39 items, divided into 2 parts as follows:

Part 1 comprised 9 questions pertaining to the socio-demographic characteristics of residents. Part 2 altogether included 30 statement items, followed by a five-point Likert scale for the residents' opinions (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided/neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree); these items measured the residents' perceptions of tourism impacts, and their overall assessment of tourism development in Lokoja.

In addition to the above, the qualitative data for this study was obtained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with residents and leaders of the community. This type of interview allows the interviewer to use probes with a view to clear up vague responses, or to ask for elaboration on incomplete answer (Welman & Kruger, 2000).

Population and sampling unit

Lokoja the Capital of Kogi State, the most centrally located State in the country is located between Latitude 7 47 N and Longitude 6 47 E, with an area of 3,180km² and a population of 196,643 at the 2006 national census. Lokoja is approximately 162 kilometers away from Abuja the Federal Capital Territory. Several factors have contributed to the geographical outlook of Lokoja. A major factor which is climate has given rise to the temperature, humidity and a mixture of vegetation cover in the Study Area. Other environmental factors such as topography, geology and land use have also contributed to such an outlook.

Due to certain limitations (such as a limited financial budget and time constraints), it was decided that the surveys would be conducted using a manageable method. In specific terms, in this study, two communities within the boundaries of Lokoja, namely, Adankolo and New layout/GRA were chosen to be the target areas and included in the primary sampling unit. The major reason why these areas were chosen was because they are located close to tourists' point of interest in Lokoja and places where tourism activities occur (River Niger Confluence, Mount Patti, and Colonial Heritage Sites etc.). Residents living in these areas include both those who earn an income from tourism and those who are not; such as civil servants, private business owners, among others.

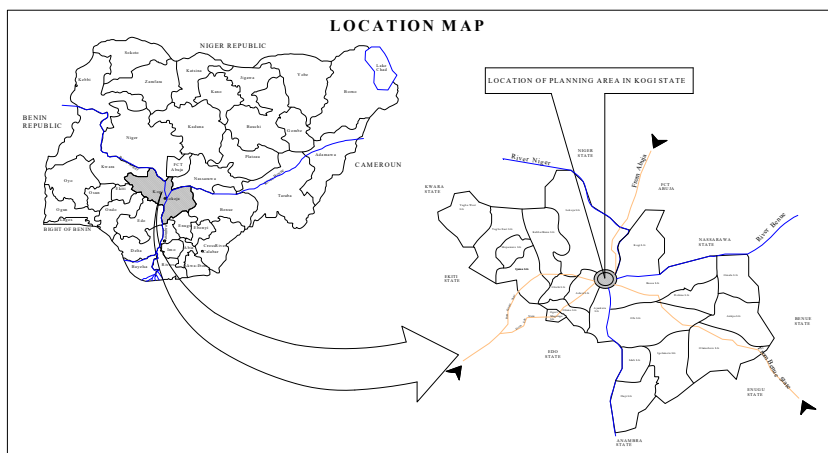


Figure 1 location map of Lokoja

Source: Mejabi (2015)

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

In any research the appropriate sampling method to be used will depend on the research objectives, time and cost (Page & Meyer, 2000; Richie et al., 2013). Since the data regarding the

population size of the target areas (Adankolo and New Layout/GRA) has not been recently updated, the researcher surmised that the representative sample size of 350 residents (for survey questionnaire) and 15 key informants (for in-depth interviews) would be appropriate for this study. A stratified purposive sampling approach was deployed taking cognisance of age, gender, and socio-economic structure to provide a broad representation of the respondents.

In view of this, a total of 250 households were contacted for the survey, with 350 individuals agreeing to participate. Most of the questionnaires were completed in the presence of the survey teams, while some were left with the respondent and collected either later that day or on the following day. The returned questionnaires with missing data were eliminated from the analysis, because any statistical result based on a data set with missing values would be biased to the extent that the variables included in the analysis are influenced by the missing data process. Following this elimination process, at the end, a total of 300 response survey questionnaires with complete data were retained for the analysis, which indicates a response rate of 85.7%. A total of 15 key informants were also interviewed face to face.

Data analysis

The data collected from the survey questionnaires was edited, coded and processed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS Statistics 24). Data was analysed through descriptive analysis to organise and summarise the data in a meaningful way.

Qualitative data for the study included in-depth interviews of the key informants (community leaders). The first stage of the analysis was the full transcription of the recorded interviews. This was followed by the process known as data reduction which entailed the process of “selecting, coding and categorizing the data” (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). The data was eventually sorted and coded according to thematic ideas or thematic analysis. The synthesised views of the respondents in descriptive summary form were finally inserted into the existing theories adopted to unpack their perceptions of tourism impacts and tourism development in Lokoja, which revealed corroboration with existing knowledge, as well as new understanding and emerging trends to the body of knowledge.

Results, Analysis and Discussion

The results and analysis of the residents’ survey is presented in this section and enhanced by interview comments of the key informants where necessary.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

As presented in Table, the sample appeared to suitably represent the population in terms of the demographic profiles of the respondents. Most of the respondents were male (66%) and female (34%), concentrated in the 26-55 years age group (69%). Most of the respondents were married (71.3%), born in Lokoja (51.4%), and from the major ethnic group (67.6%). A large section of the sample (87.1%) had jobs that were not related to tourism and hospitality, and 65.2% of the total respondents had been living in the area for over 20 years. In terms of education level, there was a concentration at the secondary/ high school level (32.7%) Polytechnic/ College of Education graduates constituted 29.3% of the sample, and 20% had completed university-level education. The monthly household income of most of the respondents (82.3%) was below N80,000 (eighty thousand Naira).

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
Age (in years)		
18-25	45	15%
26-35	113	37%
36-55	94	31.3
56-60	28	9.3
Over 60	20	6.7
Gender		
Male	198	66
Female	102	34
Ethnic Group		
Ebira	58	19.4
Igala	96	32
Okun (Yoruba)	49	16.3
Other	97	32
Place of Birth		
Lokoja	154	51.4
Other	146	48.6
Marital Status		
Single	69	23
Married	214	71.3
Divorced	9	3
Widowed	8	2.7
Education		
No Schooling	11	3.7
Primary School	38	12.7
Secondary/ High School	98	32.7
Polytechnic/ College of Education	88	29.3
University	60	20
Other	5	1.7
Monthly Household Income		
Below N 20,000	23	7.7
N20,000-N40,000	72	24
N40,001-N60,000	98	32.6
N60,001-N80,000	54	18
N80,001-NN100,000	32	10.7
Above N100,000	21	7
Occupation Status		
Tourism/Hospitality	19	6.3
Public Service	114	38

Private Business	130	43.3
Retired	20	6.7
Unemployed	17	5.7
Length of Residency in Lokoja		
Less than 1 year	2	0.7
1-5 year	4	1.3
6-10 years	12	4
11-15 years	42	14
16-20 years	56	18.7
Over 20 years	184	61.3

N=300

Residents' Perceptions of Tourism in Lokoja

Table 2 present the responses to the perception-related statements. The survey questionnaire was divided into six sub-sections, based on three aspects of tourism impact: positive/negative economic impacts, positive/negative socio-cultural impacts, and positive/negative environmental impacts. In addition, the respondents were asked to state their views about tourism on Lokoja socio-economic fabric and to indicate their support for tourism development in the city. In general, the results of this study indicate that the Lokoja residents tend to have positive perceptions of tourism impacts. Curiously, respondents agreed to all the positive statements. They especially felt that tourism can enhance employment opportunities in the city (58.2%), increase standard of living (55.3%), attract more investment to the city of Lokoja (66.1). this view was corroborated by one of the community leaders who stated:

“Tourism sector has attracted more investment opportunities to Lokoja since the advent of this democratic governance. As you can see, many hotels have sprung up in the city, including eateries, and other relaxation joints thereby creating job opportunities for the teaming youths in Lokoja.”

Most of the respondents (55.7%) agreed that tourism is one of the most important industries supporting local economy and creating business opportunities for residents (63.7%). The respondents also agreed on higher percentage rate that tourism has positive socio-cultural and environmental impacts. Such as, increase residents' pride in the local culture (79.2%), encourage and preserve variety of cultural activities (62.7%), contributed to the preservation of the natural environment and protection of wildlife in Lokoja (69.1%), and provided an incentive for the restoration of historic buildings (60.2%). Meanwhile, the respondents in their statements expressed their concerns over the fact that the prices of real estate and many goods and services in Lokoja have increased because of tourism and hospitality (76.1%) and that the income from tourism is not distributed equally among residents in their community (65.7%). They also agreed, albeit to a very great extent, that tourism created significant solid waste, and pollution of natural landscapes of Lokoja (63.8%) and to a slight extent that tourism has had some negative impacts on the natural resources (51.8%). The respondents also tended to disagree with the statement that tourism is damaging their culture (68.2%) and has limited their use of recreational facilities (57.2%). The respondents, however, indicated uncertainty in nearly all the statements regarding the negative impacts of tourism, especially those related to the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. Hence the study found that the Lokoja residents strongly agree that tourism has positive socio-cultural and environmental impacts. However, contrary to the findings of those earlier studies, which suggest that residents value positive economic impacts the most, the Lokoja residents

tended to value positive socio-cultural as well as environmental impacts, while ascribing a higher score to the latter aspect.

Another major finding of this study suggests that support for tourism development in Lokoja is strong among its residents. They firmly believe that their community should support tourism development and are willing not only to be personally involved in the future development of tourism in Lokoja but also to welcome more tourists and tourism investment (88%, 77.1% and 77.6%, respectively). These findings are similar to those of other studies such as Tosun (2002) and Ratz (2000), which demonstrated that the respondents of the respective studies not only supported the current extent of tourism but also looked forward to its expansion.

Table 2 Tourism Perception items (n=300) 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

Items	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)
Positive economic impacts					
Tourism can enhance employment opportunities in my community.	8.5	16.9	16.4	43.8	14.4
Our standard of living can be improved considerably because of tourism.	12.4	18.4	13.9	45.3	10.0
Tourism has attracted more investment to Lokoja.	2.0	13.9	17.9	32.8	33.3
The quality of public services in Lokoja is now better due to tourism investment.	2.0	10.4	22.9	42.8	21.9
Tourism is one of the most important industries supporting the local economy.	5.5	10.0	28.9	42.3	13.4
Tourism can create new business opportunities for residents.	5.0	10.9	20.4	42.8	20.9
Negative economic impacts					
Tourism income generated in the area goes to outside organizations and individuals.	13.9	25.4	32.3	19.9	8.5
Income from tourism benefits only a few people in this city	6.5	28.4	24.4	28.4	12.4
Tourism activities can induce prices of many goods and services in Lokoja to increase	4.0	14.9	15.4	39.3	26.4
Real estate prices in the Lokoja have increased because of tourism.	3.5	3.0	17.4	36.8	39.3
Seasonal nature of tourism can create high-risk, under- or unemployment issues.	14.9	21.4	44.3	15.9	3.5
Tourism development in Lokoja interferes with the residents' daily economic activities.	18.4	37.3	25.9	11.4	7.0
Positive socio-cultural impacts					
Tourism has increased residents' pride in the local culture of the community.	1.0	1.5	18.4	49.3	29.9
Tourism encourages variety of cultural activities in Lokoja	1.5	11.4	24.4	47.3	15.4
Tourism helps keep culture alive and helps maintain the ethnic identity of the residents	0.5	6.0	21.4	50.7	21.4
Tourism results in greater cultural exchange between tourists and residents.	2.5	5.5	18.9	48.8	24.4
Tourism development, now induces more recreational opportunities for the locals.	5.0	13.9	19.9	42.3	18.9
Negative socio-cultural impacts					
Residents in Lokoja have suffered by living in a tourism destination area.	17.4	32.3	24.9	20.9	4.5
Tourism damages local culture.	27.4	40.8	21.4	8.5	2.0
Tourism encourages residents to imitate the behaviour of the tourists	13.9	31.3	21.4	27.4	6.0
Due to influx of tourists is becoming difficult to find a quiet place for recreation in Lokoja	23.9	30.8	23.4	15.9	6.0
Tourism contributes to social problems such as crime, prostitution					

etc. in Lokoja	20.4	21.9	22.4	26.9	8.5
Positive environmental impacts					
Tourism contributes to the preservation of the natural Environment in Lokoja.	2.5	7.0	21.4	37.8	31.
Tourism improves the ecological environment of the city in many ways	2.0	4.5	33.3	40.3	19.9
Tourism improves the area's appearance (visual and aesthetic).	2.5	8.5	25.9	45.8	17.4
Tourism provides an incentive for the restoration of historic buildings.	0.5	7.5	31.8	38.3	21.9
Negative environmental impacts					
Construction of hotels and other tourist facilities destroy the natural environment in Lokoja.	13.4	36.8	30.3	16.4	3.0
Tourism has negative impacts on the natural resource	11.9	23.9	25.9	22.9	15.4
Tourism creates significant solid waste and air, water, noise, and soil pollution.	18.9	24.9	12.9	34.3	9.0
Due to tourism, there now are fewer natural landscapes and agricultural lands in Lokoja.	6.5	21.9	20.9	36.3	14.4
Tourism facilities built in Lokoja are not in harmony with the traditional architecture.	12.4	28.4	34.8	19.4	5.0
Evaluation of tourism impacts					
I believe that the benefits of tourism exceed the cost to the people of Lokoja.	4.5	14.4	16.4	50.7	13.9
I think tourism development in Lokoja brings more benefit than harm.	0.5	11.4	5.5	56.2	26.4
I think tourism produces more negative impacts than positive impacts in Lokoja.	23.4	58.2	6.0	9.0	3.5
Support for tourism development					
I would like to see more tourists in and tourism investments in Lokoja	1.5	4.5	16.4	45.3	32.3
The government should provide more infrastructure to support tourism development in Lokoja.	0.5	3.0	17.4	54.7	24.4
The government should control tourism development in Lokoja to maximize the benefits and minimize the cost of development.	1.0	10.4	25.4	37.3	25.9
The community should support tourism development in this area.	0	2.5	9.5	51.2	36.8
I am willing to be a part of tourism planning for Lokoja in the future.	4.5	4.0	14.4	50.7	26.4
I am willing to be involved in the development of Lokoja for tourism in the future.	4.0	3.5	10.4	43.3	38.8

Implication of the study

One of the findings of this study is that residents of Lokoja valued the sociocultural and environmental impacts of tourism higher than its economic impacts, and they supported tourism development, in general, but not merely for its economic benefits, unlike the findings of the earlier studies in other climes (see Andereck & Vogt 2000; Tosun, 2002). Consequently, this study obtained its significant results in the realm of residents' perceptions of and attitudes toward tourism research, showing that depending on the residents' socio-demographic characteristics, extent of tourism's influence, and different geographical areas, the local residents' perceptions of and attitudes toward tourism may differ; residents generally tend to support tourism if they feel that tourism brings them more benefits than costs (regardless of whether these are socio-cultural, environmental, or economic benefits). In Lokoja, residents value the social-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism over its economic impacts (because most of them see more of cultural tourism both tangible and intangible in Lokoja and they have not received significant

economic benefits from tourism so far); however, if a similar study is conducted in other destinations, the findings may be different.

This study also validates the theoretical predominant in the field of tourism research by confirming the usefulness of the social exchange theory and stakeholders' theory in explaining residents' perceptions of tourism. The findings reveal that when residents perceive that the positive impacts of tourism (regardless of whether they are economic, socio-cultural, or environmental impacts) are likely to be greater than the negative impacts, they are inclined to accept the exchange and, therefore, support tourism development in their community.

This research also provides governmental agencies both at the state and federal levels, tourism planners, tourism marketers and promoters with helpful information about local residents' perceptions and evaluations of tourism impacts and their support for tourism development; this information can be used to formulate plans and policies not only to gain residents' support for tourism but also to implement sustainable tourism development in Kogi State and other state for that matter. The more attentive tourism policy makers are to residents' concerns, the greater the support they are likely to receive in their community development efforts (Ramchander, 2004). The study findings reveal that at the time of this research, Lokoja residents tended to have positive perceptions of tourism and that they are largely in support of any tourism development agenda, especially due to its perceived socio-cultural and environmental impacts. However, to maintain sustainable tourism, it is necessary to consider a long-term perspective of residents' perceptions of tourism. Furthermore, it is important to involve residents in both tourism-related decision-making processes and the tourism activity itself since the findings indicate the residents' willingness to be involved and participate in these activities. The researcher's observations suggest that thus far, the residents particularly those in Adankolo —have very limited Information and enlightenment about government activities concerning tourism policy in the state.

In conclusion, the research instrument and conceptual framework developed and tested in this research can be expanded and tested in other geographical locations to identify and examine other variables and factors that may influence the residents' abovementioned opinions. Such information will be useful in providing more comparative results and findings in this topic.

Although the residents' views are critical for examining tourism development, in that the greatest impacts of the tourism industry are experienced and judged by the host residents, further research should investigate the perceptions of tourism organization managers both at the state and federal to identify the real concerns and conflicts pertaining to tourism development in Nigeria. Such information would lead to a better understanding of the tourism structure in Lokoja and any other location in Nigeria and help the relevant agencies to formulate effective tourism development plans and policies. According to McGehee and Andereck's (2004 : 139) "a great deal of progress has been made in the study of residents' attitudes towards tourism, but a great deal is left to be done. No matter what future direction resident attitude research takes, the most important goal must be to assure that the varied voices of the community are heard."

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