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Environmental Impact of Tourism Development Activities Within Gashaka Gumti National Park

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the global economy and exerts significant positive and negative impacts on the environment, culture, society, and economy. While it can contribute to the development of host communities, unregulated tourism often threatens the very environmental resources on which it depends. This study focuses on assessing the environmental impacts of tourism in and around Gashaka Gumti National Park, with the objective of understanding both the beneficial and adverse consequences of tourist activities on natural resources and the physical environment. A sample of 100 respondents was collected through a convenient sampling method, supplemented by direct observation of environmental conditions. Findings highlight that although tourism can promote environmental protection and conservation through awareness and economic incentives, it also generates pressures such as resource depletion, pollution, and degradation of the physical landscape. The study emphasizes the need for ecotourism strategies, balanced resource use, and proper planning to ensure that tourism development remains environmentally sustainable, socially beneficial, and economically viable. It concludes that a carefully managed

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tourism sector can minimize adverse effects while enhancing conservation and community development in Gashaka Gumti National Park.

Keywords: Environmental Impact; Tourism Development; Ecotourism; Natural Resource Management; Gashaka Gumti National Park

INTRODUCTION

In 1976, the Tourism Society of England's definition was "Tourism is the temporary, short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally work and live and their activities during the stay at each destination. It includes movements of all purposes. "There is continued growth and diversification of tourism has been experienced over the decades and it has become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Tourism has become a thriving global industry with the power to shape developing countries in both positive and negative ways. No doubt it has become the fourth largest industry in the global economy. Similarly, in developing countries like India, Brazil and China tourism has become one of the major sectors of the economy, contributing to a large proportion to the National Income and also able to generate huge opportunities in creation of employment. It has become the fastest growing service industry in the country with huge potential for expansion and diversification. There is a need to discuss the positive and negative environmental impacts of tourism. Environmental impact of tourism can be discussed in two ways as: Positive and Negative Impacts. The positive impacts are like Direct financial contribution, Raising Awareness, Increase in Government Revenues & etc… whereas the negative impacts are like Depletion of Natural Resources, Land degradation, Pollution & etc. The latest trend in the tourism industry is called "ecotourism", which refers to travel that combines preserving the natural world and sustaining the well- being of the human cultures that inhabit it. (Mowforth and Munt, 2003) In general, ecotourism differs from traditional tourism in two main respects: first, ecotourism openly promotes environmentally friendly travel and seeks to ensure that visitors do not disturb the natural environment of flora and fauna, nor do they leave behind rubbish and hazardous materials, which can disrupt the delicate ecosystem. A second aspect of ecotourism is that it seeks to promote "sustainable" tourism. Tourism that destroys the natural environment, or that leads to the disappearances of local human cultures and values is not compatible with ecotourism. An early example of ecotourism

occurred in Kenya in the 1970s when the Kenya Government began to collect fees for tourists to support conservation and park maintenance in the wildlife reserves. The main aim of the study is to understand the impact of tourism both positively and negatively on the environment and to find out the direct impact of tourist activities in the respective tourism areas.

The tourism industry has a great physical/environmental and socio-economic influence on a destination, especially regarding marketing its image and influencing tourists' destination choice. A good image of a destination brings more tourists to the destination (WTO, 1980). If any tourism authority can therefore create a positive image of its destination in tourists' minds, then it is easy to be successful in their tourism business (Hankinson, 2004) because a strong positive destination image gives a competitive advantage to a destination against other competitors (fall, 2004). If the tourists perceive the image of a potential destination positively and favourably, then they are often likely to visit the desired tourist place even many times (Laws, 2006; Beerli, 2004).

According to Hall and Sullivan (2004), there are three essential factors that help to build a destination image. First is word-of-mouth by the tourists and residents. If positive word of mouth is spread about a destination, then it is easy to build a strong image of the destination. Secondly, image making by media (print and electronic) and lastly, policies and interests taken by destination managers. If the management of a particular destination takes initiative to build a positive destination image and work accordingly with it, then it helps to build an attractive destination image of the tourist place. A positive destination image enhances the chance to choose and visit the destination. Tourism destination image therefore has been proven to be a very critical factor in people's decision process. Researches in the past two decades have demonstrated that image is a valuable concept in understanding the destination selection process of tourists.

Image is defined as a perceptual phenomenon formed through a consumer's reasoned and emotional interpretation, which has both cognitive (beliefs) and affective (feelings) components (Konecnik, 2004). Perceptual or cognitive evaluation refers to beliefs and knowledge about an object/place whereas affective evaluation refers to one's feelings about it. Affective components arebasically emotional responses concerned with feelings and meanings attached to a destination (Baloglu&Brinberg 1997; Gartner 1993; Walmsley& Jenkins 1993).

Despite the recognized benefits of tourism ranging from increased Grevenue generation, job creation, and cultural exchange to enhanced conservation funding (Jones & Miller, 2021). The park faces significant obstacles that hinder the full realization of these opportunities. The challenges primarily revolve around infrastructural inadequacies, environmental degradation, and governance issues, which together present a complex problem for stakeholders committed to both conservation and development.

One of the primary issues confronting Gashaka Gumti National Park is the inadequacy of tourism-related infrastructure. Although the park has attracted a growing number of visitors in recent years, the supporting infrastructure such as roads, accommodation facilities, and basic utilities has not kept pace with this increased demand (Chukwu, 2022). The lack of proper infrastructure not only limits the quality of the tourist experience but also restricts the economic benefits that can be derived from tourism activities. For instance, inadequate road networks and poor transportation services compromise the accessibility of key attractions within the park, thereby reducing the potential for generating tourist revenue (Adeyemi & Musa, 2023). This infrastructural gap has a dual impact: it diminishes the competitive advantage of the park as a tourist destination and simultaneously curtails the opportunities for local economic development.

Environmental degradation represents another significant challenge associated with tourism development in Gashaka Gumti National Park. Increased tourist influx, if not managed appropriately, can lead to soil erosion, water pollution, and habitat disruption, which are particularly detrimental in a region known for its rich biodiversity (Harris, 2021). The pressure from tourism activities, such as unregulated camping, littering, and the overuse of natural resources, exacerbates the risk of irreversible environmental damage. Research by Owen (2022) emphasizes that the environmental costs of tourism can undermine conservation efforts if the growth is not aligned with sustainable practices. Consequently, the environmental integrity of the park a cornerstone for both its ecological significance and its appeal to nature-based tourists is at risk. This situation creates a conflict between short-term economic gains from tourism and the long-term need for conservation and sustainability.

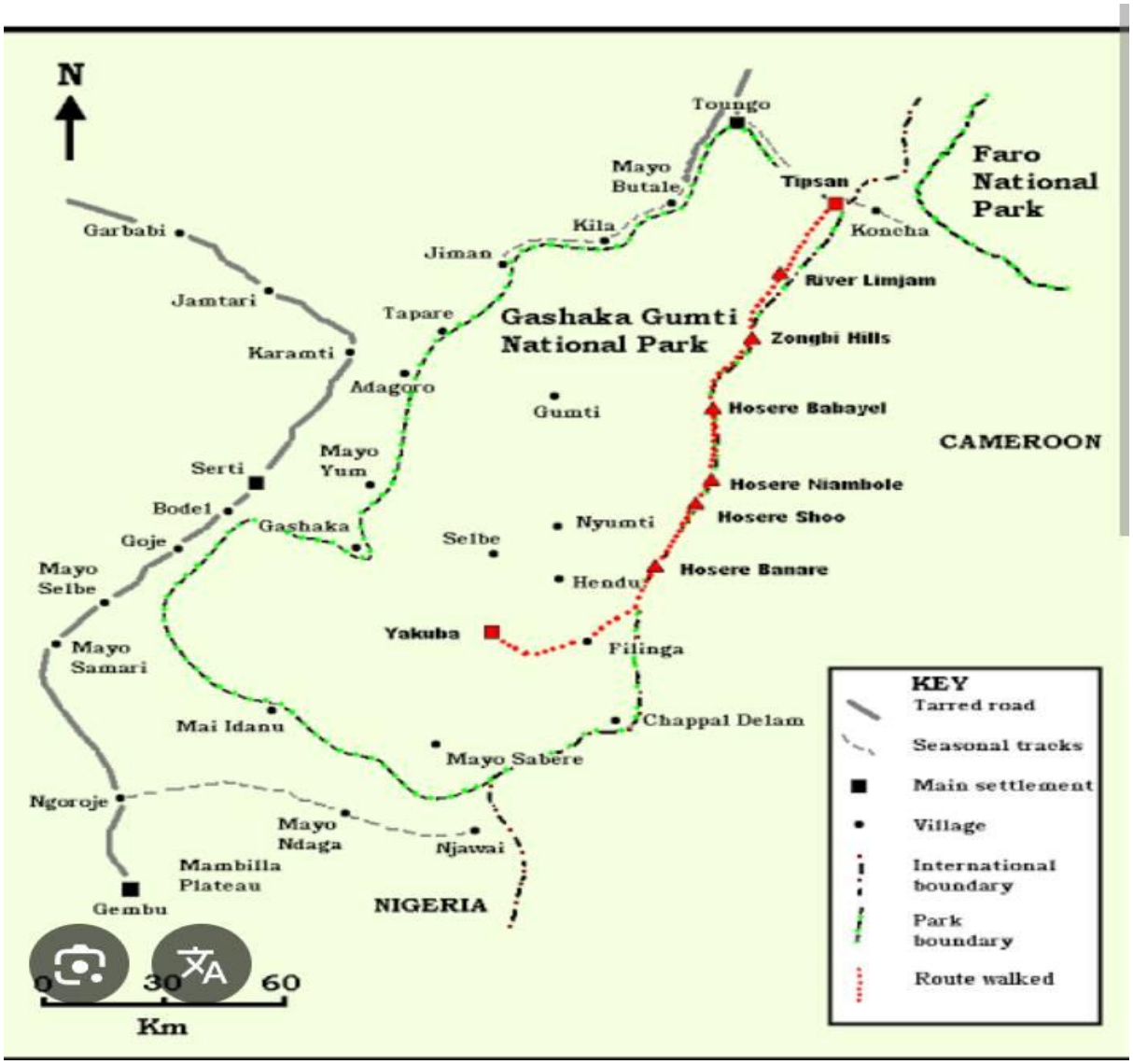


Figure 1: Showing Map Gashaka Gumtim National Park

Objectives:

To develop and promote the competitiveness of Nigerian as tourist destination, to study the environmental impact of tourism and analyze both the aspects of environmental impacts. As well as to discuss various preventive measures for the negative environmental impact of tourism

The study aims to assess the environmental situation arising at Gashaka Gumti national park due to increasing pressure of tourism. It takes up the problems of over construction of hotels, deforestation, air pollution, solid waste, water pollution and also suggests some mitigating measures to lessen the load of different forms of pollution. (Li et al. 2021).

The country has experienced an increasing use of its natural and cultural environment for tourism, resulting in tourism resources being adversely impacted in many tourism destinations. Specifically, research on tourism impacts on the biophysical and socio-cultural environments, tourism carrying capacity, environmental quality assessment, and measures for the protection and management of tourism resources was reviewed. (Batta 2000) The importance of tourism as an instrument for economic growth and employment generation, particularly in remote and backward areas, has been well recognized world over. It is the largest service industry globally in terms of gross revenue as well as foreign exchange earnings. Tourism plays an effective role in achieving growth with equity objectives which we have set for ourselves. The extant tourism literature suggests that the expansion of the tourism sector can contribute to long-run macroeconomic performance of developing countries. Nigerian high potential for the expansion of the tourism industry can be a catalyst for the long-run socio-economic growth. Thus, we have investigated the impact of tourism on Nigerian's economic growth over a period from 1990 to 2015. The results predict the possibility of a long-run equilibrium relationship between tourism and economic growth.

Tourism contributes both positively and negatively to the environment. It involves many activities that can have adverse environmental effects. Many of these impacts are linked with the construction of general infrastructure such as roads and airports, and of tourism facilities, including resorts, hotels, restaurants, shops, golf courses and marinas. The negative impacts of tourism development can gradually destroy environmental resources on which it depends. On the other hand, tourism has the potential to create beneficial effects on the environment by contributing to environmental protection and conservation. It is a way to raise awareness of environmental values and it can serve as a tool to finance protection of natural areas and increase their economic importance. (Gursoy and Nunkoo 2019).

METHODOLOGY

The present study of this paper is based on primary data collection by the researchers and follows some secondary sources books, journals for the paper. The statistical tool followed here is- data presentation of the research work. The sample frame taken in and around Gashaka Gumti. A complete collection of flooring samples is collected

directly from the public and thus the size of the sample is 100 and the samples have been collected through a convenient sampling method. This research follows empirical study. The Independent variables are age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, occupation. The Dependent variables are eco-tourism, tourists, negative impacts, conservation awareness, and natural resources.

RESULTS

Table 1: Environmental impact of tourism development activities within Gashaka Gumti National Park

Statement	Min.	Max.	Mean	STD
Wildlife species in the park are negatively affected by tourism activities.	2	4	3.04	0.68
Waste management practices within the park are effectively managed.	1	3	2.21	0.64
The carrying capacity of the park is well regulated to prevent environmental degradation.	2	3	2.67	0.47
Eco-friendly tourism practices are promoted within the park.	2	4	3.08	0.49
Tourism development has led to deforestation and habitat destruction in the park.	2	3	2.33	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.

DISCUSSION

The Environmental Impact of Tourism, regarding environmental impact, this study found that tourism activities negatively impact wildlife species (a mean score of 3.04) and that waste management within the park is inadequate (a mean score of 2.21). These findings align with Musora and Mbaiwa (2018), who reported that tourism activities in the

Okavango Delta, Botswana, caused pollution, habitat destruction, and disturbances to wildlife. Similarly, Lv and Xu (2023) demonstrated that tourism leads to environmental degradation but noted that beyond a certain development threshold, negative impacts can be mitigated.

Moreover, Gössling (2001) highlighted the environmental consequences of tourism in Zanzibar, particularly the excessive consumption of resources like water, reinforcing the idea that without proper management, tourism can pose sustainability challenges. The findings of this study suggest a need for improved waste management and conservation measures in Gashaka Gumti to align with sustainable tourism principles.

The following were identified as environmental implications of tourism in the study area: Deforestation and habitat destruction due to uncontrolled tourism activities pose a threat to the park's biodiversity. Poor waste management practices contribute to environmental pollution within the park and despite these challenges, tourism has increased awareness of conservation efforts among visitors and local communities.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided valuable insights into the state of tourism development in Gashaka Gumti National Park, highlighting its, environmental challenges, and infrastructural limitations. The study highlights the crucial role of effective tourism management in enhancing sustainable tourism development in Gashaka Gumti National Park. The findings reveal that while tourism contributes significantly to the infrastructure, limited community participation, and environmental degradation.

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