Ecotourism and National Development in Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges

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INTRODUCTION

National development starts from conceptualization of development by the human mind. Every form of development starts from and that’s why the Holy Bible (2004) emphasized that the mind should be guarded with diligence - In building the tower of Babel the people conceived it in their mind and the almighty God felt that since it has been conceptualized, it could be achieved (Holy Bible, 2004). Thus, the greatest development on earth is the development of the mind. However, the functionality of the mind depends on how stress - free it is.

Because of the complex nature of human behaviour, activities and involvements, both developed and undeveloped minds pass through a lot of stress. Stress retards efficiency and productivity. In most organizations recreation and tours are encouraged as strategy to alleviate stress. Recreation refreshes the mind and thus brings about efficiency and increased productivity (Ijoeah et al, 2014). It is on this basis that bush bars, drinking parlours, relaxation centres, cultural festivals and staff clubs are established in most organisations and sport competitions are also organized institutions of academic learning. Even in different tribe’s people have different cultural ways of recreation. Recreation within the work environment yields limited result due to the short duration it lasts coupled with the psychological effects of the person being expected to return to work – the source of stress. Stress leads to a lot of casualties in work places. Annual and casual leaves were formally introduced in work places to enable people have full rest and recreation. The period of leave is to enable staff embark on tours to areas where thoughts of work could not psychologically affect their level of recreation. The essence of recreation has therefore popularized tourism.

Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (World Tourism Organization, WTO, 2010). Put in another way, Tourism is a collection of activities, services and industries that delivers a travel experience, including transportation, accommodations, eating and drinking establishments, retail shops, entertainment businesses, activity facilities and other hospitality services provided for individuals or groups traveling away from home (Parks and Recreation Management, 2012).

Tourism is a major source of income and foreign exchange earner for countries with tourism potentials. Ecotourism, an aspect of environmental tourism makes minimal impact on the environment, empowers host communities, respects the culture of indigenous people and conserves biodiversity. It is one of the fastest growing aspects of tourism especially in developing countries (Magigi and Ramadhani, 2013), where the resources are present. Simply put, tourism has become the largest industry on the planet earth. While people are embarking on recreational tours, the effect of their travels have brought about infrastructural development, physical development, employment opportunities, addition of values to local less - valued materials. The destructive nature of mass tourism and the disturbing noise of urban tourism

Abstract: Nigeria is endowed with several resources of international ecological and touristic importance which should serve as the bases for sustainable tourism development but has not derived substantial benefits from the tourism market. With the largest population in Africa that can sustain domestic tourism, and many cultures which reflect in food and environment Nigeria is at advantage to attract both local and international tourists and therefore derive significant benefits for national development. However, the ecotourism resources of Nigeria are not packaged and promoted. Tourism in Nigeria is faced with numerous challenges: the biodiversity components are under serious threat; high rate of poaching and habitat destruction; lack of infrastructures; sabotage; poor global image; high level of insecurity; lack of awareness about tourism and conservation; poor tourism culture; insufficient facilities in eco-destination; poverty; corruption; underfunding; poor motivation of rangers; harassment by security personnel; poor road network and consistent traffic jam and poor maintenance culture amongst others. The tourism attractions in Nigeria when developed, properly packaged and promoted can satisfy the curiosity of almost every kind of tourists; and this will bring about increased benefits such as massive employment, increased revenue generation, local empowerment, foreign exchange earnings, creation of market for local product and development of infrastructures.

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have made people become more interested in ecotourism.

Visitations to natural areas have been rated highest in terms of recreation and environmental awareness as visitors are hardly disturbed by crowds. Besides interaction with nature especially plants and animals increases knowledge of the environment, and have been proved to exert healing effects on tourists (Ana and Ajewole, 2011). Sights of vegetation increases efficiency in recovering of sick persons.

People are bored of having the same experience every time. They prefer travelling to pristine areas to learn new things, have new experiences while viewing different species of animals in their habitat including rare, endangered, endemic and abundant unique land forms; water falls of different heights and velocity of flow; lakes of different colours and sizes; springs of different temperatures; birds of different calls and plumage colours (Ijeomah, 2017). Put in another way they want to interact with ‘the naturality’ of the nature and ‘the rurality of the rurals’ (Ijeomah and Aiyeloja, 2010).

Since the increased capitalistic nature of the planet, earth, there has been increased commoditization of most resources that were formerly enjoyed freely, tourists are therefore made to pay in monetary terms for what they see, feel, touch and observe (Ijeomah and Herbert, 2012). Payments by tourists have brought about many investments in ecotourism as several stakeholders are very eager to derive benefits. Ecotourism has therefore become very popular and an instrument of poverty alleviation and national development when properly managed and monitored. The fact that only countries with tourism potentials can attract significant number of tourists and benefits has made nations, states and communities without unique attractive potentials to start creating artificial attractions such as observing animals in zoos. However, tourists prefer observing the components of nature and culture in the original form. This study therefore gives an overview of ecotourism resources in Nigeria, some threats to their continuous utilization, and discussed the challenges militating against the use of these inherent tourist’s attraction to achieve national development.

**ECOTOURISM POTENTIALS OF NIGERIA**

Nigeria is well endowed with various ecotourism potentials including diverse culture, biodiversity, and scenic landscapes. There is hardly any community in Nigeria without unique ecotourism attractions - unique culture, food and environment. The cultural foods of different tribes in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States and the hospitable manner the dishes are packaged and served to visitors have been commended by many tourists. In Agulu, Anambra State, the chief priest ‘Ezemmuo’ uses a chicken to call out about 10 crocodiles from a river to satisfy curiosity of tourists that the community is endowed with the species. Monkeys roam about in Awka, Anambra State and can easily be sited. Whale is found in Akwa Ibom State coupled with crab colonies that exist therein. The consistent stranding of Manatee in Itu of Akwa Ibom State made the community very famous among travellers in the early days – Many tourists usually gathered watching sea horses (struggling to get back to water) in the era when indigenes of Itu did not have the technology to kill the attractive species and therefore termed it a mamaid (Ijeomah et al, in press). The Itu indigenes believed that any attempt to have contact with the Manatee leads to the animal stimulating the person to laugh to death, thus the species moved undisturbed then.

Various species of Python are found in south eastern Nigeria and the Niger Delta area. Python is considered sacred in many parts of Bayelsa state and therefore can easily be observed by tourists.

The wildlife resources of Nigeria, at national level, are packaged in seven national parks: Kainji Lake National Park, Cross River National Park, Gashaka Gumti National Park, Kamuku National Park, Chad Basin National Park, Old Oyo National Park and Yankajr that was downgraded to a game reserve. It was the potential ecotourism prospects of Yankari for development that made the Bauchi State Government lobbied their way through the National Assembly for its release. Also, there are numerous game reserves in Nigeria that inhabit many wildlife resources.

In Gashaka Gumti monkeys invade people’s villages. A lot of Chimpanzees and monkeys are found in the park. The presence of primate species in the destination is very evidence with their attendant noise and acrobatic displays which tourists cherish. The park is good for sport fishing. The barrel rolling of abundant Manatees in the destination fascinates tourist. Manatees have been hunted so much; the water is muddy, but can be developed. Birdlife in Gashaka is the most attractive of all – many migrant birds from Cameroun Island visit the site. Gashaka environment is semi temperate and has the grassland and gallery forests similar to Obudu cattle ranch. Obudu cattle Ranch is a proto type or miniature of Gashaka environment. It is extremely attractive. Donga River valley is also a scenic environment because of the nature of the river. The habitat of Nyaki forest reserve which is before the Mambil – Many tourists usually gathered watching sea horses (struggling to get back to water) in the era when indigenes of Itu did not have the technology to kill the attractive species and therefore termed it a mamaid (Ijeomah et al, in press). The Itu indigenes believed that any attempt to have contact with the Manatee leads to the animal stimulating the person to laugh to death, thus the species moved undisturbed then.

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gallery forest and grassland and serve as unique habitat for birds. Because it is grassland, species can easily be observed especially passerine birds, snakes, secretary birds. Being similar ecosystem in both Nigeria and Cameroon boundary it becomes unique and qualifies by IUCN requirement to build trans-boundary parks for animals to move freely using the corridor. There have been several cases of human-wildlife conflicts in the environment (Eniang et al., 2011).

In Cross River National Park: Most herbivores in the forest converge in salt licks ‘Dede’ Tourists can target saltlicks to view animals. Saltlick is a sight for tourist attractions. Dede is spread in Okwango, Oban east and Oban west ranges of Cross River National Park. Animal activities are always observed in the saltlicks. Buffalo and elephants are always observed at Dede because animal activities have opened up the place - in rainforest where it is difficult to observe animals due to closed canopies. Nile crocodiles could be sited in Okwa 1, Okwa 11 and Okwango – communities inside the centre of the park. Nile crocodile is sacred among these communities and therefore not killed. Obudu cattle Ranch which is part of CRNP has been designated as Important Bird Area (IBA) because it inhabits many bird species which can be observed due to the montane ecosystem. Okwango division remains most northerly population of lowland gorilla habitat in the world. Cross river gorilla with its population is good for gorilla tourism. The other population of the gorilla is in Takamanda National Park which is contiguous with CRNP. The Mbe mountain range which is a unique ecosystem is contiguous with the Okwango division. In Oban West range elephant can always be seen in Erokut entrance. Monkeys and many tree frogs can always be sited at Erokut, as well. It was in Erokut that *Hemidactylus enianguii* was sighted for the first time. It is a common occurrence that Buffalos encroach into people’s homes in this environment. Unfortunately earth quaking dynamites blasting of rocks take place in the area, thus making it difficult for animals to cope – this is a threat.

Agbokim waterfall and Kwa falls are famous and about the richest forest falls in Cross River State. However, these waterfalls are threatened by excessive logging.

In Oli camp of Kainji Lake National Park, Hippopotamuses are found in large numbers resting every afternoon in the Hippo pool. The ground horn bill (a bird that is bigger than turkey staying on ground) also stays side by side with the hippopotamuses. Lions are also sited in Oli. In Oli the highest congregation or herds of antelopes can be sited by tourists. Bachelor herd of kobs are always sited steering at tourists. Roan antelope (one of the biggest Nigerian antelope) can also be sited at Oli as it is common in the range. Large congregation of Kobus kob (up to 100 in a herd) is among the major attractions in Kainji Lake National Park. The abundance of baboons in the range could also be attraction to both tourists and lion.

Wild ranging Ostriches kept in Kainji Lake National Park interest tourists. The Kainji Lake environment has so many Monitor lizards moving around. The biggest wall geckos (as big as Agama lizard) are found in the lodges of Kainji Lake National Park. Kainji Lake National Park is faced with high rate of poaching (Ijeomah et al., 2013)

Chad Basin: Although Sand dunes and Sambisa game reserve cannot be accessed by tourists due to insecurity, Hadejia in Yobe.- the first ramsar site in Nigeria plays host to the highest concentration of migrant birds in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the lake is drying up--- threat. Insecurity is not much in Nguru.

Kamuku National Park is no safer for ecotourism (Ijeomah, 2017). But from Kamuku to Kaduna through Biringwari town tourists will experience the jewel in the savanna – body of forests (green forest in the midst of dryness). Every conservationist will like it.

Old Oyo National Park: In Old Oyo National Park there are many antelopes, like good herds of kobs. Aardvark is found in Old Oyo coupled with the ruins or relics of old Oyo empire which is an ecotourism delight.; Lovers of nature and human origin will like to listen to the tales of the historical old Oyo empire. There are also monkeys and baboons in the site.

Okomu National Park: In Okomu river tourists can site manatee and crocodile. From the tree house (a facility to enhance panoramic viewing of resources in the destination) (Plate 1) tourists can site Buffalos and elephants. White throated monkey is very abundant in the park and can easily be sighted. The park offers tourist the opportunity to view the different layers of a typical rainforest vegetation (Plate 1b). The night life of Okomu is very interesting to ecotourists - When it is night in Okomu the galactos, the bush babies and other nocturnal species take over the night. Palm civet features in the night life with other species including large population of fruit bats from the Oba of Benin palace that travel to Okomu for the night activities. Different sounds will therefore be produced at different sections of the park in the night.

Yankari Wildlife Park is tourism delight- siting of baboons in the tourist camp, viewing of the lion (in the forest) and good population of elephant satisfies
the curiosity of tourists. Tourists enjoy swimming in the Wikki warm spring. Threats of poaching are still there. The insurgency in northern Nigeria has not reached Yankari wildlife Park. Apart from poaching the destination is affected by the politics of dual management (Ijeomah and Odunami, 2013).

In Zamfara state Hippopotamuses are not hunted in the special pool, Hippo pools of Zamfara, natives go to the pool and swim in the same water with Hippopotamuses. The hippopotamuses can be sited by tourists, Pandam Game Reserve is home to roan antelope, mona monkeys and baboons. The baboons which could number up to two hundred in a group can easily be sited by tourists especially late in the evening and early in the morning during mango on - season. Baboons always enter houses of Pandam indigenes to lick soups. The Pandam lake, a Y shaped lake is a ramsar site and a good destination for bird watching. The lake inherits the endangered manatee and *Hippopotamus amphibious*; whose foot print is always observed by tourists in Pandam playground (Ijeomah and Emelu, 2009). The tourist attractions especially the lake is accessible only during dry season, Sclateri monkeys can easily be sited by tourists in Lagwa community of Abob Mbase Local Government Area of Imo State, Itu in Akwa Ibom state and Akpuugeze in Enugu state where the species is considered sacred and therefore not utilized in any form (Ijeomah et al., 2011).

The Urashi waterfall of Dikenafai in Imo state is an interesting site for tourists. Having a shower from the unique Urashi fall entails walking through an untarred muddy road (purposefully scarified to aid movement) before climbing 57 steps inside the valley; which is a natural environment as tourists sit on hanging seats which are part of root system of living plants in the destination (Ijeomah et al., 2007). Farin Ruwa Water fall (Plate 2) is a very unique fall as ‘white water’ falls continuously from a height of 150 meters and width of 50 meters in a ‘wondrous way’ into a rocky basin (Ijeomah and Alao, 2007). Tourists cherish spending time in the destination viewing the waterfall and analyzing the mystery behind its pattern of flow.

Walking through the narrow iron walkway (Plate 3), the bamboo bridge (Plate 4) of Enugu tourist complex, and the hanging bridge (Plate 5) and tree house (Plate 1) of Okomu national park fascinates tourists. The main attractions in Ezeagu tourist complex Ogbagada waterfall (Plate 6) and Ihu-ogba cave (Plate 7) are so unique and fascinating to tourists that most visitors to the destination always desire to repeat visits.

River aethiope in Delta state is transparent to the bottom. Oguta Lake (Plate 8), a ramsar site has interesting attractions like the Kalabari beach (Plate 9) and Confluence. Fish is sold in Oguta lake as souvenir. In Okomu fish could sometimes be distributed as souvenir. In Enugu tourist complex only one animal killed by any hunter should be gone home with. Prevailing culture in the host community demands that the excesses of the catches must be roasted in the destination and consumed. Annual carnival is well celebrated in Oguta community as the carnival feature many interesting activities like boat regatta and masquerade parades which tourists cherish. It is cultural to preserve ancestral homes in Oguta community. One of the most interesting ancestral sites in the community is the relics of the empire of Ezeawa, a leader who preferred to be killed on the throne rather than (lose the position to) migrate with his subjects when Oguta community forcefully immigrated into the community and annexed the area. Tales of the death of Ezeawa on the throne is a history most visitors will always like to listen to as no traditional ruler in Oguta ever visits the site due to the belief that anyone that attempts it will die (Ijeomah et al., 2015b).

The artifact or statue of Igbe in Okomu national park is very obvious. It interests most tourists to hear of the tales of how Igbe, by magical powers used a standing palm tree to sweep the site for a cultural festival event. There are many beaches in Nigeria especially in the Niger Delta area and south west. Each beach has its uniqueness. People living around Wase area of Plateau state always site elephants in their farms due to the closeness of the side to the Yankari Wildlife Park and Pai River game reserve. Similar thing happens in Andoni areas of Rivers State. Many mine dungs in Plateau State have been converted to tourist attractions – Rayfield resort is an interesting site for boating by many tourists in Plateau state. Sand dung inside Finima Nature Park of Bonny Island has also been converted to an ecotourism site for boating. Finima Nature Park has the endangered African grey parrot, a species seriously affected by the pet market due to its ability to mimic what someone. It is species tourists will always like to site.

**INSIGHTS OF BENEFITS ACCRUABLE FROM ECOTOURISM IN NIGERIA**

Availability of attractive natural virtues is the indicator of potential success in the use of ecotourism for national development (Ijeomah et al, 2011). Many countries where tourism is well developed and practiced has benefitted enormously in terms of infrastructure maintenance, national development and economic empowerment. Nigeria has not derived significant benefit from tourism however; an insight of few benefits in some areas of Nigeria will be highlighted. Communities around Farin Ruwa Water
Fall have free supply of electricity; hence a lot of events take place in the playground of the destination at no financial cost. Similar things happened in Assopfall of Hawankibo where the inhabitants of the area are given free electricity and therefore energized. It was because of the Farin Ruwa Water Fall destination that the Abdullahi Adamu led government of Nasarawa State, established a police post and primary schools in the host community. The Nasarawa State Government also constructed 12 culverts for the water bodies to the destination. The frequent events including national World Tourism Day celebration that the destination hosted during Abdullahi Adamu led administration popularized the community. Ijeomah and Alao (2007) reported that the Farin Ruwa destination has been the ecotourism site with the highest percentage of foreign visitors in Nigeria.

Lives of many people are sustained through souvenir production and sales - the Naraguta souvenir centre in Jos Plateau State is a typical example (Ijeomah and Edet, 2011). Shells of periwinkle and oyster which should normally be thrown away in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria (where it is very abundant) can be filled to shape and sold as souvenirs by households when tourism thrives in the area (in the host communities). An Individual made #2,000,000 with #65,000 worth of investment in Argungun fishing festival. The lives of many boat operators and fish sellers in Oguta community are sustained through the market created by tourism to Oguta lake destination. The road leading to Port Harcourt beach was tarred in 2017 by the Rivers State government to create access to the ecodestination. Ijeomah et al (2005) reported that an Australian couple saved three years salary to visit the Wase rock, which is one of the only five permanent breeding places of the Rosy Pelican bird in Africa. The Argungun festival has brought about visitation of many foreigners to Nigeria and popularized the host state. These tourism operations have created informal jobs for many people especially hoteliers, transporters and souvenir producers and sellers.

The national parks, forest reserves, game reserves etc. have been source of employment to many people. Many restaurants in Oguta operate because of the visitors to Oguta Lake destination. Africa is popular because of its highest congregation of mammals on earth in the contemporary world. Fifty percent of international visitors to Kenya want to view wild animals (Odunga and Maingi, 2011). Eltringham (1984) reported that the main reason tourists visit Africa is to view games.

Tourism brings about infrastructural development such as tarred roads, airports, hotels, power, railways and of course revenue generation. One of the major sources of revenue generation in Plateau State is tourism. Nigeria has different kinds of ecodestinations which operate at different seasons. Thus, all season tourism can take place in Nigeria in places like caves in Enugu tourism complex, Mado cave of Plateau State. Awareness of an area as a tourism city and the consciousness of the inhabitants of the area to receive visitors is part of human development as that gradually becomes part of the people lifestyles. Cross River State is a popular tourism state similar to Plateau State and the awareness level of this amongst the inhabitants is very high. Performances of Asharuwa dance, Atilogwu and etc. promotes cultural preservation. Fishing festivals strengthens culture that are already being weakened by religion and development.

Plate 1a: The tree house, a major attraction in Okomu national park (Source: Ijeomah et. al, 2015)

Plate 1b: Okomu Park fence showing natural vegetation with multi storeyed canopy (Source: Ijeomah et. al, 2015)
Plate 2: Farin Ruwa Fall

Plate 3: Narrow iron bridge, a tourism facility in Ezeagu tourist complex (Source: Ijeomah et al., 2018)

Plate 4: Hanging Bamboo Bridge, a tourism facility in Ezeagu tourist complex (Source: Ijeomah et al., 2018).

Plate 5: Tourists climbing the hanging bridge in Okomu national park (Source: Ijeomah et al., 2015).

Plate 6a: Ogbagada waterfall, the main attraction in Ezeagu tourist complex (Source: Ijeomah et al., 2018).

Plate 6b: Picnicking, one of the main tourism activities in Ezeagu tourist complex (Source: Ijeomah et al., 2018).
Plate 7: Ihu-ogba cave, an attraction in Ezeagu tourist complex (Source: Ijeomah et al., 2018).

Plate 8a: Oguta Lake (Source: Ijeomah et al., 2015).

Plate 8b: Tourists boating in Oguta Lake (Source: Ijeomah et al., 2015).

Plate 9: The Kalabari beach in Oguta lake destination (Source: Ijeomah et al., 2015).

Plate 10: Oguta Motel, an age-old facility that is in bad condition due to government neglect and lack of funding.

Plate 11: Poorly managed golf course in Oguta lake destination, an indication of government neglect and lack of funding (Source: Ijeomah and Okoli, 2016).
Plate 12: A damaged pontoon that needs to be repaired. (Source: Field survey, 2015).

Plate 13: Dilapidated tourist lodges in Farin Ruwa Waterfall. (Source: Ijeomah and Okoli, 2016).

Plate 14a: The flooded bridge of Njiri River (Source: Ijeomah and Okoli, 2016).

Plate 14b: Passersby walking across the flooded bridge of Njiri River (Source: Ijeomah and Okoli, 2016).

Plate 14c: A motor bike being moved across the flooded bridge of Njiri river by hired villagers (Source: Ijeomah and Okoli. 2016).

Plate 14d: A motor bike being moved across the flooded bridge of Njiri river by hired villagers (Source: Ijeomah and Okoli. 2016).
Plate 15: Entrance to Okomu national park showing the untarred access road (Source: Ijeomah and Okoli, 2016).

THREATS TO ECOTOURISM IN NIGERIA

With numerous tourism resources Nigeria is not among popular destinations in Africa because of many challenges: The game rangers and ecotourism staff are not well motivated. When staff morale is low they become beggarly and start exploiting tourists. In some parks’ tourist camp, hunting could take place in the night. Non-motivated rangers can become hunters in the night and start hunting or connive with poachers to poach from the park. Most parks in Nigeria do not have good communication facilities such as walkie talkie. The few places communication facilities exist they are inadequate.

Tourist facilities are low in most parks and ecodestinations in Nigeria: Ecotourism vehicles are not functioning in many parks. Many destinations lack outdoor camping facilities for tourists. Okomu has the tree house from where a tourist can have a panoramic view of the resources in the ecodeestination but it is not well maintained. In Oguta Lake Destination the motel (Plate 10), golf course (Plate 11) and one of the pontoons (Plate 12) have not been functioning for some years.

Farin Ruwa Waterfall is devoid of lodges as the one started about ten years ago was uncompleted and has become dilapidated (Plate 13). Farin Ruwa destination is inaccessible during rainy season as the culvert for River Njiri will become covered by water (Plates 14a, 14b, 14c and 14d). The road to Okomu national park is bad and worse during rainy season (Plate15). Tourists therefore pass through communities with many difficult terrains to access the destination. Cross River National Park has no facility that can enable tourists have a panoramic view of the resources in the park.

Infrastructure has really degenerated in most parks: Erokut gate entry of CRNP is the only place where there is a little facility because CERCOPAN was once involved she wanted to embark on re-introduction of animals. There is nowhere in most park for a tourist camping to buy basic items.

Tours are not scheduled and efficiently carried out. In Krugger national Park, there are scheduled ecotourism tours that tourists are aware of the time for viewing different species in different sections of the park and that is very efficient and effective. Tours are not well packaged in Nigeria.

Frequent harassment by the security personnel in Nigeria: There are so many police check points where unnecessary demands are consistently made. This does not only delay tours but also frustrate visitors as they are not used to such systems. Police demand for receipts of basic things tourists carry such as Binocular, laptops, cameras etc to look for avenues to exploit them. From Johanessbourg to Krugger national park is over 5 hours yet no check point will be seen though cars will be seen packing by the road side. Many tourists feel secured when they travel without seeing road blocks – because of police

The matching ground syndrome of Nigeria where every visitor seen in an area will be exploited: Tourists are to pay before they are allowed to take photographs else their cameras will be seized. The amount to be paid is not regulated, the collector is not identified. If the tourist fails to pay he will be molested or could be kidnapped, and there is no avenue to seek redress. This happens in destination host communities in Nigeria. Foreign tourists are scared by molestation by such agents who make tourists survive by whiskers. Police, Vehicle inspection officers, Road safety and other security agents should begin to redress their way if Nigeria should be listed among popular destinations in the world.

Signages in Nigeria are grossly absent; where they exist, they are misleading. Nigeria should adopt one signage system i.e. metric or mileage

Road signs and billboards that should give visitors information should not be misused; Politicians should not campaign on government or tourism bill boards

There are no land marks. Building are not numbered; many streets are not named. This has to be addressed to reflect light in the night for tourists to get direction for ecotourism to function.

Frequent power outage; Wind energy and solar energy is used to generate energy. Nigeria relies on electricity which is not efficient.

There should be point of service (POS) to pay and interswitch must work.

Ecotourism requires intelligent and efficient tour guides who are bilingual at least to communicate with tourists; else there must be pocket dictionaries to aid interpretation. This facilitates communication
Another infrastructure: A wildlife map of Nigeria should be introduced
Lack of street maps: Street maps are supposed to be kept in city centres. Tourists will pick them, read and know where to go and what to do. Street maps should be everywhere and given free of charge.

Lack of Tourists (Bed and breakfast) outlet to take care of tourists’ breakfasts and where to sleep: In many places in Nigeria, a tourist cannot find were to eat on a Sunday morning. This will make tourists starve.

‘I don’t have change syndrome’ has become the order of the day in Nigeria. There is a corruption undertone or criminal undertone on it – the tourist will feel that the seller wants to keep the money. This gives the tourists a bad impression about the seller. Tourists cannot endure it but will always want to collect their balance.

There is policy gap. Excessive Logging takes place in the night in Cross River State. Logs are harvested in the night in CRS, rafted and transported by water to Akwa Ibom State (where there is no ban on logging) from where they will be transported to Abia State. Akwa Ibom forest officers receive the logs and collect tariff for receiving them. The logs are floated on public holidays or weekends. Communities in Cross River State without water to aid secrete transportation of their own logs, out of anger sets their forests on fire to burn down the timbers- since they cannot carry out logging operations cannot yield any benefit, they better burn down the timbers and plant cocoa and plantain that can be of benefit to them when harvested. Through this clandestine logging and arsonic destruction of ecosystem many pristine forests which serve as habitats are destroyed. Similar exploitation and clandestine marketing of endangered wildlife species exists in Cross Rivers State - Hunters who hunt in the night carry their catches (including many endangered and touristic species) to secrete bush meat market that operate between 5.30am and 7.00am where many patronizers including native doctors buy before environmental enforcement agents that operation by 8.00am (Eniang and Ijeomah, 2011).

High deforestation rate in southern Nigeria has destroyed many pristine parts of the rain forest; which are quite touristic and habitat for many species of international conservation and ecological importance. This is worsened by land hunger caused by development and the cultural demand for males in eastern Nigeria to own personal houses. Ijeomah et al. (2007) reported that Akpam sacred forest in Dikenafai of Imo State was cleared for farming by a chief priest from the same community.

Increase in awareness of new religious practices has aggravated the deforestation rate of sacred forests that served as living laboratories, store of resources, habitats and ecodestinations. A Chief priest in charge of the sacred forest (which Cercopticus sclateri inhabits as a sanctuary) in Lagwa community of Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State willingly resigned while supporting the clearance of the sacred forests (Ijeomah et al., 2011).

Inadequate staffing: Most national parks, game reserves and forest reserves in Nigeria are understaffed. The number of staff employed to cover a large area makes it difficult for them to be effective. It also endangers the life of the rangers as they can easily be overpowered by poachers. The Plateau State Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (PSMNRE) assigned only two rangers to guard Pai River game reserve, a park that was five miles away from Yankari game reserve, and covers an area of about 830 km². The killing of one of the rangers by herdsmen who lurked in the destination led to the withdrawal of the remaining game guard by PSMNRE for safety of live.

Low level of awareness concerning ecotourism resources: Consistent killing of elephant, Hippopotamus, Crocodile and other endangered species in Nigeria is an indication of prevailing low awareness level of the people about the value of conservation.

Other threats to the use of ecotourism as a tool for national development includes as listed by Ijeomah and Aiyeloja (2010) among others includes: Poverty, poaching, over hunting in none protected areas, bad global image, lack of maintenance culture, poor road condition with cultural traffic jam, corruption, internal insecurity, inadequate funding, misplaced priority, inadequate infrastructure etc.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
One of the greatest justifications for rural people to be involved in conservation of biodiversity is the promising effect of empowerment to be brought by ecotourism. Nigeria is endowed with attractions that can satisfy the curiosity of almost every type of tourist. There is no local government area in Nigeria without unique ecotourism attractions - unique cultures, foods and environments. The challenge is lack of promotion and packaging. Killing of elephant in Idanre, Ondo State shows that the level of awareness about tourist attractions and species of global ecological importance is still very low in many areas. Neglected species of wildlife should be focused on.
All the 3 species of tortoise in Nigeria have been declared endangered by IUCN but commonly consumed in Enugu State. The three species of crocodile in Nigeria are endangered but commonly consumed in the Niger delta region of Nigeria. The long snouted crocodile can hardly be found in within the Niger Delta environment. Awareness of the ecological and touristic importance of turtle in Akassa led to the formation of turtle club for the conservation of turtle in the environment. Fishermen who by chance catch turtle release the species unlike the case of crocodile. Nigerians should begin to celebrate and promote the animals the country is endowed with.

There are three species of electric fish in Akwa Ibom State. African civet is found in Akwa Ibom State, and CR S. The fact that this species uses community latrines is enough to draw the interest of many tourists. Lapwings that migrate from Europe to Akwa Ibom and many states in Nigeria do two weeks rehearsals before travelling back to Europe and viewing this species rehearsals could interest tourists. Awareness should be created about the magic trees in Nigeria; which one smells and get drunk. Ecotourism should be made to empower host communities. Global environmental facility (GEF) was formerly funding empowerment projects but that ended because of corruption in Nigeria – Misuse of the fund. It was because of this that establishment of community Wildlife sanctuary is presently introduced in Cross River and Akwa Ibom States. This is more preferable than zoos

Other ways to harness greater benefits from tourism for national development as listed by Ijeomah and Aiyeolja (2010) includes:
✓ Change of attitudes and development of tourism culture
✓ Secure local people’s support
✓ Strengthen internal security and security in protected areas
✓ Motivate rangers
✓ Enforce wildlife protection laws
✓ Clean up the environment
✓ Develop infrastructures
✓ Create varieties of activities
✓ Amend national image
✓ Create awareness
✓ Monitor tourism growth and impact
✓ Ensure that the guiding principles of ecotourism are observed


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