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ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDLY TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIAN NATIONAL PARKS



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Abstract

The paper focuses on Environmental friendly Tourism and its prospects on Nigerian economy. Nigeria, like many other developing countries, should diversify her economic base from her sole dependence on oil to non-oil sectors of the economy. Thus, her present emphasis on Tourism which is being regarded as the fastest growing sector of the economy globally could not be more timely. Maximizing the benefits from Tourism without jeopardizing the sustainability of our environment, however, is a great concern to many worldwide. Nigeria National Park Service with its eight National Parks (now seven) located in various ecological zones of the country is not only promoting tourism (through ecotourism), but also protecting and conserving the country's flora and fauna, historic sites and monuments, morphological and geomorphologic features and also promoting the non-consumptive uses of these resources without adverse effect on their sustainability. Greater priority (financial and political will) need to be placed on the tourism sector by all tiers of Government in Nigeria in order for the country to be able to have her own share of international tourism market.

Introduction

Today, no country of the world, whether industrialized or developing can afford to ignore the importance of tourism to its economic, social and cultural development. More than ever before, nations of the world have become increasingly more aware of the immense benefits derivable from tourism, and are vigorously developing their tourism industry. In Ghana, Tourism is one of the key sectors in the economic recovery programme and is currently the third foreign exchange earner, after minerals and cocoa. In Tanzania, Tourism accounts for about 50% of foreign exchange earnings. The country of Kenya earns about US\$128 million annually from its tourist potentials (Oyakhilome, 2005).

In Nigeria, the Tourism sector has witnessed the dawn of a new era, since the inception of the new democratic government in 1999. The Federal government has accorded a preferred sector status to Tourism, which is presently one of the six priority sectors of the

Administration. However, unlike other industries where factories and machines could be put up within a specified period of time and production could commence, tourism needs planning, creativity, infrastructures and allied services, and an enabling social and political environment to thrive. The creation of an environmental friendly tourism would impact more positively on the Nigerian economy.

Tourism and the environment are inter-dependent. The physical (natural and man-made) environment provides many of the attractions for tourists, and the development of tourism can generate both positive and negative environmental impacts. Developing and managing tourism so that it is compatible with the environment, and does not degrade it, is a major factor in achieving sustainable development. In order to plan tourism environmentally, it is first important to understand the possible impacts of tourism on the environment. Therefore, this paper attempts to examine issues of environmental friendly tourism and its impact on Nigeria economy.

Sustainable Development of the Tourism Sector

Long term sustainable development in the tourism sector must depend upon a partnership and balance between the environment, economics, and social values and benefits. In other words, sustainable development can only be achieved if social and economic impacts are in equilibrium with environmental goals. Thus in planning and promoting tourism for both economic and conservation development, proper considerations must be expressed at three levels in relation to the impacts of the exercise. These are;

Environmental Impact of Tourism

The environmental awareness that started in the 1970s exposed environmental problems in many prosperous industries including tourism. The physical impacts of tourism can be widespread. Examples of negative environmental impacts are soil erosion through the provision of tourist facilities and infrastructure such as roads, accommodation, and trampling on soil and vegetation by tourists; air and water pollution from CO₂ emissions through transportation of tourists, and loading of water sources with Nitrogen and Phosphorus, pollution of streams with spent lamp-carbide and batteries which threatened the survival of aquatic species; decreased diversity of flora and fauna through killing and injury from passing vehicles; increased noise levels from vehicular and air transportation and; aesthetic degradation from lack of integration of structures with the natural features and indigenous architectural design (Weaver and Dale, 1978; Williams, 1987).

The intensity of tourism development and use, the reliability of the ecosystem, long-term versus short-term tourism planning, and the extent of modification an area undergoes affect the amount of environmental damage incurred (Cohen, 1978). Controlling negative environmental impacts in tourism is important for ecological and economic reasons. As with any type of development, unsound ecological practices can have far – reaching effects. Examples of these are flooding due to watershed deforestation and species extinction

due to habitat loss. Environmental degradation in natural areas, especially with increasingly sophisticated and environmentally conscious travelers, can lead to a decrease in tourist visitation and the ensuing revenue loss (Lawrence, 1994). Increasingly, environmental impact assessments and carrying capacity calculations are used to control the environmental impacts associated with tourism development (Vining, 1990; Whelan, 1991).

Carrying capacity developed in the tourism industry as a result of “the growing problem of tourist saturation” (World Tourism Organization, 1984). Mathieson and Wall (1982) define carrying capacity as “the maximum number of people who can use a site without an unacceptable alteration in the physical environment and without an unacceptable decline in the quality of the experience gained by visitors. Carrying capacity must not only account for the physical number of people in an area, but also for the type of recreational activity the tourist undertakes, because some activities are more damaging to the environment than others. (Lawrence, 1994).

Carrying capacity has useful implications for tourism planning and management; several negative issues, however, need to be addressed. It is difficult to predict the impacts resulting from tourist use, yet carrying capacity accounting limits use based on these predictions (Getz, 1983). Enforced limits on visitation levels often result in problems. Developers, wanting to earn revenue quickly, dislike limits on the number of tourists allowed to visit an area. Carrying capacity may also alienate tourists who are turned away from an area or are restricted in their activities at a tourist attraction.

Carrying capacity spawned the “limits of acceptable change” system (Stankey and Mc-cool, 1984). This system was developed for use by wilderness area managers and is used to identify and monitor important environmental and social indicators. The LAC system consists of nine steps, including identifying environmental and social impacts and their indicators, analyzing and developing standards for conditions in the area, identifying and analyzing alternative allocations of the area, implementing the selected alternative, and

establishing a monitoring program (Stankey *et al.*, 1985). The limit of acceptable change system is useful for maintaining and improving the environmental and social quality of an area. It also leads to a high level of customer satisfaction.

If tourism is well planned, developed and managed, it can generate important positive environmental impacts. These include the following:

- * Helps justify and pay for conservation of important natural areas and wildlife, including marine environments, and development of national and regional parks and reserves, because these are major attractions for tourists. This is an especially significant benefit in countries with limited resources for undertaking environmental conservation.
- * Helps justify and pay for the conservation of archaeological and historic sites as attractions for tourists. Otherwise many of these sites would be allowed to deteriorate or disappear. Even entire historic districts in towns and cities can be conserved and developed for tourism.
- * Helps improve the environmental quality of areas because tourists like to visit places that are attractive, clean and not polluted. Tourism provides the incentive to clean up environments through controlling air, water, noise and visual pollution, reducing congestion and upgrading overall appearance with suitable landscaping and building design. Also, well-sited and designed tourist facilities themselves can contribute to the attractive appearance of both urban and rural environments. Improvement of infrastructure, especially of water supply and sewage and solid waste disposal, also contributes to improved environmental quality.
- * Increases local environmental awareness; when residents, and especially young people, observe tourists' interest in conservation, they

also begin to realize the importance of conservation in their areas.

SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACTS

Tourism can bring both benefits and problems to the local society and its cultural patterns. Although more difficult to measure than environmental impacts, socio-cultural impacts are major considerations in developing tourism in any place. These impacts can be especially critical in countries that still have strongly traditional societies and economics. Although tourism can generate socio-cultural impacts, it should be kept in mind that any type of new development brings changes. Tourism is only one source of change in a society.

If tourism is well planned, developed and managed in a socially responsible manner, it can bring several types of socio-cultural benefits. These include the following:

- * Improves the living standards of people through employment and income generation.
- * Helps pay for improvements to community facilities and services, if the economic benefits of tourism are well distributed.
- * Conserves the cultural heritage of an area which otherwise might be lost as a result of general development taking place. Conservation of archaeological and historic sites was referred to under environmental impacts. Cultural patterns of music, dance, drama, dress, arts and crafts, customs, ceremonies, life styles, rational economic activities and architectural styles are also important attractions for tourists. If these are lost, cultural tourism will not be successful in the area. Tourism helps justify their conservation. In some places, tourism can be the impetus for revitalizing cultural patterns, which might be disappearing.
- * Helps develop and maintain museums, theatres and other cultural facilities. These are, in part, supported by tourism but are also enjoyed by residents. Many major museums and theatres in the

world receive much financial support from the admission fees paid by tourists.

- * Reinforces or even renews a sense of pride by residents in their culture, when they observe tourists appreciating it. This is especially true of some traditional societies, which are undergoing rapid change and losing their sense of cultural self-confidence.

Economic Implications

Tourism is presently the world's largest and fastest growing industry accounting for about 7% of global capital investment, with receipts predicted to reach an estimated US\$1.550 billion by year 2010 (Oyakhilome, 2005). According to estimates, World tourists on the move throughout the world within the next decade will increase and they will spend billions of dollars (Falade, 2001).

Furthermore, World Tourism Organisation (WTO) on the basis of its research arrived at the following interesting and inspiring findings, that:

1. Travel and tourism constituted the world's largest creator of jobs in most countries (e.g. in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Australia Tunisia and Morocco), providing service and employment for a total of 101 million people or one in sixteen (16) workers worldwide.
2. Travel for holiday purpose accounts for 60% of world's travel and 30%

of business trips.

3. Africa's share of international tourism receipts grew from US \$ 88 million in 1950 to US \$ 1 – 3 billion in 1975; US \$ 2.17 billion in 1980 and US \$ 5.0 billion in 1990. (WTO, 1990).

The above statistics has since been recognized by Nigeria and other Africa countries. It is not impossible to increase our participation rate in the share of benefits that continue to accrue to world tourism only if our national planning of tourism is accorded greater attention by local governments, states, the federal government and private individuals. This must be within the confine of socio and ecological implications of the exercise. There is no "zero impact" tourism, and therefore, the minimum acceptable levels of negative impacts need to be planned.

Ecotourism: Case Study of Nigeria National Park Service

Since 1979 when the first National Park (i.e. Kainji Lake National Park) was created, the number of National Park in the country has increased to eight. However, the transfer of the management of Yankari National Park to Bauchi State Government in 2006 reduced the number to seven. Kainji Lake (Niger and Kwara States), Kamuku (Kaduna State), Old Oyo (Oyo State), Okomu (Edo State), Cross River (Cross River State), Gashaka-Gumti (Adamawa and Taraba States) and Chad Basin (Borno and Yobe States) National Parks are the remaining National Parks in Nigeria (Table 1)

Table 1: Nigeria National Parks

National Parks	Size (km ²)	Location (State)	Ownership	Vegetation
Kainji Lake	5,380	Niger and Kwara	Federal Government	Guinea Savanna
Kamuku	1121	Kaduna	Federal Government	Guinea Savanna
Old Oyo	2512	Oyo	Federal Government	Dry Forest/Guinea Savanna
Okomu	197	Edo	Federal Government	Lowland Rainforest
Cross-River	4,000	Cross-River	Federal Government	Lowland Rainforest
Gashaka-Gumti	6,670	Taraba and Adamawa	Federal Government	Guinea Savanna/ Montane Forest
Chad Basin	2,245	Borno and Yobe	Federal Government	Sudan/Sahel Savanna
Yankari (Now Game Reserve)	2,244	Bauchi	Bauchi State Govt.	Guinea Savanna

Source: Nigeria National Park Service

Nigeria National Park Service (NNPS) has gone a long way in conserving, preserving and protecting the flora and fauna resources in the country. This is evidenced in the checklists of animal species that are being protected in our various National Parks. Some of these animals are rare, endangered or threatened; many do not occur elsewhere but can only be found in the National Parks. The population of some animals that has hitherto nosedived due to persistent hunting and poaching is now becoming appreciable due to the protection provided by the National Parks e.g elephants at Kamuku National Park, Cross River National Park and Yankari National Park (now Yankari International Game Reserve). Most of the indigenous flora which are now rare can be found regenerating in National Parks (e.g. *Azalia Spp*) without which they face the threat of extinction in the nearest future.

The contribution of ecotourism to conservation activities in our National Parks cannot be over- emphasized. Though appears meager, the revenue generated (Table 2) has gone a long way in contributing to the management of these protected areas especially with increasing paucity of fund from the Federal Government. From 1999 to 2005, Chad Basin National Park generated N1, 918,532.64 from

the provision of ecotourism services. During the same period, Cross River National Park, Gashaka-Gumti National Park, Kainji Lake National Park, Kamuku National Park, Okomu National Park, Old Oyo National Park, Yankari National Parks and Nigeria National Park Headquarters generated N8,387,054.52, N5,390,330.08, N19,548,705.36, N5,023,624.36, N2,195,382.95, N2,452,647.95, N90,691,328.38 and N649, 366.66 respectively. This income being generated through ecotourism can be aptly described as "revenue for conservation and sustainability"; though with multiplying effect on the economy.

Nigeria National Park service involvement in ecotourism is having positive effects not only on our conserved ecosystem but also the economic development of the country. From figure 1, the total revenue generated by the National Parks peaked for the year 2001. This bears a direct correlation with fund allocation to the Nigerian Parks in the preceding year (Table 3). Though data on fund allocation for succeeding years could not be accessed, it is quite interesting to note a progressing decline in the amount of internally generated revenue by the parks, which is also in tandem with the observed trend in tourist traffic to the various parks (Fig. 2).

Table 2: Revenue generated (N) from ecotourism services by Nigeria National Parks from 1999 to 2005

National Parks	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Basin National	123,633.00	N/A	94,543.38	150,250.00	1,488,935.00	88,814.26	95,999.00	1,918,532.64
River National	1,484,761.00	1,132,821.71	2,055,566.00	658,148.50	705,585.00	1,386,585.00	2,448,348.31	8,387,054.52
Ika-Gumti	325,559.00	1,443,438.00	1,293,064.91	344,193.75	736,236.00	1,121,971.66	451,425.76	5,390,330.08
Lake National	2,030,860.61	2,676,055.25	3,379,300.65	4,212,384.11	2,745,659.93	3,098,682.42	3,436,623.00	19,548,705.36
Kuku National	N/A	484,120.00	646,700.00	840,033.60	1,403,696.47	1,173,888.87	475,185.42	5,023,624.36
Yankari National Park	N/A	874,934.45	330,736.50	142,680.00	407,690.00	245,450.00	193,892.00	2,195,382.95
Okavango National	550,000.00	100,800.00	43,400.00	1,048,452.30	238,825.05	661,241.48	598,754.17	2,452,647.95
Yankari National	2,986,947.18	12,632,950.78	22,179,584.87	15,600,000.00	17,917,061.00	12,567,759.33	9,793,972.40	90,691,328.38
Headquarters	9,895.00	259,115.04	253,637.12	64,000.00	72,614.50	N/A	N/A	649,366.66
	7,511,655.79	19,604,235.23	30,276,533.43	23,060,142.26	25,477,477.90	20,344,393.02	17,496,196.06	136,256,972.90

Note: N/A Implies that Data was not available Source: Nigeria National Park Service

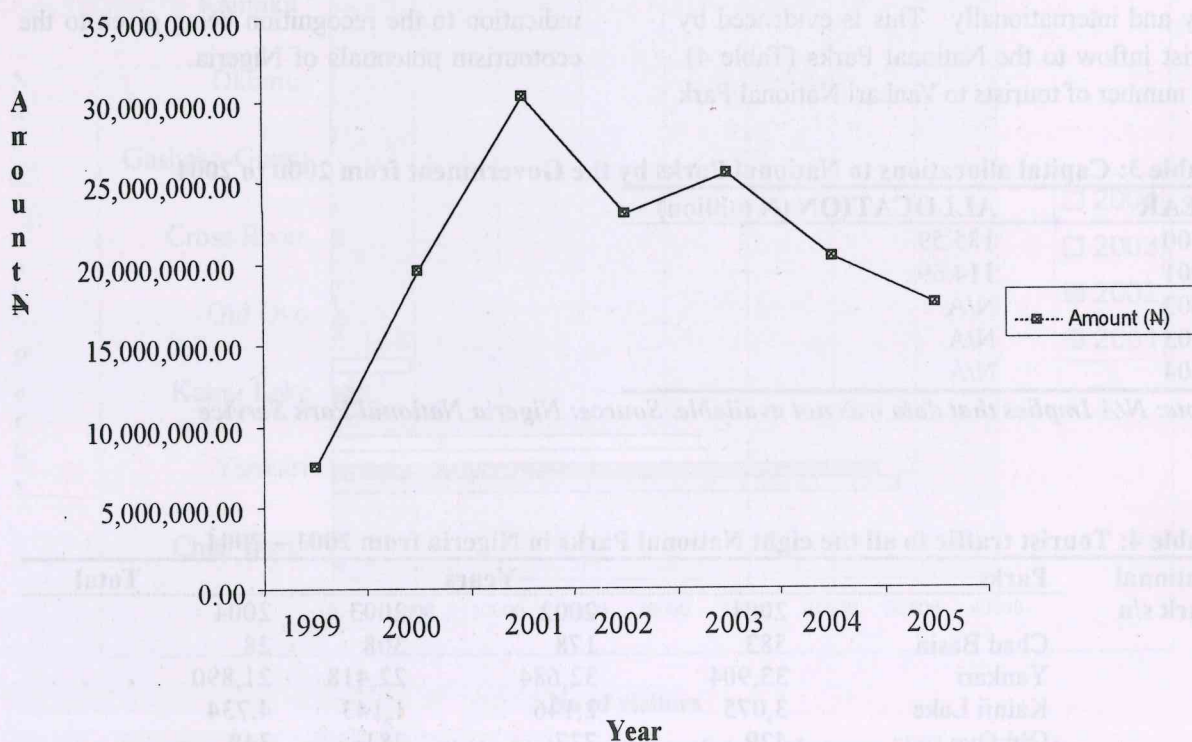


Fig. 1: Trends in Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) by Nigeria National Parks from Ecotourism services between 1999 and 2005.

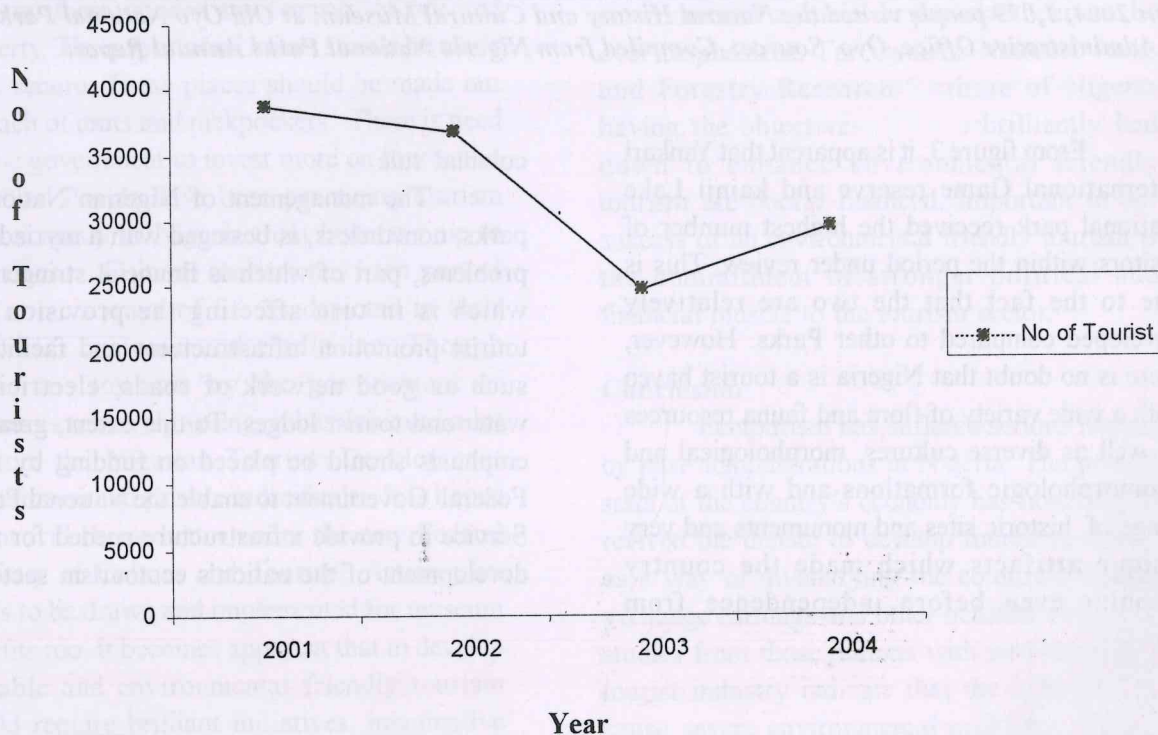


Fig. 2: Trends in number of tourist to Nigerian National Park Between 2001 and 2004.

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Nevertheless, Nigeria ecotourism industry is now being recognized both domestically and internationally. This is evidenced by tourist inflow to the National Parks (Table 4). The number of tourists to Yankari National Park

(110,896) and Kainji Lake National Park (11,098) within the year 2001-2004, is an indication to the recognition being given to the ecotourism potentials of Nigeria.

Table 3: Capital allocations to National Parks by the Government from 2000 to 2004

YEAR	ALLOCATION (N million)
2000	185.59
2001	114.69
2002	N/A
2003	N/A
2004	N/A

Note: N/A Implies that data was not available. Source: Nigeria National Park Service

Table 4: Tourist traffic to all the eight National Parks in Nigeria from 2001 – 2004

National Park s/n	Parks	Years				Total
		2001	2002	2003	2004	
1	Chad Basin	583	178	308	28	
2	Yankari	33,904	32,684	22,418	21,890	
3	Kainji Lake	3,075	2,146	1,143	4,734	
4	Old Oyo	429	727	281	348	
5	Cross River	413	580	153	398	
6	Gashaka-Gumti	104	121	81	205	
7	Okomu	196	209	230	788	
8	Kamuku	12	120	84	1,040	
Total		38,716	36,765	24,698	29,431	

In 2004, 1,079 people visited the Natural History and Cultural Museum at Old Oyo National Park Administrative Office, Oyo. Source: Compiled from Nigeria National Parks Annual Report

From figure 3, it is apparent that Yankari International Game reserve and Kainji Lake National park received the highest number of visitors within the period under review. This is due to the fact that the two are relatively developed compared to other Parks. However, there is no doubt that Nigeria is a tourist haven with a wide variety of flora and fauna resources as well as diverse cultures, morphological and geomorphologic formations and with a wide range of historic sites and monuments and very unique artifacts which made the country popular even before independence from

colonial rule.

The management of Nigerian National parks, nonetheless, is besieged with a myriad of problems, part of which is financial stringency which is in turn affecting the provision of tourist promotion infrastructures and facilities such as good network of roads, electricity, water and tourist lodges. To this extent, greater emphasis should be placed on funding by the Federal Government to enable the National Park Service to provide infrastructure needed for the development of the nation's ecotourism sector.

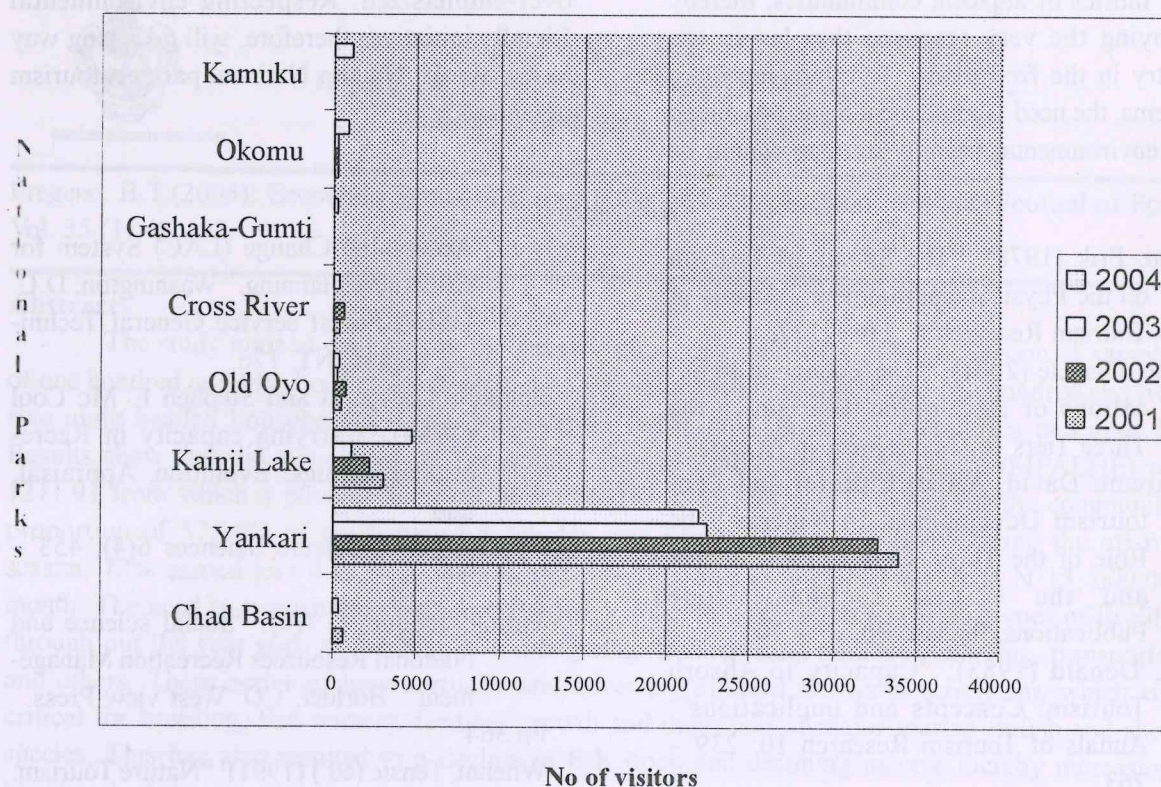


Fig. 3: National Parks with the highest number of visitors between 2001 and 2004.

Recommendations

For effective domestic and international tourism, there is need for security of life and property. The airports and hotels should be made more secure. These places should be made out of reach of touts and pickpockets. There is need for the government to invest more on tourism in Nigeria. People have been practicing tourism unconsciously in Nigeria from historic time to the present. Cultural tourism has been part of the people's ways of life as depicted in their festivals, customs and traditions. Though conscious tourism by the government of Nigeria is relatively young, it has achieved a lot through the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation and private individuals. It is hoped that it will thrive better under the new Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Action plan needs to be drawn and implemented for museum benefits too. It becomes apparent that to develop a viable and environmental friendly tourism would require brilliant initiatives, imaginative minds and creativity. We have also recognized the need to have an enabling political and social

environment for tourism to succeed as an industry. The policy on financing ministries and environmental agencies or parastatal can not be over emphasized. For instance National Parks and Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria having the objectives brilliantly laid down to enhance environmental friendly tourism are poorly financed. Important to our success of an environmental friendly tourism is the commitment of stronger political and financial muscle to the tourism sector.

Conclusion

Ecotourism has suffered serious neglect by past administrations in Nigeria. The present state of the country's economy has nonetheless, revived the debate to develop tourist resources as a way of diversifying the country's foreign exchange earnings and other benefits. However, studies from those nations with well developed tourist industry indicate that the industry can cause severe environmental problems ranging from the possible destruction of wild animals and their habitats to the possible destruction of

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social fabrics of adjacent communities, thereby destroying the very resource that led to the industry in the first place. To overcome these problems, the need to implement measures aimed at an environmental friendly tourism cannot be

over-emphasized. Respecting environmental friendly initiatives therefore, will go a long way to sustain the Nigeria National park ecotourism potentials.

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