African Journal of Sciences and Traditional Medicine

ISSN : 1595-7942

Index: Harvard, Boston, Sydney University, Dimensions, Lens, ResearchGet Scilit, Semantic, Google Scholar, Base etc

https://doi.org/10.58578/AJSTM.v2i3.7350

# Evaluating the Challenges Affecting Tourism Development in Gashaka Gumti National Park

**Akafa Konde Silas, Kanati Madaki, Gani Saidu Chibuma**
Federal University Teaching Hospital Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria
akafakonde@gmail.com

**Article Info:**

| Submitted: | Revised: | Accepted: | Published: |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aug 1, 2025 | Aug 22, 2025 | Sep 3, 2025 | Sep 8, 2025 |

**Abstract**

This study evaluates the key challenges hindering tourism development in Gashaka Gumti National Park, Nigeria. Data were collected through 100 structured 5-point Likert scale questionnaires administered to park staff, with responses analyzed using IBM SPSS version 25 and descriptive statistics. Findings reveal that the continuous presence of enclave communities within the park poses a major threat to its sustainability, as livelihood activities such as farming, poaching, lumbering, mining, honey harvesting, open grazing, fishing, and bush burning negatively affect park development. Additional challenges identified include lack of cooperation from enclave communities, impacts of climate change, attacks on rangers, inadequate manpower, insufficient budgetary allocation, and poor ranger welfare. The study concludes that these challenges significantly constrain the park's tourism potential and conservation efforts. It recommends increased resource allocation by the Federal Government of Nigeria, along with improved ranger welfare, stronger community engagement, and enhanced manpower capacity, to ensure more effective management and sustainable tourism development in Gashaka Gumti National Park.


AJSTM Journal is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

**Keywords**: Tourism Development; Challenges; Gashaka Gumti National Park; Enclave Communities; Conservation Management

## INTRODUCTION

The Gashaka-Gumti National Park is located between latitudes 7o 56' and 7o 59' N and longitudes 11o 48' and 11o 54' E. The park's entire area is approximately 6,731 km2. The park is located in the states of Adamawa and Taraba (Fig. 1). The park's Gumti section is in Adamawa State, while the Gashaka area is in Taraba State (Akinsoji et al., 2016). The name of the park was inspired by two (2) of the region's oldest and most historic settlements: Gashaka village in Taraba State and Gumti village in Adamawa State. The Federal Government of Nigeria established the Gashaka-Gumti National Park in 1991 by merging the Gashaka Game Reserve with the Gumti Game Reserve. The park, like any other park in Nigeria, was formed as a protected area for the purposes of nature protection, recreation, ecotourism, scientific and medical research, and promoting the art, craft, and cultural value of the indigenous people that live in the park's vicinity.The Park's northern, Gumti region is generally flat, whereas the southern, Gashaka sector is more mountainous. This harsh environment is distinguished by steep, densely forested slopes, deep falling valleys, sheer escarpments, and fast-flowing rivers. The altitude ranges from 450 metres above sea level in the plains of the Northern Park sector to the peaks and pinnacles of Mount Gangirwal (Mounting of Death) in the Southern Park sector, which, at a stunning 2,400 metres above sea level, is the highest point in the park, represents Nigeria's highest mountain (Mubi, 2010).

National Parks face many threats. Some threats are human and others are natural. Regardless of the origin, these Parks rely on the help of conservation funded by the Federal Government to remain alive (Bessah *et al.*, 2019). Bessah *et al* (2019) opined that every creature, plant or bacteria has a place of existence where it supports the blossoming of its own ecosystem. Sometimes, an event occurs that disturbs that organism in its natural habitat Sometimes this event is human led and other times, it is natural. However, if that organism is disturbed and redistributed, it is often led away from its home and to an alien environment (Bessah et al., 2019).

Bila-Isia (2014) posited that "lack of local community's participation in the process of creating Protected Areas resulted in the lack of acceptance of the existence of Protected Areas". Poaching has many correlates that may seem tricky to disentangle, including commercial pressures, banditry and lawlessness; but lack of acceptance of Protected Areas clearly contributed to intensifying hunting within Protected Areas as a measure of defiance. Hunting as an expression of defiance happens in almost all Protected Areas, though all poaching cannot be attributable to this single factor (Bila-Isia, 2014).

According to Eagles & Paul (2016), no Park exists in isolation, and this fact is becoming increasingly clear as the areas surrounding Parks are developed for living space, agriculture, mining, forestry, and more. The iconic species protected inside the Parks don't recognize boundaries and must often move in and out of the Parks to feed, mate, or migrate. If larger ecological wildlife corridors can't be maintained to include the lands outside of Parks, many species may not survive within them either (Eagles & Paul, 2016).

Sambandam et al. (2014) stated that for effective wildlife management, prior knowledge of species diversity, distribution and abundance is required to help detect significant changes and thus appropriate management interventions. Efficient and reliable methods are required for monitoring changes in species abundance in protected areas. In the Himalayas, due to the remote and rugged high-altitude terrain, monitoring of species is often a challenge for wildlife managers. In the Greater Himalaya where road connectivity and other essential logistic support is minimal inside Protected Areas, monitoring of any animal population is difficult and thus monitoring programmes tend to be lacking.

number of initiatives have highlighted the likely impacts of climate change on biodiversity (Bergengren et al., 2011). Even a relatively modest 2 °C global temperature rise will cause significant modifications to ecosystems and their functions. Climate change is not only a threat, but many of the response measures being designed for mitigation will also impact adversely on natural habitats and biodiversity. Already the demand for biofuels has led to more rapid deforestation and agricultural expansion for sugar cane, soya and oil palm plantations in the tropics. Investment in more renewable energy sources, such as hydropower and geothermal energy, can lead to loss of natural habitats and disruption of ecosystem processes unless carefully planned and implemented. Adaptation to climate change is likely to involve more investment in dams, levees and reservoirs to buffer against increased variability in rainfall and runoff and flood control; such infrastructure may be

essential for economic development, but can reduce important ecosystem services, and dependent livelihoods, through their impacts on the volume, pattern, and quality of flow (Hirji & Davis, 2009).

According to Akinsoji et al. (2016) and Oruonye et al. (2017), Gashaka-Gumti National Park has a good drainage system. Rivers such as the Mayo Kam, Mayo Yim, Mayo Kpa, Mayo Gamgam, Mayo Beriji, and Mayo Burtali run through the park, providing habitat for aquatic wildlife as well as a reliable source of water for the neighbouring communities. Sedimentary rock makes up Gashaka-Gumti. The region's sedimentary rocks have been mineralized with lead (pb) and zinc (zn). The pre-Cambrian Basin is also known as the "oldest, crystalline, solid foundation in the country" because it comprises igneous and metamorphic rock. Sedimentary rock can be found in the basins that divide the basement complex continent The predominant rock type in the area causes erosion and weathering of landforms within the park. Gashaka-Gumti National Park's mountainous terrain provides an ideal landform for the local watershed. The Gumti area has highly fertile soil, which supports diverse agricultural activities of the park's enclave populations. Humic ferrisols and lithosols are generally found at higher elevations, with ferruginous tropical soils and alluvial soils in river basins (Akinsoji et al., 2016). The rainy and dry seasons characterize the climate of Gashaka-Gumti National Park. The park has temperatures ranging from 18oC (64oF) to 36oC (96oF) with an annual rainfall of approximately 1,500mm, with a single rainfall peak in September (Akinsoji et al., 2016). The dry season in the study area starts in November and lasts until March. It is distinguished by a northeasterly or harmattan wind from the Sahara Desert. The average temperature at GGNP is 29 degrees Celsius, with an average humidity level of 38 percent (Mubi, 2010).

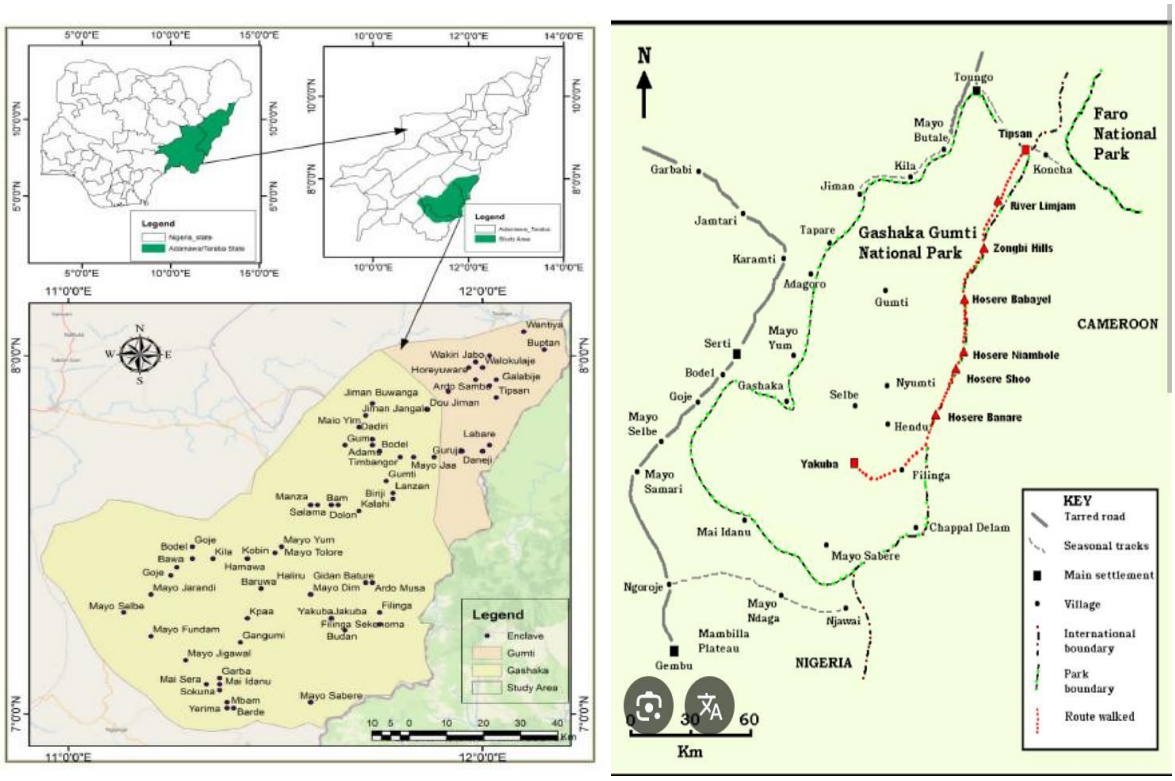



Figure 1: Showing the Map of Gashaka Gumti National Park

## Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to assess tourism contribution to the development of Gashaka Gumti National Park.

Specific objectives are to identify the challenges affecting tourism development in study area.

## Research Questions

What are the challenges affecting tourism development in Gashaka Gumti National Park?

## Significance of Study

The significance of this study lies in its comprehensive approach to understanding how tourism can be leveraged to foster sustainable development within Gashaka Gumti National Park. By examining the challenges in the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural dimensions of tourism, the study provides critical insights that can inform both policy formulation and practical management strategies. The dual focus on policy and

academic contributions ensures that the findings not only address immediate development challenges but also enrich the broader discourse on sustainable tourism practices.

Furthermore, the study critically examines the environmental challenges associated with increased tourism, such as habitat degradation, waste management issues, and resource depletion. The analysis of these environmental impacts is essential for crafting regulatory frameworks that balance tourism growth with the need for conservation. In doing so, the study informs the development of integrated management practices that protect the park's biodiversity while promoting eco-friendly tourism initiatives (Owen, 2022; Ramirez & Gomez, 2022).

In addition, the study emphasizes the importance of community engagement and participatory management in tourism planning. By highlighting the socio-cultural dimensions of tourism such as the preservation of local traditions and the prevention of cultural commodification the research supports the formulation of policies that are inclusive of local stakeholder interests. This collaborative approach is crucial for ensuring that tourism development not only contributes to economic growth but also enhances social cohesion and cultural preservation (Lee, 2022; Taylor, 2023).

The practical implications of the study extend to the formulation of specific interventions, such as upgrading transportation infrastructure, improving visitor facilities, and implementing sustainable waste management systems. These interventions can help mitigate the negative impacts of tourism while maximizing its benefits, thereby contributing to a more resilient and adaptive tourism framework that aligns with both developmental and conservation goals.

**Scope of the Study**

This study focuses exclusively on Gashaka Gumti National Park and its surrounding communities in northeastern Nigeria; a region celebrated for its rich biodiversity and cultural heritage. By concentrating on developments over the past decade, the research examines the evolving impact of tourism from multiple perspectives.

This focused yet multidimensional approach enables the study to capture both the opportunities and challenges associated with tourism, providing a detailed analysis of its role in regional development.

### Limitation of the Study

This study only focuses the tourism contribution to the development of Gashaka Gumti National Park, which may not be representative of other tourist destinations in Nigeria or globally as well as not to generalized to other tourist destinations or contexts. Thus, conducting a comprehensive assessment of the tourism contribution to the development of Gashaka Gumti National Park is resource-intensive, and financial limitations restrict the scope and depth of the study.

### Study Area

Gashaka Gumti National Park, Nigeria's largest national park is in the northeastern part of the country, spanning parts of Adamawa and Taraba States. The park is renowned for its rich biodiversity, encompassing a variety of ecosystems that include savannahs, montane forests, and wetlands. It serves as a critical ecological corridor and a significant center for wildlife conservation. In addition to its ecological importance, the park has the potential to drive regional development through tourism by attracting both domestic and international visitors interested in its natural beauty and cultural heritage.

The park's geographical coordinates roughly range from 9°30'N to 10°00'N latitude and 12°30'E to 13°00'E longitude, covering an expansive area that provides a habitat for numerous endemic and endangered species. The local communities living in and around the park largely depend on agriculture, animal husbandry, and increasingly, tourism-related activities for their livelihood. The study focuses on assessing how tourism contributes to the park's development by examining its economic, environmental, and socio-cultural impacts.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

Descriptive research methods using a survey study design were used for this work. This was considered appropriate because according to Osuala (2003), descriptive research is the basis for all types of research in assessing a situation as a pre-requisite for inference and generalization.

This study employed a mixed method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach will facilitate the collection of quantitative and

qualitative data on tourist behavior, community perceptions, and the overall socio-economic impact of tourism. The design enables the identification of key trends and challenges in tourism development within the park's context.

**Population of the Study**

The Population consisted of the local communities of Gashaka and Gumti National Park. These include tourists, residents, business owners, and park officials in the park.

**Tourists:** Visitors to Gashaka Gumti National Park who use its facilities and participate in tourism activities.

**Residents:** Residents living in the communities adjacent to the park who are affected by tourism.

**Park Officials:** Managers and staff involved in the administration and conservation of the park.

**Local Business Owners:** Entrepreneurs and service providers whose livelihoods are linked to tourism activities in and around the park.

**Table 2: Population and Sample Size of the Study**

| S/N | Target Population | Sample Size |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Tourists | 80 |
| 2. | Residents | 20 |
| 3. | Park officials | 10 |
| 4. | Local business owners | 10 |
| **Total** | | **120** |

**Sample and Sampling Techniques**

A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents who are knowledgeable and directly involved in tourism activity in the study area. The study sampled respondents from the identified groups as in table 3.1 above.

**Instrument for Data Collection**

The main instrument for the collection of primary data will be Questionnaire

**Questionnaire**

Self-administered questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Structured Questionnaires will be administered to the respondents. This method was adopted because it is a faster and easier method of getting information from respondents. This was anchored on the fact that the respondent's response can give the researcher the opportunity to make further observation to get additional response to cross validate the responses elicited from the questionnaire method. The questionnaire contains section A and B. Section A contains personal information about the respondents. Section B is the main body of the questionnaire. This section contained close end questions using a four (4) point Likert scale through which the opinions of the respondents were expressed. This ranges from 1= strongly disagree to 4= strongly agree.

**Procedure for Data Collection**

The procedure for data collection began with the acquisition of a letter of permission from the head of the department to conduct fieldwork. This initial step ensures institutional approval and compliance with ethical guidelines. Once permission is granted, the research instrument titled 'Assessment of Tourism contribution to the Development of Gashaka Gumti National Park' was administered to the respondents. As a result of the inability of the researcher to effectively know the exact number of respondents, the researcher surveyed the park under study to ascertain the number of respondents as shown in table 2 above.

Questionnaires were administered to respondents based on the information obtained by the researcher on the number of respondents under study. One week was used for the collection of data at the park. Emphasis was placed on the tourists, local community members, park officials and local business owners at the time of data collection. Questionnaires were designed and administered to gather relevant data relating to the objectives and research questions. A total a total of 120 copies of well-designed and properly structured questionnaires were prepared to be administered to the respondents as shown in the sample size table above.

**Method of Data Analysis**

Responses from the questionnaires were computed in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Data collected were analyzed and presented using appropriate

descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts, simple percentages, mean and standard deviations which formed the basis for decision making.

## RESULTS

The results in Table 1 highlight key challenges affecting tourism development in Gashaka Gumti National Park. Respondents generally agreed that poor infrastructure is a major limitation, as indicated by a mean score of 3.04 and a standard deviation of 0.61. This suggests that inadequate roads, accommodation, and other tourism-related facilities hinder the park's ability to attract and accommodate visitors effectively.

Poor funding was identified as a significant issue affecting the maintenance of park facilities, with a high mean score of 3.21 and a low standard deviation of 0.41, reflecting strong consensus among respondents. This finding highlights the need for increased financial investment to improve and sustain tourism operations within the park.

Security concerns were noted as a moderate deterrent to tourism, with a mean score of 2.42 and a standard deviation of 0.49. While security is a concern, the relatively lower means suggests that it may not be the most pressing challenge compared to infrastructure and funding issues. However, addressing safety concerns could enhance visitor confidence and tourism growth.

The lack of government support was also perceived as an obstacle to tourism development, with a mean score of 2.71 and a standard deviation of 0.45. This indicates that while some governmental efforts exist, they are insufficient to fully support the park's tourism potential. Strengthening policy frameworks and increasing government involvement could improve the park's tourism prospects.

Similarly, respondents expressed concerns about inadequate local community involvement in tourism development, with a mean score of 2.67 and a standard deviation of 0.47. This suggests that despite the potential benefits of community participation, engagement levels remain low, which could affect the sustainability of tourism initiatives.

**Table 1 Challenges affecting tourism development in Gashaka Gumti National Park**

| Statement | Min. | Max. | Mean | STD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Poor infrastructure limits tourism development in Gashaka Gumti National Park. | 2 | 4 | 3.04 | 0.61 |
| Poor funding affects the maintenance of National Park facilities. | 3 | 4 | 3.21 | 0.41 |
| Security concerns discourage tourists from Visiting Gashaka Gumti National Park. | 2 | 3 | 2.42 | 0.49 |
| Lack of government support hinders tourism development. | 2 | 3 | 2.71 | 0.45 |
| The local community's involvement in tourism development is inadequate. | 2 | 3 | 2.67 | 0.47 |

Likert scale: 1.00-1.49= Strongly Disagreed; 1.5-2.49 = Disagreed; 2.5-3.49 = Agreed; 3.5-4.00 = Strongly Agreed.

**Source:** Field survey, 2025.

## DISCUSSION

This study examined the challenges militating against the development Gashaka-Gumti National Park. The study employed the use of questionnaire to solicit information from the respondents. The findings of the study revealed that the continuous existence of enclaves within the park constitute a serious threat to the survival of the park. This is because their various livelihood activities such as farming, poaching, lumbering, mining, honey harvesting, open grazing, fishing and bush burning are affecting the development of the park in one way or the other. The study further revealed lack of cooperation by the enclave communities, climate change, attack on rangers, inadequate manpower, lack of adequate budgetary allocation and poor rangers' welfare as some of the challenges militating against the development of the park.

Furthermore, governance and implementation challenges significantly contribute to the problem. There exists a notable deficiency in cohesive regulatory frameworks and

management strategies that adequately address the dual objectives of tourism development and environmental conservation (Ramirez & Gomez, 2022). In many instances, the absence of integrated policy measures has led to fragmented efforts where various stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, and private operators, work in silos. This disjointed approach often results in policies that are either too lax to prevent environmental degradation or overly restrictive, thereby stifling tourism growth and the associated economic benefits (Uche & Okafor, 2023). The lack of effective coordination between these stakeholders further complicates the implementation of sustainable tourism practices, leaving both the park's natural resources and local economies vulnerable.

**Recommendation**

The study recommended the need for Federal Government of Nigeria to employ more staff with adequate training for effective policing of the park as the current number of 259 staff cannot effectively manage the Park. The study also recommended the need for Federal Government to allocate more resources to the park to ensure its effective management. Also, the Federal Government may have to consider resettling the enclave communities out of the park. This can bring to the barest minimum the rate of anthropogenic activities going on within the park.

## REFERENCES

Kinsoji, A., Adeonipekun, P.A., Adeniyi, T.A., Oyebanji, O.O. & Eluwole, T.A. (2016). Evaluation of Flora Diversity of Gashaka Gumti National Park-1, Gashaka Sector, Taraba State, Nigeria. Ethiopian Journal of Environmental Studies and Management, 9(6): 7737.

Mubi, A. M. (2010). Remote Sensing-GIS Supported Land Cover Analysis of Gashaka-Gumti National Park, Nigeria.

Bessah, E., Bala, A., Agodzo, S.K. & Okhimembe, A.A. (2019). The Impact of Crop Farmer's Decision on the feature f Land Use/Land Cover Changes in Kimtampo North Municipality of Ghana. International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Managemen,11(1): 234-240.

Bila-Isia, H. (2014). Conserving Biodiversity in Democratic Republic of Congo: a Brief History of Current Trend and Insight for the Future. Park journals.com. Online: www.iucn.org

Eagles, J.A. & Paul, F.J. (2016). Trends in Park Tourism: Economics, Finance and Management. Journal of sustainable Tourism, 10(2): 134

Sambandam, R., Tapajit, F., Tawquir, H. & Kamal, M. (2014). Developing a Monitoring for Mammals in Himalayan Protected Areas. International Journal of Protected Area and Conservaton, 20(2): 132-146.

Bergengren, J.C., · Waliser, D.E. & Yung, Y.L. (2011). Ecological Sensitivity: a Biospheric View of Climate Change. 0nline: https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s10584-011-0065-1.pdf

Hirji, M.N. & Davis, J. (2009). Environmental Flows in Water Resources Policies, Plans and Projects. Online: https://books.google.com.ng/books

Oruonye, E.D., Ahmed, M.Y., Garba, A. H. & Danjuma, R.J. (2017). An Assessment of the Ecotourism Potential of Gashaka Gumti National Park in Nigeria. Asian Research Journal of Art and Social Sciences, 3(2): 1-11.

Ramirez, L., & Gomez, H. (2022). *Governance challenges in tourism development: A policy analysis approach*. Tourism Policy Review, 19(1), 85-102.

Uche, C., & Okafor, T. (2023). *Stakeholder collaboration in sustainable tourism governance: A Nigerian perspective*. African Journal of Public Policy & Administration, 11(2), 133-149.

Owen, G. (2022). *The ecological footprint of tourism: Assessing sustainability in national parks*. Journal of Environmental Management, 55(3), 199-215.

Lee, J. (2022). *Cultural sustainability in tourism: Strategies for preserving local traditions*. Journal of Cultural Tourism Research, 17(4), 309-325.