

The Implication of TALC to Tourism Planning and Development in the Global South: Examples from Nigeria

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Application of Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) in tourism destinations in the global south (i.e., Nigeria) is limited despite its predictive values. This study evaluates ecotourism destinations in southeastern Nigeria using the TALC model and its implications to tourism planning and development. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews were used in the study, and the results were discussed based on variables in the model. The results showed the following: “Instant resorts” were developed near lakes; limited development and stagnations, the uncertainty of destination growth, stages over-lap, among others were characteristics of tourism destinations in southeastern Nigeria due to socio-political landscape shaping tourism in Nigeria. Tourism destinations in the region fall between exploration and development stages; this is not unconnected to government “slapdash attitude” to tourism. Conversely, the status of these destinations offers the opportunity for community involvement for sustainability reasons. The qualitative means used to gauge tourism destinations’ stages is novel and worthy of academic attention; it is invaluable where numeric data are missing. The study is suggestive of theoretical underpinning in tourism studies in developing nations.

Keywords: Anambra, Butler, destination, ecotourism, Enugu, Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC)

Introduction

Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model seems to be the most used framework in tourism scholarship (Zhong, Deng, & Xiang, 2008). The model has been applied to different aspects of tourism studies ranging from coastal areas, mountains, even to the different phenomena like economic and environmental changes as it relates to different stages of the model (Agarwal, 1997; Hovinen, 2002).

Emerging tourist destinations have seen the decline of tourist flow in other destinations leading to what Butler in his TALC model called stagnation stage; tourist destination remains in constant competition as years go by and many socio-cultural and socio-economic factors affect destination attractiveness. Therefore, the need for adequate planning and development for tourist destination becomes inevitable.

Knowledge of the relevance of TALC to tourist destinations in Africa is insignificant (Mouhamadou, 2018) and its application in ecotourist destinations in the global south such as Nigeria is limited or unknown in tourism studies. Where available, its application in ecotourist destination, such as lake resorts, and caves are unknown. Moreover, lakes and caves related destinations abound in the south region of Nigeria. Furthermore, testing the model in destinations that are undeveloped with no numerical data appears problematic and a path tourism scholarship has left unexplored. Despite these challenges, this paper tries to address this shortcoming using a

descriptive approach.

This study is an attempt to use the TALC model as proposed by Butler in 1980 to assess the stage(s) of selected ecotourist destinations in southeastern Nigeria. Secondly, exploring implications of the current stages of these destinations is essential for tourism development, while the value of the study to the academia is invaluable.

Literature Review

Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) was designed with a clue from the product life cycle (PLC) commonly used in the business perspectives to model the life of a product, passing through named stages as introduction, growth, maturity, and decline (Levitt, 1965; Vernon, 1966). By 1980, Butler proposed the Tourism Area Life Cycle model with a later revision in 2006 (Butler, 2006a; 2006b). The model seems to be culled from the life cycle theory, where Butler argued that destinations evolve through a life cycle. This is gleaned from the content of his paper titled “The Concept of a Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution: Implications for Management of Resources”, but it seems that “tourist area cycle of evolution” has been replaced with “tourism area life cycle” as the years go by and this appears to have affected comprehension of the concept and its applicability. “Evolution” appears to be broader and give room for more possibilities of options than “life cycle” because the latter connotes continuous change due to environmental condition (McKercher, 2005), but this is not the crux of the present study, details of the concept abound in literature (Butler, 1980; 2006a; 2006b; 2009a; 2009b). The author’s concern here is the applicability of TALC as proposed by Butler in 1980 in selected ecotourism destinations in southeastern Nigeria and the likely tourism development implications. TALC has been used to assess the progress and probably decline of ecotourism destinations like Banff National Park, Western Canada (Boyd, 2006), China’s Zhangjiajie National Forest Park (Zhong et al., 2008), Niagara Falls (Getz, 1992), and destinations with multiple features like the Greater Yellowstone region, the Smoky Mountain region, Lancaster County (Hovinen, 2002; Tooman, 1997; Johnson & Snepenger, 1993) to mention but few. A detailed myriad of previous studies on the application of the TALC model from 1980-2002 has been documented (Lagiewski, 2006; Muzaffer, Eunju, & Manisha, 2012). Although there are studies that have applied the concept in various regions of the world for different purposes, its applicability and implications in developing nations seem to be scarce or not existing.

The highpoint of these previous studies is the presentation of merits, demerits, and reasons for modification of the concepts using different locations across the globe. Moreover, these studies serve as a quick guide for scholarly reference. Nevertheless, the application of the model may not always be the same because of geographical differences, and different types of destinations may be difficult to model as one (Choy, 1992), and may have different results (Haywood, 1986) from TALC. Besides, TALC lacks consensus about its validity and applicability, although it offers a meaningful platform in comprehending the vicissitudes of tourism development in a destination (Zhong, Deng, & Xiang, 2008). This aligns with the concern of current paper. Tourism development in developing nations such as Nigeria seems not to have been tested in specific status with the TALC, and this is what the paper entails to achieve.

Most of the studies using the TALC concept have used the number of tourists to compare the features in each stage (Park, 2006), but this approach was not feasible in the study locations due to non-existing record-keeping witnessed in developing nations (Tosun, 2000) which is part of barriers to tourism development. Due to lack of numeric data, the study relied on discussions with natives, the staff of state government-owned tourism parastatals/units/departments and ground-truthing to arrive at its findings. This makes this study unique as it will

serve as a guide to future studies in similar locations where numeric data are absent and tourism still undeveloped.

There are numerous studies on the selected ecotourism destinations in different states in eastern Nigeria especially within two states selected for the study (Ewelum, 2015; Odum, 2017), but none of these studies discussed TALC with reference to ecotourism destinations and implications to these destinations. Although TALC was used to understand the status of selected ecotourism resources in Anambra State (Odum, 2017), the study was silent on the tourism development implications. Moreover, other studies conducted on these natural tourist attractions are either evaluating their attractiveness for tourism purposes, utilizing these attractions for socio-economic gains (Ewelum, 2015; Odum, 2017); the need to use to develop these destinations by government or other tourism (Odum, 2018). Due to limited attention to tourism in Nigeria, most of these destinations are largely undeveloped (Esu, 2015). The need to develop these destinations seems relevant due to government quest to diversify its economy through tourism (Okonkwo & Odum, 2010); tourism has been recognized as a key driver in employment generation in Nigeria (Orekoya, 2018) and other developing nations. Ecotourism a variant of tourism holds immense value for Nigeria ecosystem, but it seems least explored in Nigeria. Nigeria appears to show more concern for cultural tourism since 2005 (Bankole, 2013).

Ecotourism activities occur in a given environment endowed with ecotourism resources (i.e., caves, lakes, forests, etc.) and mass tourism can lead to excess visitation, and carrying capacity of a destination exceeded causing a decline in visitation (Fennell, 2008). Therefore, evaluation of ecotourism destinations with TALC model will bring out the possible stages that these ecotourism resources will be in different stages of their growth when they are fully developed and prepare the stakeholders of the likely future of a destination, using examples where such model has been applied in a similar situation (Odum, 2017).

Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC)

Stages of Butler Concept

A summarized highlight of each stage of the TALC concept is presented below, but a detailed version of the stages and examples used by Butler can be seen in his first presentation of the concept to the public titled: “The Concept of a Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution: Implications for Management Resources”, published in *The Canadian Geographer*, 1980. The concept was later reviewed by Butler (2006a; 2006b; 2009a; 2009b); all adds flavor to the pros and cons of the concept in scholarship.

Exploration stage—A small number of visitors, attracted by unique natural and cultural features, low accessibility, little or no facilities for visitors, social fabrics of the community are unchanged by tourism, visitors and tourists’ presence has no significant economic and social benefit to natives. Contacts with the locals have a tendency to be high (Butler, 1980).

Involvement stage—The locals get involved, provide services to visitors, and get incomes from the services they provide although interactions are still meager. Different forms of advertising of the destination is seen, some forms of organized travel are witnessed. Tourist season becomes noticeable and recognized (like on and off-peak periods). Government attention is drawn to provide tourism facilities in the destination and improve facilities for the mutual benefit of locals and tourists (Butler, 1980).

Development stage—This stage witnesses an increased number of tourists, with possibilities of outnumbering local or being of equal level. The locals’ involvement begins to reduce and external agencies or organization begins to provide facilities. The natural and cultural attractions in the location are developed at this

stage, in some cases supported by man-made facilities. There is a mutual benefit for both tourists and locals, and there are observable physical changes in the area that may not be fit into the values of the locals; this triggers negative feedback from locals. Exceeding carrying capacity is witnessed at this level and facilities become overused (Butler, 1980).

Consolidation stage—Tourism is now part of the local economy. The number of visitors has exceeded that of the locals. Quality of life deteriorates, and impacts of tourism hamper negatively on the locals and the environment. Marketing will increase to attract more visitors. This leads to increasing the facilities to cater for visitors leading to pseudo-conflict among tourism developers, promoters, and locals (Butler, 1980).

Stagnation stage—Visitors reach a maximum point, probably exceeding carrying capacity, with attendant economic, social, and environmental challenges manifesting in the area. The destination has an image of being a beautiful destination but to maintain tourist-traffic will be hard. Artificial structures and facilities exceed genuine natural and cultural resources in the area. The destinations lose all sense of originality (Butler, 1980).

Decline stage—Here the destination cannot compete with a new destination; it faces low patronage due to poor appeal to tourists. Instead it attracts more weekend visitors and “daily-visitors” if it is still accessible. Properties around the destination will be turned into non-tourist facilities. The nature of life and values of the communities decreases monumentally, locals likely to return to buy off tourist facilities at a remarkably low price due to diminished market; hotels may be turned to condominiums, retirement homes, or conventional apartments. The destination is not far from being tagged tourist slum (Butler, 1980).

Rejuvenation stage—At this level renovation and introduction of new products or market segment set bringing new characteristics into the area. This entails a total overhauling of tourism facilities in the area which tourism relies on, and this is done in consonance with destination managers and marketing bodies. Sourcing and developing new and undeveloped resources in the destination is sought after. This entails the involvement of all tourism stakeholders (Butler, 1980).

Criticism of Butler Concept

Tourism is inherently dynamic and more specific analysis. No single model is comprehensive to explain the dynamism associated with tourism development. Meanwhile, the vastness of earth surface comes with varieties of landscapes; therefore its universality seems limited. The two basic concepts of the product life cycle and carrying capacity underlining the model are limited in application. Furthermore, the stages seem overlapping with each other, blurring its forecasting ability and variables like time, types of tourism development, and units of analysis are not explicit in the model (Choy, 1992; Getz, 1983; Cooper & Jackson, 1989; Shaw & Williams, 1994; Haywood, 1986; Ioannides, 1992; Pearce et al., 1991; Hart et al., 1984 in Anthony & George, 1998). It is worthy of reiterating here that the author and other scholars captured some of the weaknesses of the concept; Concersely, Butler explained that variation in different locations, due to difference in the rate of development, number of visitor’s accessibility, government policies, and number of similar competing areas; lack of data for a extended period in a particular destination creates hitches in testing the basic hypothesis and modeling of the different locations (Butler, 1980; Kaewta, 2014). Despite these weaknesses, the concept has offered some insights into what a unilateral development of a destination looks like and may likely follow given the stability of variables proposed by Butler. With time, Butler adapts changes to the model based on the finding of other scholars. Its applicability in developing nations can serve as a guide.

TALC model has copious literature and has undergone some review by the author based on experiences of

other researchers who used the model. The review x-rayed the weakness and strength identified by other scholars about the concept. He later added reasons for development, fluctuations, limits, and interference viz.: dynamism, process, tourist absorption and capacity or development limitations, initiative factors, management, long-term perspective, spatial components, and universal application (Zygmunt, Michal, & Adam, 2018).

Benefits of the Model

Despite these shortcomings, the model appears simple, logical and internally coherent. Acceptable to government and business planners as a vital easy planning mechanism that enhances predictions for various tourism destinations as demonstrated in different locations (Anthony & George, 1998). Its application in this study is relevant for the following reasons: It offers a preliminary guide to comprehend destination development evolution where there is none. It pigeonholes scholars to think for sustainability due to the inevitability of change and decline as suggested in the model and its value as a conceptual framework for tourism scholars cannot be overemphasized, especially in developing nations.

It is worthy to emphasize product here is construed to mean natural attractions like lakes, caves, and waterfalls. Each of these can form a single tourism product for tourist consumption or form a single motivating factor for travel. Therefore, the application here entails a tourism area (caves, lakes, mountains, rivers, forests, valleys, etc.) as a product which makes a complete unit (Tooman, 1997) and has the potential to evolve through different stages of the model with the potential of creating an “S” shape as shown in TALC (Butler, 1980) and graphically represented in Figure 1.

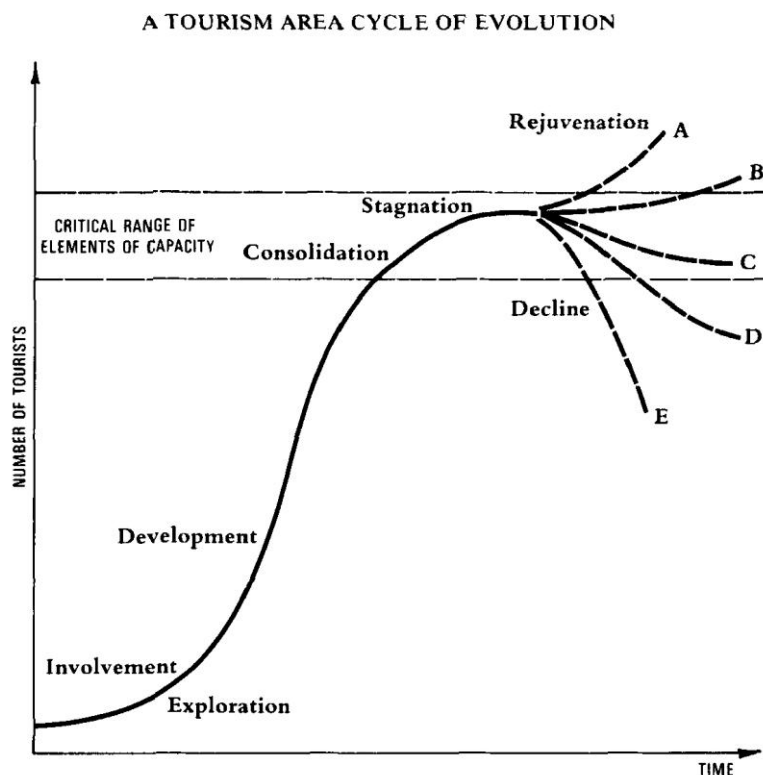


Figure 1. Diagrammatical presentation of hypothetical evolution of a tourist area by Butler in 1980. Source: Butler (1980).

Statement of Problem and Significance of This Study

The common phenomenon associated with researches in relation to TALC is either that the study is testing the application of the model or redeveloping the model to incorporate different ideas (Agarwal, 1997; Lagiewski, 2006), rather than testing its value in tourism planning and development which this study hinges on with examples from eco-destinations. Secondly, testing the model has gained popularity in locations where tourism has thrived for a long period of time such as United Kingdom, Mediterranean, and North America and recently in Asia (Uysal, Woo, & Singal, 2012). There is paucity of literature from the global south and developing nations such as Nigeria, where tourism development appears to be at “low level” due to poor or limited government attention (Esu, 2015; Odum, Onwudufor, & Arene, 2018), weak tourism policy and institutions (Odum & Ukekwe, 2020), associated socio-political challenges and incessant insecurity issues such as Boko Haram insurgency, herdsmen attacks and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)/security operatives clash. Little is known about tourism studies applying the model in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the model did not take cognizance of case studies from West Africa and drew most of its example from non-African destinations. Therefore, the need for this study emerged and its contribution to knowledge cannot be overemphasized.

Significance

The study gives an idea of concomitance or divergence of the model in developing nations using the landscape of the study. The value of the study to academia, tourism stakeholders and developers cannot be over-emphasized. Tourism scholars will draw insight(s) from this study on how to use the model in developing nations with peculiar tourism landscape, taking cognizance of tourism challenges in the region unlike tourism landscape in the southern part of Africa and other non-African nations where tourism seems well established.

Tourism stakeholders will see the need for adequate planning of eco-destinations as new destinations are likely to emerge from the same region, causing a sudden decline of previous destinations of similar features as argued by Butler. This makes early destination planning and management imperative. The model will highlight the stages of each destination sampled, and the need for planning ahead. Some destinations in the region are likely to have perpetual attractiveness due to some socio-cultural undertones, while others may not exceed some stages due to some socio-political realities in the region. Therefore, the need for sustainable tourism planning cannot be overlooked.

It is worthy to note areas with little knowledge of tourism may open their arms to tourism development without knowing the impacts of tourism. As predicted by Butler, there are stages where antagonism is expected; the need to plan and manage natives is vital. The education of locals is likely a means of mitigating negative reactions and responses from them. Therefore, this study is novel and holds value to all actors in the tourism industry in Nigeria and other developing nations, relying on tourism as a source of income.

Materials & Methods

In-depth-interview, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), checklist, ground-truthing and documentary sources were used to generate data for this study. A semi-structured interview-guide was used in the study. This was deemed necessary as it requires asking questions relating to a different stage of the TALC model. Moreover, to avoid bias in the assessment, the author is of the view that tourism stakeholder’s opinion is essential rather than an individual assessment of these destinations. The staff of tourism unit in the Anambra State Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, Culture, and Tourism (eight staff) and Staff of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (seven staff),

Enugu State were interviewed. Interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were conducted in both ministries. The people that make up of the FGDs were mainly people who are concerned with going to field-works and people who have spent over ten years in both ministries. It is adjudged that ten years are enough to have the requisite experience in civil service in the study area. FGD was carried out to triangulate the information gotten from each interviewee and be precise on the assessment to be made on the stages of each destination based on TALC model.

A total of 23 respondents were interviewed across the selected destinations; they are kings, chief priests, town union presidents, cave guards, and members of communities where these attractions located who were interviewed at each respondent's convenient time and date. These categories of persons were selected based on their knowledge of the natural attractions and uses over the years; moreover, the chief priests were skeptical to some extent, due to fear that most researchers come from government. But they are the custodian of the gods who owns sacred animals like crocodiles in Agulu Lake. And the number of respondents from each community is listed below against each attraction sampled in the study. The interviews were conducted during weekends because participants were engaged in different economic activities. Further, weekends were chosen to make sure it is easier for the researcher to be free from Monday-Friday's academic engagements. In the course of making preliminary investigations, community members directed the researcher to people with information concerning the topic of interest. The interviews were carried out between November 2017 to March 2018. These months were chosen because of climate factors—dry season is more comfortable to navigate some of the destinations. Second, the raining season will not disrupt the discussions especially with cave-guards and other interview sessions. Further, weekends were chosen to make sure it is easier for the researcher to be free from Monday-Friday's academic engagements. A checklist of variables in each stage of the TALC model was drawn and administered to participants. This was deemed necessary to checkmate the author's bias due to familiarity with host communities. Finally, ground-truthing was carried out in each of these destinations. This was essential to enhance the author's knowledge about these attractions. The documentary approach helped to gather information about what other scholars have done in these destinations and highlight the research gap for the study. It equally aided in substantiating the- "field-data"-.

The results of the interviews were presented with descriptions of each attraction, while the variables (from Butler's model) were assessed and tabulated for easy comprehension. This was followed by discussions on the implications of the levels of each destination in the model.

The following ecotourism destinations were sampled and the number of participants from each community attached to the destination: Ezeagu tourist complex (2), Varavara Umueze-Aguiyi Lake (2), Awhum cave (4), and Nike Lake (3) located in Ezeagu, Opi, Awhum, and Nike communities respectively in Enugu State. Agulu Lake (3), Ogbunike cave (2), Owerrezukalla cave (4), Amaokpala Lake (3), located in Agulu, Ogbunike, and Owerrezukalla communities respectively in Anambra State. These destinations were purposely selected for this study because most of the destinations have gained scholarly attention from different disciplines including tourism. Moreover, the author has carried out studies in most of the destinations, and the need for sustainability appears vital due to perceived government intentions in developing tourism. Second, some of these destinations have a series of utilitarian values and relevant histories; relevance of these destinations in local, state and international tourism maps. For example, Ogbunike cave has attracted United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) attention, and is currently in tentative list.

Background Information of Enugu and Anambra and Their Tourism Status

Anambra and Enugu States belong to the east-central state, a former administrative region in Nigeria which created on 27th May 1967 and was later divided into two states: Anambra and Imo. Old Anambra State was carved out of east central State of Nigeria in 1976 with Enugu as its capital (www.en.wikipedia.org). In 1991, Enugu State was further carved out of old Anambra with Enugu metropolis as the capital, while Anambra moved its capital to Awka. Anambra has 21 local government areas and Enugu has 17 local government areas.

Prior to 1991 Anambra and Enugu State shared political affinity and some element of cultural similarities such as the traditional political system is gerontocracy; natives of both states believe in God (*Chiukwu/Chineke*) which is common. Natural resources like forests, caves, and lakes are deified in most communities forming center of worship for adherents of African traditional religion. The sacredness associated with these natural resources has preserved some of these resources but is currently threatened by modernity and activities of overzealous Christians (Odum, 2019). Conversely, these natural resources form part of ecotourist attractions yearning for development. Although there are tourism parastatals in charge of tourism in each state; most of these natural attractions are largely undeveloped (2017). This is not unconnected to previous reasons already discussed-low government interest and lack of personnel. Most state tourism boards, including in the study area are inefficient and this has created poor tourism development (Esu, 2015).

Tourism Background

The bodies responsible for tourism planning and development in the region are government agencies and parastatals. These bodies at times are full-fledged ministries or units under ministries. The federal apparatus in charge of tourism planning and development in Nigeria-Nigeria Tourism Development Commission (NTDC) has its presence in both states (mainly NTDC staff). Anambra State has the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, Indigenous Artworks, Culture, and Tourism, while Enugu State has the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

It is worthy to reiterate that the afore-written tourism-related agencies have the responsibility of documenting tourist attractions within each state, plan and develop tourist attractions, keep a record of visitors/tourists in listed attractions (this is rarely done), and plan for the development of each destination. Unfortunately, this is not feasible as most tourist destinations lack reliable statistics. Destinations and resorts such as government hotels have a record of guests but no record of day-trippers, excursionists, among others. This is not unconnected to inadequate government funding and attention to these tourism-related bodies and a low number of tourism personnel in these states (Ewelum, 2015; Odum, 2017; 2018). Given this background, the selected ecotourist destinations appear to have drawn the attention of tourism-related bodies in these states and garnered extensive scholarship. Still, none seems to have been evaluated through the TALC perspectives and the implications of the model to destinations, where tourism is limited, is unknown.

Descriptive Background of Selected Ecotourism Destinations

The descriptions given here were based on the comments from participants. The descriptive background showed high variation in terms of details but the variables presented in Butler's model were assessed across all communities and tourism parastatals in each state. The assessed variables are presented in Table 1. The table is a summation of the results of the presence of the variables in each community.

Ezeagu Tourist Complex

Ezeagu tourist complex is located in Obinofia Ndi-Uno in Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

The major attractions in this destination are the popular Iheneke Lake, Ogbagada waterfall, and Ihu-Ogba cave. There is strong contact between visitors, tourists and natives in this destination. The natives act as tour-guards. They built a thatched house for the people to use during their visit to the area. During group visits for students, indigenes offer their homes for them to spend the night at a low cost of about four dollars (\$4 or ±N2000.00 Nigerian currency) or free of charge depending on the negotiation between the visitor(s) and the native(s). The natives prepare foods; sell carbonated drinks such as Cola, Pepsi, sprite and juice of different types. Based on the Butler TALC model, features of the exploration stage are still high here. The arrival and departure of tourists have not affected the “physical fabric and social milieu” of the Ezeagu community.

There is evidence of Butler’s involvement stage in Ezeagu, such as the advertisement of the area. There is online and printed information by the state government and other individuals about this destination; an example is the Enugu State Tourist Guide, 2015. The booklet contains cultural and geographic information about the complex and other tourist attractions in the State. Another feature of this stage is “the tourist season”; this destination is visited mostly during festive periods such as Easter and Christmas. The Enugu State Ministry of Culture and Tourism has been making a concerted effort to draw the state and federal government attention to the destination. For instance, the State hosted the 2016 World Tourism Day at the destination. The resort has socio-cultural value to the natives; it is the abode of worship for adherents of Africa traditional religion because of the deity associated to the cave, lake, and waterfall.

Varavara Umueze-Aguiyi Lake

Varavara Umueze-Aguiyi Lake is located in Umuezechukwu (formerly known as Umueze-Aguiyi) village in Opi community in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. The Lake has different species of crocodiles and is very popular in Opi and Nsukka environs. The Lake falls under the exploration stage of the TALC model and is competing with other lakes in Opi, such as Orufu Lake, Ozii Ezenekwa Lake among others. Tourists and visitors rarely come here, but people are searching for puzzles in life, especially adherents of African Traditional religion who use the Lake as a medium of communicating to their gods (the Lake is deified). The Lake is deified. There is no facility near the Lake for tourism purposes.

Awhum Cave and Waterfall

Awhum cave and waterfall are located in Ibite-Uwenu village of Awhum town. The cave and waterfall have some elements of affinity with Our Lady of Mount Calvary Monastery situated in the community. Pilgrims to the monastery also go to the cave and waterfall for prayers. The cave and waterfall are used by pilgrims, visitors, tourists, and natives. Awhum cave and waterfall seemed to have exceeded the first stage of Butler’s TALC model and is currently in the involvement stage. This particular destination is affected by its relationship with the monastery. Moreover, there appears to be an internal crisis between the monastery and natives (Odum, Obielum, & Ezenagu, 2018). Through ground-truthing, it was observed that the monastery had suspended public visitation, leading to a decline in visits to the destination. The destination would have reached the development stage as predicated by Butler’s TALC model but it jumped to what can be termed “pseudo-decline stage”. It declined because of abrupt stoppage of public visit to the monastery by the monastery management (Odum, et al, 2018). The abrupt closure of the monastery by the Catholic Church halted many economic activities within the destination. The Biafran market that serves visitors and tourists has closed. Businesses associated with the destination crumbled. This is not unconnected with religious issues and other related conflicts between the monastery and natives (Odum et al., 2018). That said, there is a recent move to re-open the monastery. It is

worthy to mention that this destination placed Enugu State in state, national and international tourism map. It has generated both local and international attention, although this might not be unconnected to natural features like the waterfall associated with the monastery and the religious values attached to the destination. The sudden decline of tourism activities (religious tourism) in this destination makes a study of this nature relevant because proper consultation and deliberations would have halted the economic loss experienced in this community (Odum et al., 2018) during its years of closure.

Nike Lake Resort

Nike lake resort (currently called Nike Lake Hotel) is located at Abakpa Nike road in Enugu East Local Government of Enugu State. The hotel is located near Nike Lake. The hotel was officially opened on February 5th, 1988. The destination is under the management of Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Enugu State. The lake has beautiful scenery. It is a habitat of giant crocodiles that forms part of its attractiveness drawing visitors, day-trippers, and tourists. The resort offers services such as a restaurant, tennis court, gymnasium center, swimming pool, basketball court, gift shop, Omenala bush bar and convention hall. These services are open to visitors, tourist, and guests in the resort. The destination falls on the “development stage” of the TALC model as it appears not to have witnessed the first two stages in the TALC model. As Butler has proposed, some destinations will start from “developmental stage” known as “instant resort”, where “the exploration and involvement phases are probably of minimal significance if they are present at all” (Butler, 1980, p. 10). The peak period for this resort is usually all festive periods in Nigeria (Easter, Salah, Christmas celebration). There are, at times, national and international activities double the flow of “guest-traffic” to the hotel like 1999 under 17 World Cup hosted in Nigeria. This destination features in both online and print media within and outside Enugu State.

Ogbunike Cave

Ogbunike cave is located in Ogbunike town in Oyi Local Government Area of Anambra State. The destination has attracted the attention of UNESCO and appears to be the most popular in the State, and probably southeastern Nigeria. This cave has attracted the attention of academia, state, and federal government. It is a common feature in most tourist brochures of the Anambra State Government. The destination has exceeded the first stage of the TALC model and almost all the features of the “involvement stage” are currently manifested. The cave is promoted by the state government and the natives. All festive periods in Nigeria are periods of “high-traffic” to the destination. There are molded seats for visitors and a public convenience built by Anambra State Government for visitors’ comfort. The cave is deified and has socio-cultural values attached to it by the natives (Odum, 2019).

Golden Tulip (Agulu Lake Resort)

Agulu Lake is located in Agulu town in Anaocha Local Government Area of Anambra State. The Lake is one of the famous lakes in the State, being promoted by the government and natives. The natives donated the land where the resort was built close to Agulu Lake. There is a scenic view of Agulu Lake from the hotel and an opportunity for visitors to see crocodiles at the bank of the Lake. The first phase of the destination has been completed with a hotel of 81 room capacity, conference center, and relaxation spot. Given the stages in TALC, as Butler has proposed, some destinations will start from “developmental stage” which are known as “instant resort”, where “the exploration and involvement phases are probably of minimal significance if they are present at all” (Butler, 1980, p. 10). Golden Tulip Agulu is a good example of a destination that starts as an instant resort.

Amaokpala Lake

Amaokpala Lake is located in Amaokpala community in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State. There is no crocodile inside the Lake. The Lake has drawn the attention of the state government but there seems to be little or no effort to develop the destination yet. The Lake has a unique feature; it hates any form of dirt. The Lake attracts visitors and tourists daily, especially students of Federal Polytechnic, Oke. There is no noticeable change in the social fabrics of the natives as people from all walks of life come to the Lake and go without restrictions. Moreover, it is accessible from different routes; visitors/tourists may not necessarily meet from point of entry to departure, especially visitors/tourists that come with cars and motorbikes. The Lake is still at the exploration stage of the TALC model. Meanwhile, the lake features in most state government online media and magazines.

Owerrezukalla Cave and Waterfall

Owerrezukalla cave is located in Orumba South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The cave and waterfall have been witnessing visitors and tourists from all walks of life. The Nigeria movie industry (Nollywood) has an uncompleted building close to the entrance of the cave. The state government has also recently renovated the staircase leading to the cave. The destination is tilting towards the second stage of the TALC model concept as there are elements of the “involvement stage”. Natives usually cater to the needs of visitors coming to the caves especially on the day when the gods are celebrated. The natives also act as tour-guides. This has attracted local and international attention and features in Anambra State tourism brochures.

Table 1

Tabular Presentation of TALC Model Features in Sampled Destinations

| Stages in TALC Model | Features in each stage | Destinations | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| | | Ezeagu tourist complex | Varavara Umueze-Aguiyi Lake | Awhum cave and waterfall | Nike lake resort | Ogbunike cave | Golden Tulip (Agulu lake resort) | Amaokpala lake | Owerrezuka Ila cave |
| Exploration stage | i) small number of tourists | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | ii) individual travel & irregular visitation patterns | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | iii) non-locals attracted by different unique natural and cultural features | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | iv) no specific facilities for visitors | √ | √ | ± | - | A | A | √ | √ |
| | v) use of local facilities and contact with local residents are likely high | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | vi) tourism has not changed the physical and social milieu of the area | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | vii) little significance about the felt on the economic and social life of the permanent residents | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Involvement stage | | Ezeagu tourist complex | Varavara Umueze-Aguiyi Lake | Awhum cave and waterfall | Nike lake resort | Ogbunike cave | Golden Tulip (Agulu lake resort) | Amaokpala lake | Owerrezuka Ila cave |
| | i) increase in the number of visitors with elements of regularity | √ | × | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | ii) locals provide facilities primarily or exclusively for visitors | √ | × | √ | × | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | iii) contacts with locals remains high with more locals getting involved in catering for visitors | √ | × | √ | × | × | × | √ | √ |
| | iv) advertising specifically to attract tourists can be anticipated and a basic initial market area for visitors can be defined | √ | × | √ | √ | √ | √ | × | √ |
| | v) a tourist season is expected to emerge and adjustment made in the social pattern of residents involved in tourism | √ | × | √ | √ | √ | √ | × | × |
| | vi) some level of organization in tourist travel arrangement can be expected and the first pressure pushed upon government and public agencies to provide or improve transport and other facilities for visitors | √ | × | × | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |

Table 1 to be continued

| | Ezeagu tourist complex | Varavara Umueze-Ag uiyi Lake | Awhum cave and waterfall | Nike lake resort | Ogbunike cave | Golden Tulip (Agulu lake resort) | Amaokpala lake | Owerrezuka Ila cave |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Development stage | i) well defined tourist market, propelled by heavy advert in tourist-generating areas | x | x | x | √ | x | x | x |
| | ii) local involvement and control of development will decline rapidly | x | x | x | √ | x | x | x |
| | iii) local provided facilities will disappear due to presence of elaborate and more up-to-date facilities provided by external organization, especially for visitor's accommodation | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| | iv) natural and cultural attractions will be developed sophisticatedly with man-made imported facilities | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| | v) changes in the physical appearance of the area will be noticeable and may not be welcomed by all natives | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |

Source: Author's computation. NB: √ = presence of a feature in a destination; x = absence of a feature in a destination; ± = the feature is complicated; A = means the presence of a feature or facility(ies). The only destination with ± is Awhum in the exploration stage. The feature reads: "no specific facilities for visitors". The facilities (accommodation) within the monastery axis are for pilgrims to use in most cases, not for visitors, excursionists, or tourists. There is a hotel within the Awhum community for public use.

Discussion

The first stage of the TALC model is exploration. The sampled destinations seem to have crossed the stage apart from the Varavara Umueze-Aguiyi Lake. Nike lake resort and Golden Tulip appear to have started from the “development stage”. This tallies with the Butler view that some destinations will not follow the model sequentially and this is usually common with “instant resort”. Destinations are usually tagged “instant resort” due to reasons known to governments in selecting areas or attractions to develop such destinations usually skip the first two stages in TALC or the stages appear too insignificant. Nike Lake and Golden Tulip were probably selected by the government and developed. These destinations close to lakes were developed due to government perceived favorable conditions (probably geographical) prevailing in the location of the lakes over other lakes or out of government choice due to perceived uniqueness—there are totemic crocodiles in both lakes.

Ecotourism destinations in developing nations may not exceed beyond the “developmental stage” due to the sole reliance on the government for tourism development. Conversely, governments in developing nations perceive tourism as an alternative source of income. Africa’s weak currencies have made it cheaper for tourists to visit; international tourists search for new undisturbed attractions free from pollution, unadulterated unlike what obtainable in the western world (Abdulrahman, Muhammed, & Muhammad, 2014). Despite this, most governments in developing nations such as Nigeria, through its actions and budgetary allocations seems to have limited interest in tourism development. There is no tourism plans/guideline to drive the sector in LGAs, meanwhile the NTDC created an opportunity for such. Within the state level, the State Tourism Boards are ineffective (Esu, 2015). Moreover, due to tourism capital intensive nature, governance structure, or tenured office of governors in the eastern region, tourism is given less priority. Governors are more interested in developing programs the masses will see to support their second tenure or deliver their political parties at an interval of four years than investing in tourism which is usually capital intensive and takes a longer period to mature especially superstructures and facilities.

Tourism may thrive in Nigeria in the near future when the government develops the infrastructural needs of the people. Presently, the meager resources from the federal government and internally generated revenues are used in paying civil servants; provide tarred roads, hospitals, electricity, academic institutions, agro-allied companies, which are currently inadequate in the region. Furthermore, the usual four-year tenure for governors in Nigeria is a limited time for proper tourism planning, except where the governor shows commitment to tourism which in most cases the next governor may not be interested in the predecessor’s tourism project. This leads to stagnation in tourism in the region. Meanwhile, governors are more interested in developing projects that will guarantee second tenure in office. Given this short time, planning for tourism may be limited. A change in government is a change for new administration whose interest in developing tourism maybe limited. Meanwhile, cases where a governor invests in tourism, the next government might not be interested in maintaining the tourism structures and development plans. An example is the case of Obudu cattle ranch and Tinapa in Cross River State, Nigeria, where the successive governments after the initiator Donald Duke left office in 2007. This has made some scholars propose a Public-Private Partnership to manage and develop tourism in the region (Odum, et al, 2018) and Nigeria due to the afore-written challenges.

TALC concept appears to be useful in modeling the growth of destinations but its application here gives a different result as none of these destinations have exceeded the development stage and may not get beyond it due to the abundance of similar destinations that are un-gazetted in the southeastern region and Nigeria at large.

There are numerous caves, lakes, and 15 forest reserves within Enugu and Anambra. These potential tourism resources hold a lot of prospects likely to cause other destinations not to develop beyond the “development stage” as attention will be shifted to similar destinations once new sites are accessible. Secondly, a new government might choose to develop a particular destination and such destination declines once s/he leaves office due to mal-administration and the bureaucracy associated with public service in Nigeria. Furthermore, it has been reported that there is a lack of synergy among tourism-related organizations in Nigeria from federal to local government level, NTDC, and National Orientation agency etc. (Esu, 2015) and it has been argued that lack of coordination is common among tourism agencies in developing nations as a result of “bureaucratic jealous” (Tosun, 2000).

Nevertheless, the TALC model serves as a pointer in what awaits the sampled destinations and similar destinations in the region and beyond and the need for adequate planning. Whether destinations concur or disagree with the TALC model may not be as vital as the model simple direction to the future of destinations where decline or rejuvenation appears as an inevitable end. This hypothetical inevitable end needs to be planned for at an early stage, especially for destinations that are developing to ensure sustainability and compete favorably with other destinations. The TALC result on these destinations showed that destinations are still at the lower ebb of the model, where the need for proper planning and management is essential. The management must take care of the identification of similar natural attractions like lakes and caves for adequate documentation, planning, and development of identified similar and related attractions. The management of these attractions and the yet-to-be-identified attractions should take cognizance of attractions with socio-cultural undertones like deified lakes, caves, or other similar or related nature-based attractions. Such destinations offer the opportunity for multiple attractions to be developed in one destination, and adds value to destinations’ attractiveness.

Implications of This Study—Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretical Implications

1. Novelty—TALC may have been over-discussed in tourism literature but the Nigerian tourism landscape offers a new perspective. The discussion also addresses the gap-lack of the model application in the global south. This study appears to be the first time the model is tested in Nigerian tourism research using two states and filling a lacuna in the literature which Butler did not take cognizance of, especially destinations in Africa. The result of the study tallies with the model; most of the sample destinations are not developed and fall between the exploration and involvement stage. The relevance of this study in destinations with similar features cannot be overemphasized.

2. Instant resorts—The instant resorts in the study areas appear to be a likely future path for some ecotourism destinations like lakes in the region and developing nations. Most governments build hotels and resorts close to lakes. This might not be unconnected to the lakes’ natural, serene, and scenic view which has been demonstrated in Agulu, Nike, and Oguta within the southeastern region of Nigeria. Moreover, lakes offer more opportunities for other recreational activities like boat ride, swimming, and boat-regatta.

3. Opportunity for community involvement—Majority of the destinations are still between the exploration and involvement stage and this offers the opportunity for adequate community participation to forestall antagonistic behavior when natives are weaned off the tourism system due to growth and expansion as predicted in “development stage” (see Table I, feature number five (v) of the model). Odum (2017) states that the

application of the TALC model in ecotourism destinations in the southeastern region of Nigeria will assist tourism stakeholders in planning for the different stages of ecotourism resources (i.e., caves and lakes) which tourism is dependent on, and this can be achieved by adapting examples of similar destinations across the globe as the model has been useful in destination planning, and forecasting. Moreover, adequate planning at early-stage should take cognizance of community participation which is the bedrock for sustainable tourism. Opportunity for community participation in the tourism development plan is vital at the “exploration stage” to “empower local people to keep control over tourism before local destinations become more popular and attractive for large capital owner” (Tosun, 2000, p. 627). This resonates with Siripen (2017), where the Koh Kred Nonthanburi Province of Thailand is yet to go beyond the development stage of the TALC model. The author also recommended the need for “thoughtful planning and careful management”; all this was to ensure the sustainability of the Koh Kred’s authenticity as a destination. Despite this opportunity, community involvement has a lot of limitations (Tosun, 2000).

Practical Implications

1. Applicability where there are no numeric data—The study has shown that there is no accurate record about tourists visiting sampled ecotourism destinations in southeastern Nigeria. This may likely be the status of similar attractions in the region due to the inherent developmental challenges facing tourism in the region, especially poor government attention. Where data are likely to be available it usually hotels in which 98 percent are privately owned or destinations with religious attributes like Awhum. Lack of numerical data will forestall any sustainable developmental plan, but this may not be peculiar to ecotourism but a common problem in tourism destinations like parks (ecotourism destination) (Jones, 2012). Numerical values are needed to forecast the next stage of destinations and ensure adequate planning. This is vital for the proposed future of destinations as argued by Butler. The approach used in the study might be useful, when numeric data do not exist.

2. Undeveloped destinations, original and attractive—The present stages of these ecotourism destinations have multiple effects. First, most of these destinations are original, uncontaminated, unpolluted, and hold a lot of socio-cultural and economic values to natives (Odum, 2017). Moreover, their undeveloped status makes it more appealing as the destinations flourish in their natural state and may increase the attractiveness of such destinations. On the contrary, these destinations are not developed for tourism purposes and the quest for development is gradually coming to these destinations which will erode or destroy their attractiveness if not harnessed sustainably for tourism purposes. Tourism can conserve ecotourism destinations for present and futuristic benefits, and generate economic and environmental benefits. Ecotourism resources are usually scenery, and hold special appeal due to their unique nature, whether developed or not has the capacity and appeals to draw tourists because of their unique appeal (Odum, 2017).

3. The need for visitors’ record—As highlighted by Butler (1980) quantitative data are needed to make the model more plausible in different destinations. Apart from Golden Tulip, Nike Lake, numerical data on tourists’/visitors’ patronage to these destinations are not available and this appears to be missing in most of the destinations sampled. Therefore, the need to keep an accurate record of number of tourists/visitors in these destinations will enhance the applicability of this model in the selected destinations, and aid in its sustainability planning. Lack of visitors’ profile probably affects tourism planning in developing nations such as Nigeria where lack of tourists’ profile is lacking. Meanwhile the profile of tourists is germane for tourism development (Odum, 2019).

4. Limited development & stagnation—The feasibility of any of these destinations getting beyond the developmental stage is slim. There are over hundreds of similar destinations in southeastern Nigeria unharnessed, and unknown to the government, tourism developers, and academia. The available ones also vary in the landscape. For example, some caves are dry, while some have associated waterfall. Caves with waterfalls are perceived to be more attractive. The chances of a sudden decline of similar or existing destinations before getting to the developmental stage are plausible. Furthermore, the sole reliance on the government for developing these destinations will cause some destinations to remain at a particular stage for tens of years without possible development. This is not unconnected to the government's poor attitude to tourism development (Esu, 2015; Odum et al., 2018) in Nigeria.

5. Uncertainty of destination growth—The fluctuations between exploration and development stages might be the direction of destinations in the study area in the nearest future. No known destination in the region has manifested all the features in the development stage let alone going beyond it. As new destinations with similar attractions spring up, the ones available will decline without reaching its full potential. This aligns with the assertion of Jones in nature-based tourism parks in Japan. The tendency of some destination not to reach the peak of the model is not ruled out, due to the availability of similar alternatives (Jones, 2012). The need to explore alternative tourism products within these destinations is inevitable for sustainable tourism in these destinations and region at large. Developing a new tourism product within each destination will maintain the destination's attractiveness. Moreover, since destinations differ (Choy, 1992), TALC results will always give varieties of alternatives (Haywood, 1986) that may or may not tally with the predictive outcome of Butler's proposal.

Conclusion

This study, using descriptive means, showed different stages of ecotourism destinations in southeastern Nigeria. Most of the destinations are not fully developed for tourism, although the government has shown some efforts. These efforts appear not to be enough to drive the tourism sector. The tourism development level in the region seems to be at most in the "developmental stage". This is likely applicable to other destinations in Nigeria and beyond. The government seems the sole developer of tourism in developing nations, and the same government has little interest in tourism due to socio-political reasons stated earlier. This attitude can be summarized as "slapdash attitude" to the sector (Odum & Ukekwe, 2020; Odum, 2019; Esu, 2015). Therefore, using the TALC model, tourism destinations in developing nations may fall between "exploration" and "development" stages. This may have made destinations in developing nations to command fewer tourist arrivals.

Conversely, the current state of ecotourism calls for planning and development, especially involving community members. Community involvement in tourism planning is the pillar of sustainable tourism, especially in Africa due to perceived values inherent in tourism. Tourism has been recognized as a means of economic diversification, job creation, poverty alleviation, economic generation and stability (Matiza & Oni, 2014), and to achieve the afore-written variables, tourism must be properly planned. Adequate planning can make these destinations withstand competition in the nearest future, because, similar destinations are likely to spring up, and older ones not reaching "development" or "consolidation" as predicted in the model. The descriptive approach used in this study may be employed to comprehend tourism status in similar or related tourism destinations in regions where government effort to tourism development is meager. The study will aid tourism scholars from developing nations to pigeonhole theoretical frameworks using the TALC model. It serves as a guide where

quantitative data are lacking.

It is exaggerative to generalize the results of this study for the southeastern Nigeria; rather it offers a perspective of what is likely to be the status of eco-destination, using examples from Nigeria. Variationing geographic endowments, cultural milieu, and political structures will always produce different results. Besides, the lack of numeric values in the study which is a major component of Butler's model is a weakness to this study and makes it difficult to make categorical statements on these destinations. Beyond this, the qualitative options may be one of the ways to gauge tourism status using the TALC model where numerals are not existing. Furthermore, such assessment of tourism (eco-destination) destinations status using Butler's model highlights the need for proper planning and development of the tourism sector.

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