

SEASONAL CHANGES ON RESORT PATRONAGE IN CROSS RIVER STATE - NIGERIA

Eja Eja

Anim Ajake

Violet Effiom

University of Calabar, Nigeria

Bernadette Ndomah

Federal College of Education Obudu, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: The seasonal changes on the influence of visitor in Calabar has not only affected the tourism development but has constituted great concern to various stakeholders in the tourism industry especially the providers of recreational services in the area. This paper critically examines the seasonal changes that occur in the various resorts with respect to patronage, income generation, origin of tourist and the available recreational facilities and services in the area. Three basic resorts were used which include Marina resort, Aqua vista resort and Orange resort. Data were obtained from secondary sources and findings revealed that resorts in Calabar witness a high seasonal fluctuation in terms of patronage especially during wet season which is usually characterized with no events. However, December was observed as the peak period for revenue generation and usually with high rate of tourist influx. Therefore, the sustainability of resort destination depends on the various stakeholders in the industry. Keywords: tourism development, seasonal changes, tourist patronage, recreational services.

RESUMEN: Las variaciones estacionales de los visitantes de Calabar, además de afectar el desarrollo turístico, son motivo de fuerte preocupación para los stakeholders de la industria turística, en particular para los que están directamente ligados a las actividades de animación turística. Este artículo analiza de forma crítica los cambios estacionales que ocurren en varios emprendimientos, respecto a la demanda, ingresos, origen de los turistas y disponibilidad de servicios de animación en la región. Se estudiaron tres emprendimientos turísticos, designadamente: Marina Resort, Aqua Vista Resort y Orange Resort. Los datos, obtenidos a partir de fuentes secundarias, muestran que estos emprendimientos de Calabar presentan fuertes variaciones estacionales, en términos de la demanda, especialmente en la estación húmeda, que se traduce en la total inexistencia de eventos. Sin embargo, al mes de diciembre corresponde un pico en la generación de ingresos y un aumento inusitado en las llegadas de turistas. Se concluye así que la sostenibilidad del destino depende de los stakeholders que intervienen en el sector. **Palabras clave:** desarrollo turístico, variaciones estacionales, demanda turística, animación turística.

RESUMO: As variações sazonais dos visitantes de Calabar, além de afetarem o desenvolvimento turístico, são motivo de forte preocupação para os stakeholders da indústria turística, em particular para os que estão diretamente ligados às atividades de animação turística. Este artigo analisa de forma crítica as mudanças sazonais que ocorrem em vários empreendimentos, em termos de procura, receitas, origem dos turistas e disponibilidade de serviços de animação na região. Foram estudados três empreendimentos turísticos, designadamente: Marina Resort, Aqua Vista Resort e Orange Resort. Os dados, obtidos a partir de fontes secundárias, revelam que estes empreendimentos de Calabar apresentam fortes variações sazonais, em termos de procura, especialmente na estação húmida, que se traduz na total inexistência de eventos. No entanto, ao mês de Dezembro corresponde um pico na geração de receitas e um acrésci-

mo inusitado nas chegadas de turistas. Conclui-se assim que a sustentabilidade do destino depende dos stakeholders que intervêm no sector. **Palavras chave:** desenvolvimento turístico, variações sazonais, procura turística, animação turística.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world (World Tourism Organization WTO, 1998), and it continues to grow. From 1950 through 1998 international tourist arrivals have increased 25 fold.

The corresponding receipts from tourists have increased 211 fold worldwide. In addition, to the dramatic increase in international tourist arrivals, per capital expenditures of these tourists have also increased, both rising income levels, more leisure time, increase in life expectancy, advances in technology and the shrinking of travel time, international tourism is still expected to continue to grow in the current millennium.

However, Kenya depends largely on tourism potentials such as the Nairobi National Park with its biodiversity wildlife; Masai Mara national reserve which has one of the greatest migration of about 1.7 million wildbeasts annually, as well as Mount Kenya, Lake Nakuru and the village market, all contribute to Kenya's coffers (Brotherton, 2001). South Africa, which is now the haven of foreign direct investors, gave priority to its tourism industry. Attractions like the table mountain, the vineyard cape point and "the event place" called sun-city, were all developed and run by private entrepreneurs, with the government holding minimal shares (Baloglu, 1999).

In Nigeria, the geographical features of Cross River State, from the South to Northern part; makes it a natural paradise (Larry, 2005). Cross River State with favourable climate conditions has attracted many tourists to it numerous tourist sports, over the years. These centers include the Tinapa Business Resort, Aqua vista, museum, orange resort, love garden resort, Agbokim waterfalls, the green vegetation, the overwhelming beautiful landscape, colourful folks and the agreeable climate which welcome many fun seekers to the highlands of the Obudu Ranch Resort (Larry, 2005). In Calabar, the weather condition which is characterized by double maxima (wet and dry season) greatly influence the rate of tourist influx and providers of tourist services. These conditions adversely affect resorts development, operating costs, sales of beverages and leisure equipment (Aniah, 2005).

Today, the seasonal changes on resort patronage is highly attributed to weather conditions, and absence of tourism related activities, all year round, has an impact on the various resorts and its general operations. Can we attribute the low fluctuation in terms of patronage and low income generation to the operators of the industry? What role have the various stakeholders playing to ensure the sustainability of this great potential (resorts) in Calabar. Therefore, this paper seeks to x-ray the seasonal changes that occurred in the resorts as regards to tourist origin, patronage, revenue generation and the recreational facilities and services offered by the various resort.

Tourism is affected by six main factors namely, wealth (ones standard of living), demographic conditions, educational factors, social habits, mobility and working conditions (World Tourism Organization, 1994). Empirical finding sources have shown that the potential holiday period is a strong parameter in tourist patronage, for example. Edginton (2003), opined that school holidays, industrial holidays, climate and geographic factors, result in tourism patronage being highly seasonal. Robinson (1979), went further to determine the implications of this on tourism industries. He discovered that tourism often needed heavy investments that were only used for a few months and made the industry uneconomic. Baud-Bovy and Lawson (1998) stated that the socio-economic groups of individuals determine the level of tourism patronage. Their assertion was that, people whose social cultural and recreational standards are similar, as a rule the larger the education and wealth of the individual, the higher his socio-economic group, the more recreational pursuits they tend to be engaged in, and the more diverse their recreation experience will be. These authors said also that the pursuance of recreation depends on the person's physical, mental, intellectual and social ability. One can further stress that all these vary with age, sex and stage in the life cycle. He also observed that during one's childhood days, tourism introduces the individual to a host of experiences, and develops one's mental and physical powers. But as a teenager, recreation or tourism provide opportunities for exploration of tastes and talents. Robinson (1976) also observed the age variation in tourism participation. A study carried out in Britain by Linderman (1937) revealed that, elderly people were less likely to take holidays away from home, because of their age or increased infirmity. He further observed that the difference in leisure activities is to a large extent a distinction of the level of income. Some scholars however agreed with Robinson's (2006) views. Kando (1964), for instance, observed that as ones personal income increases, so does the quest for recreation and travels. One's occupation however, determines the number of free time hours available for leisure activities and to a greater extent determine the availability for leisure activities. This actually has influenced the attainment of recreation.

The World Tourism Organization (1994) however, stated that every human being regardless of his economic or social status can achieve one form of recreation or the other, and this cannot determine the level of patronage. In other words, they are of the view that the economic or social status of an individual cannot determine the pattern or level of patronage of tourism facilities.

STUDY AREA

The study area is Calabar which lies between latitude $50^{\circ} 32'$ and $40^{\circ} 22'$ North and longitude $70^{\circ} 50'$ and $90^{\circ} 28'$ East. It is about 21,

481sqkm in size. It is situated within the tropics sharing a common boundary with the Republic of Cameroon in the East, Odukpani Local Government Area in the North, while Akwa Ibom in the south.

The peninsular of Calabar is moderately undulating with land descending rather abruptly to Calabar River at the Western boundary while the slope is gradually towards the Kwa River to the east.

However, the scope of this research is limited to the hotel industry as sub system of the hospitality industry and the tourism potentials within the area. The climate of the study area is of the semi-equatorial (monsoonal) type with normal heavy downpours. The rainfall regime is divided into types-dry and wet season. The movement of our mass northward and southward determines the beginning and end of dry and wet season in the study area. Rainy season starts in March and ends in November, while the dry season sets in December and ends in February. Annual rainfall ranges from 2500mm to 3000mm. The variations in the intensity and reliability of rainfall coupled with high temperature throughout the year affect the influence of tourist and visitors in the area. The vegetation of the study area was typical tropical rainforest, and it was characterized by three layer canopy with the emergent trees. It is a closed canopy forest and made up of layer of broad leaf evergreen tree species (60-100 species per sq km) with 3-4 layers. The canopy height of this forest was between 25-50m tall with emergent trees up to 100m high. The trees had buttress smooth bark and columnar boles. Thick-stemmed woody climbing plants (Lianas) were common as well as epiphytes and other herbs.

METHODOLOGY

This study was within the confine of Calabar, taking into consideration three major resorts which include Orange resort, Marina resort and Aqua vista resort. Two seasons were used such as dry and wet season to assess the seasonal changes that occur in terms of the rate of patronage (tourist influx) income generation and origin of tourist. Secondary data such as origin of tourist, patronage, income generating facilities and services were used which were obtained from customers registration form in each of the resorts. Interviews were also conducted with the resorts managers and staff in order to ascertain the general operation of the resorts.

RESULTS

Tourist patronage on resorts

It was discovered in table 1 that the dry season witnesses a high influx of tourists in the various resorts with a value of one thousand six hundred and twenty six (1626) tourists compared to wet season with a value of five hundred and eighty (580) tourists between January to December 2009. This result affirms what Klenosky (2002) determines as

“destination attractiveness”. According to this author, climatic conditions and the attractiveness of a place influences tourist decision and choice to visit any given destination for leisure or recreation. However, dry season in Calabar is accompanied with events such as the carnival festival and Obudu mounting race which attract high influx of visitors into the state hence boosting the image and level of patronage of the resorts (Johnson, 2001). Table 1 indicates that during the dry season Marina and Orange resort recorded a high influx of tourist with values of 52.15% and 29.90 compared to Aqua Vista with a value of 18.02% which patronage was also observed to be on the least side in the wet season with a value of 18.80 compared to Marina and Orange resorts with high values of 46.90% and 34.48% in the wet season.

Table 1. Monthly Tourist patronage of resorts in the dry and wet season

Month	Marina resort	Orange resort	Aqua vista	Total
April +	35	26	12	72
May +	28	45	9	82
June +	48	19	11	78
July +	29	23	35	77
August +	41	51	17	109
Sept. +	38	14	14	66
Total-Wet season	272(46.90)	200(34.48)	109(18.80)	580
Oct. *	56	27	19	102
Nov. *	145	78	76	299
Dec. *	535	259	107	995
Jan. *	62	75	29	166
Feb. *	29	21	35	85
March *	21	31	27	79
Total-Dry season	848(52.15)	486(29.90)	293(18.02)	1626

Source: Field survey, 2010.

*Note: + = Dry season; * = Wet season.*

Trend analyses of seasonal changes in tourist resorts

The seasonal changes in the various resorts varies from one another and also between the various months. Marina resort and Orange resort had a high influx of tourists during December compared to other months. However, it was noticed that the months of March, May and September recorded the least patronage in the various resorts with Orange and Aqua vista recording the same number of patronage as in indicated with low values.

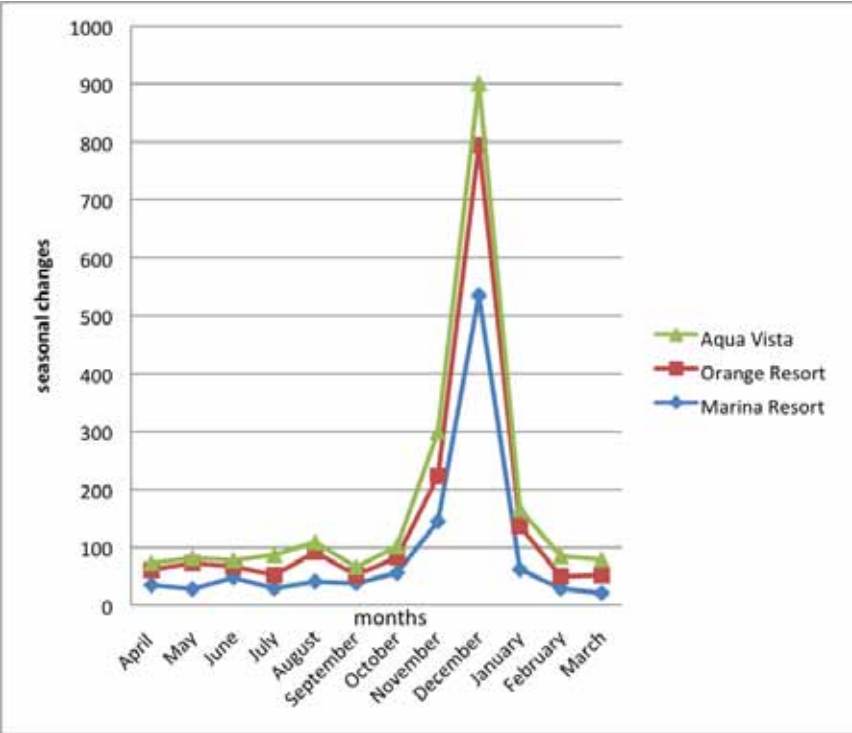


Figure 1. Trend analyses of seasonal changes in monthly patronage

International tourist arrivals in dry season

The origin of tourist arrivals in Calabar indicate that one thousand six hundred and twenty seven (1627) were the major arrivals m the vari-
ous resort in Calabar. It was observed that the Marina resort had more
patronage with a value of 52.11% compared of Orange and Aqua vista
with values of 29.90, 18% respectively.

Table 2 shows that tourists from Cuba dominated the various re-
sorts with values of 13.08%, 21.60% and 20.81% respectively. This
was accordance with what Johnson (2001) opine that countries with
the same socio-cultural and ethnic affiliation have great influence with

one another. This situation was usually experience in Calabar especially during festive periods where the majority of the international tourists come from Cuba to display their arts and cultural activities which are usually similar with those of Cross River State especially the Efiks. The tourists from Cameroon were high in the Marina resort with a value of 21.13% on an individual note during dry season. However, it was noticed that tourists from Brazil and Irland represented lower values of arrivals in the resorts with Brazil Marina resort 1.17%, Orange resort 1.44% and Aqua vista 4.09% and Irish, Marina resort 3.42% , Orange resort 4.12% and Aqua vista 3.07% respectively.

Table 2. Origin of tourist arrivals in the dry season

Tourists Origin	No. of arrivals in the resort					
	Marina resort	%	Orange resort	%	Aqua vista	%
Cuba	126	14.90	75	15.43	41	20.81
South Africa	95	11.20	65	13.37	32	10.92
Cameroon	181	21.13	69	14.20	29	10.00
Ghana	75	8.84	31	6.38	19	6.48
India	125	14.74	87	17.90	52	17.74
China	111	13.08	105	21.60	61	14.00
Kenya	45	5.31	11	2.26	26	8.87
Irish	29	3.42	20	4.12	9	3.07
Brazil	10	1.17	7	1.44	12	4.09
Total 1627	848 (52.11)		486 (29.90)		293 (18.01)	

Source: Field survey, 2010.

International tourist arrivals in wet season

Table 3 reveals that a total of five hundred and sixty (560) tourists visited the different resort during wet season in Calabar. Cameroon, Cuba and South Africa dominated the resorts on an individual note with values Cameroon, Marina resort 20.22%, Cuba, Orange resort

18.93% and South Africa, Aqua vista 21.01%. Marina resort recorded a high level of tourist influx with a value of 48.57% compared to orange resort and Aqua vista with values 30.18% and 21.25% respectively. However, Thailand and Irish were on the least side with values Thailand, Marina resort and Orange resort 5.51% and 4.14% and Irish, Aqua vista 3.50% as presented in table 3.

Table 3. Origin of tourist arrivals in the resort in wet season

Origin of tourist	Marina resort	%	Orange resort	%	Aqua vista	%
Cuba	53	19.50	32	18.93	20	16.8
South Africa	30	11.03	26	15.38	25	21.01
Cameroon	55	20.22	26	15.38	14	8.28
Ghana	27	9.92	23	13.61	10	5.92
USA	19	6.98	21	12.42	9	7.56
China	33	12.13	31	18.34	13	10.92
Kenya	22	8.08	19	11.24	12	10.08
Irish	18	6.62	15	8.87	6	3.50
Thailand	15	5.51	7	4.14	10	8.40
Total 560	272 (48.57)	100	169 (30.18)	100	119 (21.25)	100

Source: Field survey, 2010.

Changes in revenue generation in the resorts

Table 4 resorts indicate that the resorts generated a high income during dry season. This is in line in which Brotherton (2001) admits that seasonal changes can improve the revenue base and multiplier effect in an organization or management. Table 4 reveals that during October, November and December the resorts generate high revenue generation compared to wet season with a high rate of fluctuation revenue generation in the resorts. In dry season the resorts generate high revenue, especially December period which was usually characterized with events in Calabar. The rate of patronage of resorts in any destination is a function of holiday, age, distance and income of tourists.

This situation according to (Klenosky, 2009), help to sustain the viability of a tourist destination with great tourism potentials. This situation by Klenosky affirms the major problems of resort development in Calabar which is lack of tourism related activities all year round, low standard of living and low income in Calabar. Table 4 reveals that in June, high revenue was generated in Marina Resort and Orange Resort and in September in Aqua Vista as shown in the table with high values.

Table 4. Monthly changes in revenue generated in the resorts
Revenue generated (N)

Month	Revenue generated (N)			
	Marina resort	Orange resort	Aqua Vista	Total amount generated
Jan *	12,960.00	34,211.00	9,754.00	56,925.00
Feb *	10,113.00	32,456.00	20,101.00	62,670.00
Mar *	11,012.00	29,131.00	14,103.00	54,247.00
April +	12,105.00	21,123.00	7,559.00	41,787.00
May +	14,565.00	74,103.00	4,341.00	93,609.00
June +	19,931.00	63,141.00	4,401.00	87,473.00
July +	15,111.00	51,314.00	8,581.00	75,006.00
August +	9,212.00	19,127.00	11,121.00	39,460.00
Sept +	13,515.00	23,380.00	23,345.00	60,240.00
Oct. *	33,956.00	311,964.00	27,740.00	373,660.00
Nov *	90,107.00	584,456.00	29,485.00	1,040,48.00
Dec. *	101,131.00 →	999,998.00 →	31,100.00 →	1,132,229.00
Total	253,619.00	2,244,404.00	191,631.00	2,689,654.00

Source: Field survey (2010).

*Note: * - dry season; + - wet season.*

Recreational facilities and services in the resorts

Table 5 indicates that orange resort had more recreational facilities and services with a total of sixteen facilities ranging from accommodation, shops, swimming pool among others.

Facilities such as television and video were on the high side with values of Marina resort, 7.14%, Orange resort, 17.85% while Aqua vista resort had the least with a value of 3.57%. The number of accommodations (rooms) was on the high side in Orange resort and in Aqua vista with values of Orange resort, 10.71% and Aqua vista 5.35%. However, table 5 shows that Marina resort and Orange resort recorded high internet and bar facilities compared to Aqua vista resort with a least values of bar/restaurant and internet 1.79% respectively.

Table 5. Recreational facilities and services in the resorts								
Various Resorts								
s/n	Facilities and services	Marina resort	%	Orange resort	%	Aqua vista	%	Total
	Accommodation	1	1.79	6	10.70	3	5.31	
	Bar/restaurant	3	5.35	5	8.92	1	1.79	
	Shop	2	3.7	1	1.79	1	1.79	
	Laundry	1	1.79	2	3.57	1	1.79	
	Swimming pool	1	1.79	2	3.57	1	1.79	
	Table tennis	1	1.79	1	1.79	1	1.79	
	Internet	3	5.35	2	3.57	1	1.79	
	Television/ video	4	7.14	10	17.85	2	3.57	
	Total- 6	16	100	29	100	11	100	

CONCLUSION

The initial takeoff of tourism activities in Cross River State in general and Calabar in particular has encouraged the development of resorts and influx of tourists from within and outside the state to visit Calabar as a tourism destination. It has been realized that despite the efforts by the government and private sector in resort development in the area, the rate of patronage and influx still pose a serious problem as only during dry season they seem to attract more tourist into

Calabar while wet season the resorts suffer series of setbacks. This situation makes the efficiency of the resorts difficult and in most cases the resorts fold up.

However, findings reveal that the climatic condition and the absence of events during wet season in Calabar have affected the generation operation of the resort business. In light of the above, the following measurement should be put in place if the resorts must be effectively sustained and maintained: (a) the Cross River State Tourism Bureau should package a program that would ensure tourism related activities all year round, (b) the resort operation should organize activities that would attract tourist to Cross River State and Calabar in particular, (c) adequate facilities and services should be provided by operators of resorts to boost tourist interest in the destination, (d) the prices for leisure and other related tourism activities should be made affordable for fun seekers by the operators of the industry especially during off peak periods, and (e) the adequate awareness should be created to the public by respective stakeholders and also enlighten the people on the advantages of taking recreation.

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