

Where There Is No Second Language: The Problems Faced By International Tourists during the Calabar Christmas Festival

**Gloria Mayen Umukoro
University of Calabar, Nigeria**

Abstract

Recent issues in tourism development such as security, tourist attractions, employment, infrastructures, basic amenities, human development and language reactions are issues bothering around the tourism industry in Cross River State. Using some tourist destinations, international tourists and indigenes survey in Cross River State as case study, the paper surveys the current status of the second language policy in the tourism industry in Cross River state through monitoring, participation and interview of visitors and stakeholders during some selected tourism activities in the Cross River State tourism industry and shows how imperative it is to encourage the second language policy in a tourism based economy. Taking into consideration the need for the adoption of French as a second international language for tourism purposes in the State, the main objective of this paper is to emphasize the importance of the adoption and proper implementation of a second international language policy in the tourism industry in Cross River State to enhance the growth and sustainability of the industry in the state. However, with emphasis on the French language as an important tool in this regard, the paper suggests a reorientation of the people on the need to be bilingual and a concrete implementation of the French language policy, to create a favorable environment for international tourists in the state and solve to a great extent, the language problem during the festival.

Keywords: Foreign language skills, bilingual tour guides, tourism product, destination quality, foreign tourist

Introduction

Calabar has played a significant role in the history and development of Nigeria. Calabar has hosted several historical events of socio-economic and political importance ranging from the historic slave trade through the legitimate trade and missionary activities, to being the administrative seat of the colonial government. From colonial era, Calabar attracts visitors and tourists who due to its calm and hospitable atmosphere had become a preferred tourist destination. As far back as the 15th century, Calabar was well known by European sailors. As already highlighted, the state with a well-known seaport known to the whole world since the 16th century has played significant role in the business tourism and the historical development of Nigeria. The caption below on the history of Calabar is a testimony:

Calabar the capital of cross River State has a great potential in hospitality and tourism. Its relative peace and tranquility, coupled with low crime rate, clean and natural environment, choice tourist attractions and second to none hospitality nature of the people has made it a tourism haven with vast potentials and opportunities. (www.nkankori.com)

There has been an exponential growth in the tourism industry in Cross River State in the past 6 to 10 years. The abundance of natural resources ranging from beautiful lakes, serene sea sides, unique traditional cuisines, lush vegetation all put together has made the city of Calabar the most preferred destination for international tourists and the most attended tourist activity being the Calabar Christmas Festival, which is the main feature in this study. According to the Executive Summary of the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee on the Christmas Festival (2011).

The number of participants keeps increasing and in 2011; the number increased to 1,500,000 participants, 23% of which are foreigners.

Coupled with this background and various reports from players in the tourism sector, the state with Calabar as the “City at the Center” is becoming a global player in the international tourism sector. Amongst other activities; the Calabar Christmas Festival is gaining popularity with the Carnival Calabar parade tagged “Africa biggest street party” as the final curtain usually the grand finale for the festival.

There are however, some common dominant problems faced by tourists visiting the coastal city of Calabar and its environs today. These problems; such as Inadequate Infrastructures, Inaccessible Tourist Sites, and so on have been made worse by the recent language reactions which has made the international participants feel uncomfortable in their inability to communicate adequately with the locals. According to a research in the department of hospitality in the Indian Institute of Hotel Management; “tourists will feel at home in another foreign country if they can communicate in their mother tongues,” with the above, it is evident that this will further help them to be more confident and feel safe as well and thus a repeat visit to the destination.

Albeit, apart from English Language which is the lingua Franca in Cross River State, there is need for staff of various hotels, tourists sites, airport workers, local transporters as well as other stakeholders in the tourism sector to have knowledge of a second foreign language, as a foreign language skill becomes invaluable when communicating with people from other countries and also acts as a cross-cultural interface between tourism enterprises and visitors.

The City of Calabar

Historically speaking, right from the colonial era Calabar has played significant roles and has stood out as a city with so much history. Known today as the capital of Cross River State; this geographical seat is made up of people of diverse culture, lifestyle and some degree of linguistic diversity. Calabar shares common boundaries with the Republic of Cameroon in the East, to the South borders with Akwa Ibom State, with Odukpani Local Government in the North. Calabar is referred to as an Island surrounded by streams and rivers and has between longitude $70^{\circ} 50'$ and $90^{\circ} 28'$ East and Latitudes $50^{\circ} 32'$ and $40^{\circ} 22'$ North.

Environmentally, adding to its climate change programme, Cross River State in 2008 had commenced the planting of 5 million trees in designated urban areas with the City of Calabar as its main area of concentration. There is also a standard system of waste management and development of sand-fills put in place, as stated by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, "This would be further deepened with the recent passage of the Waste Management Agency Bill" (2010, 7). Furthermore, government is tackling the hazards posed to human and economic activities by erosion sites in a sustainable manner. All these are geared towards making the city of Calabar a true and worthy destination for tourists. To further improve on its reputed and efficient waste management programme; the city of Calabar is flooded with waste disposal bins and trucks. According to the Special Adviser to the Governor...

All these have further deepened the reputation of the state as the cleanest state and are contributing to the realization of the vision of the administration to make Cross River the first green state in Nigeria (8).

It is worthy to mention here that apart from Lagos State which has an urban renewal programme almost next to none, Cross River State has an effective and efficient urban renewal programme. The agencies put in place are providing and maintaining, beautification, landscaping and waste management in five major urban cities namely: Calabar, Ugep, Ikom, Ogoja and Obudu. "Urban streets are being constructed and upgraded, and dualization of City Gate to Adiabo Bridge road, Akpabuyo Housing Estate Roads and Urban roads in Ugep, Ikom and Ogoja have reached completion stages"(8). Again, all these put in place, no mention of foreign language skills to further enhance communication for tourists visiting the state.

In terms of security, "Come and live and be at rest", Cross River State has a near zero crime rate. The state boasts of an efficient security network. In Calabar the Capital

city, there is safety of lives and properties all year round. “Cross River State is perhaps the only state in the country with a functional Emergency Response Centre” (10). In Calabar, as well as in other towns in the state, there are dedicated staffs providing 24 hours response to all emergencies especially during tourism activities.

Furthermore, in the past few years, the Cross River State Government has embarked upon various world-class infrastructural developments to position the state as the number one destination for both business and leisure (www.crossriverstate.gov.ng). The people of Calabar are known for their cleanliness and hospitality, this attribute also makes it a preferred tourist destination. (www.calabar.com), as a result, Calabar, the capital city, is one of the four urban centres of the state, constructed and upgraded by Government to international standards. The installation of streetlights helps to illuminate the city to give it a welcoming view at night and ensuring that the tourism special activities are delivered to world-class standards.

The ongoing expansion and upgrading of the Margaret Ekpo International Airport (MEIA) in Calabar is also a drive towards developing and improving the tourism sector. The proposed Calabar Central Market (CCM) is also a special project geared towards creating wealth and ensuring optimum social impact in the state. The Calabar Monorail Limited (CML) project is not left out, the Calabar Energy City (CEC), theme park/convention centers are all special projects, some of which are ongoing geared towards making Cross River State a first-class tourism destination.

Business wise, with its vision “To make Cross River State the leading state in Agricultural production and Agro-Allied industries towards the economic well-being and property of the people of the state” (www.crossriverstate.gov.ng) is not just a statement. The economic strength of the state is in its agricultural strength. The state is endowed with 10 oil palm, 6 cocoa, 12 rubber plantations owned and managed by indigenous and foreign private investors.

It is worthy to mention here that the state has vast 1.8 million hectares of untapped agricultural land, extensive water facilities, which is available for irrigation with rainfall in abundance. The state is also blessed with other crops such as fruits ranging from pineapple; banana, oranges and cashew all of which can be cultivated in a very large scale. There is rice with a potential for producing 3 million metric ton per annum, cassava with a current level of 2.4 million mt per annum and the Biofuel Project, which the state seeks investors and partners both foreign and local to take advantage of. There is also palm oil, sugarcane, cassava and jetroplia, which are being promoted for the Biofuel Project.

In terms of livestock, the Obudu Cattle Ranch Area and surrounding land can support a minimum of 20,000 herds of cattle. Poultry, piggery, fisheries with deep sea fishing for shrimps and fish. The state is emerging as one of Africa’s most dynamic market place for agriculture and agro business. There are opportunities to service both domestic and international markets. There is also the project Tinapa which was commissioned in April, 2007 (Mofinews April, 2007). Furthermore, as policy frameworks to help develop the state, the Cross River State Government with the support of the federal Government

took the giant stride to establish the Cross River State Tourism Bureau (CRSTB) and the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) Egbaji, 2007.

Other facts stated about Cross River State are as follows; Indigenous Languages spoken; Efik, Ejagham, Bekwara, Yakurr, Agbo, Bakur.

Tourism in Cross River State

With regards to Nigeria, there is no gain saying the fact that she has of late recognized the significance of tourism in the development of her economy. This recognition stems from the positive effect (economic and non economic) which tourism is likely to stimulate, efforts are therefore being made by both federal and state governments to promote the tourism trade. These efforts cultivate in the establishment of the Nigerian tourism corporation and the formulation of a tourism policy in Nigeria, Okolo and Okpolo (135).

Tourism in Nigeria has been a front burner on the issues of both the federal and state government. The country and the various states have taken advantage of its unique tourism characteristics to boost the GDP of the nation and encourage both local and private mentors in the industry.

Cross River State is naturally endowed as one of those rare global sites with acclaimed tourists potentials like the Obudu Cattle Ranch, the Agbokim Waterfalls, the Drill Ranch, the Canopy walkway, the Nkarasi monolith just to mention but a few. The development of a state-based tourism industry by all tourism stakeholders became apparent due to the influential master plan and accessible tourism zones scattered across the state. The eventual development of tourism automatically brings about the provision of social infrastructures both at the rural and urban areas.

Tourism in Cross River State is equally geared towards the diversification of the state-based industry as well as providing an alternative means of improving the state's internally generated revenue. Government policy on tourism since 1999 was motivated following the United Nation's estimate through the World Tourism Organization (WTO) of over 4 trillion dollars to be generated annually across the globe. In the first four months of 2013, an extra 12 million international tourists was recorded, the UNWTO stated thus "Friday, 19 July, a total of 298 million international tourists travelled worldwide between January and April, 2013, 12 million more than in the same period last year. Following the result of our survey, this figure is predicted to double by the year 2014. No wonder reports show that "receipts from international tourism in destinations around the world grew by 4% in 2012 reaching US and 1075 billion. This growth is equal to the 4% increase in international tourist arrivals, which reached 1035 million in 2012 (Hospitality Net, 2013). A holistic measurement of tourism arrival from the above estimate indicates that tourism expenditure would flow both from domestic to international arrivals. It is therefore, clear that the Cross River State government is not out of place to identify tourism as a priority sector meant to accord development as this is expected to lurch the entire state and Nigeria as a whole into the prophetic boom.

“Come and live and be at Rest” is an appropriate acronym not only for Calabar, but for the entire state of Cross River, which offers visitors a safe and relaxing atmosphere away from the commotion and congestion of the Nigeria’s big cities (www.crossriverstate.gov.ng). Recognizing the above assertion, the government of Cross River State has made tourism development a priority and is working to leverage the contributions of the private sector to brand Cross River as a premier destination for Nigerians and foreigners alike. Let’s pause and digest the last statement, which to some extent may contrast with the main problem raised in this communication.

In Cross River, tourism remains a critical option in the state’s drive for wealth creation and an alternative to dependence on fluctuating oil revenue.

Two leading tourist facilities in the state, Tinapa and the Ranch Resort have gained more utility yardage. A Water Park, and an Amusement Arcade have been added to Tinapa Resort to expand its entertainment offerings. Its retail business offering has also had a substantial filling following opening of T-mart. This following the Federal Government’s approval of a regulatory guideline for its operations” (3).

To ensure that this and more are achieved, these facilities have been repositioned and utilized for excellent service delivery and tourism services. Government has thus put in place a good number of infrastructures to enhance access to tourist sites and at the same time ensure an exotic tourism experience for tourists who visit the state. But again, what happens when they arrive at these sites? Is communication very easy? How do tourists get vital information? Are there bilingual tour guides to put them through? I remember during our visit to see the outstanding monoliths at Nkarasi, the villagers where the monoliths are found could only speak their indigenous dialect which of course none of us could speak, we then had to send for someone who could at least communicate to us in pidgin English.

Furthermore, identifying tourism as a preferred sector for development implies the creation of avenues for the accessibility of unidentified tourism zones. This also informs government’s intention to appropriate resources for the development of abandoned tourist attractions in which case probative value was not earlier attached to. However, from information we gathered from a recent research carried out by the Economic Monitoring Committee, the number of tourists’ sites has increased from 54 in 2008 to 70 in 2012 with about 54 to 60 classified as semi-visitor ready from our estimation. This also is an indication that number of tourists will increase considerably.

Cross River State is rich in cultural tourism; we have the Ekpe cultural festival, the Obong of Calabar Palace, the Mary Slessor Tombstone at Duke Town. We also have the Marina Beach, which is a very indigenous beach with the entire traditional and cultural outlook, with a typical traditional, beach market where one can buy and sell all kinds of seafoods in their natural and very fresh state. There is also the Aqua Vista Farm and Resorts, the Calabar museum has also been a major attraction for tourists who visit the metropolis.

Local governments in Cross River State are also richly blessed with several tourist attractions, some of which are yet to be exploited as we speak. In Boki Local Government Area, there is the Kanyang Game Reserve, the Buanchoir Drill Ranch; there is also a conservation center for these species in Etung Local Government Area. These tourist sites are renowned and attract a good number of tourists especially during the Christmas festival. The state is also blessed with the Agbokim waterfalls, there is also the Abam falls in Ajasor and to complement these is the traditional Moninkim dance. This dance is a maiden dance that speaks volumes of the people of this area.

There is the very prestigious Nkarasi monolith found in the Ikom beach with lovely sand and aesthetic beauty. The monolith dates back to 2500 BC and IAA (Cross River Forum, Tourism and Investment website). These objects from our interview with the indigenes are very significant in the history of the Nkarasi people and have become a major attraction to tourists who are curious about their history and symbolism.

Another Local Government is Akamkpa, which is rich with ecology. There is the National Park, the Qua-falls at Aningheje which is a very distinctive tourist destination in the area as it also has the potentials to attract a large number of tourists on a daily basis during the festival period, but to our surprise on our visit to the water fall, we met a deserted natural tourist site lying wasted due to the absence of adequate tourist facilities and attractive tourism activities to encourage the flow of both local and international tourists. It is worthy here to note that apart from international tourists who visit the state during the festival period, these sites have serene environments which Cross Riverians and other Nigerians can take advantage of the calmness for holidays and short vacations creating additional revenue for government even after the festival period.

There are also reform lakes in Eboni and Ujum, these lakes, we discovered during our interview with some of the chiefs, have very interesting resources like rich species of fishes. They are also rich in swamps and flood plains. From our discovery also ceramics, pottery, glass wares, stone chips and crush rocks are found in this local government area as we were told due to the enormous clay deposits and glittering hard core stones and also rivers with high silica content.

Festivals in Cross River State

In Africa, where a significant aspect of the people's culture revolves around transferable folkways, irrespective of the Western influence occasioned by Cross-acculturation, globalization and westernization, festivals have become an essential part of tourism products in most destinations of the world. In Cross River State, apart from the few tourist attractions, which we have highlighted in this study, there are remarkable numbers of festivals in the state, which have unique features that give the state an edge above others in terms of cultural tourism. From our secondary source, we gathered that the number of cultural events has increased from 38 in 2008 to 42 in 2012 and presently; there are 54 cultural events in Cross River State.

The unique Ekpe festival was usually celebrated yearly during the Christmas period and this festival has gained international recognition with tourist traffic drawn from South America, the Caribbean Islands, Africa and other orients boosting the desired international tourism. The period of Christmas, which was introduced by the European Christianity as, stated by Offiong was in recent times celebrated side by side with the prestigious and renowned Ekpe festival. The Ekpe masquerade is a highly religious significant masquerade of the Efik people.

Another remarkable event is the Calabar Annual “home away from home” International Jazz festival. In 2013, the festival attracted international Super Stars like D’Angelo and Eric Benet from the United States and Jonathan Butter from South Africa the festival is usually an ideal Easter weekend gateway that delights all senses. It attracts artists both internationally and locally and thus attracts a large number of local and international jazz (tourists) lovers into the state.

Another notable festival in Cross River State is the Leboku festival of the Yakurr people. The Leboku is a festival where different age grades display colorful cowries, costumes and dances, just as other new yam festivals celebrated by about 80% of the communities in the state. The festival is symbolic in nature, it is a celebration of bountiful harvest, and it is a display of symbolic dance to the god of harvest. During this festival, all roads lead to the Yakurr community. There is usually a rich display of cultural artifacts and international tourists cease the opportunity to visit nearby tourist sites, like the Nkarasi Monoliths, the Obudu Cattle Ranch and the rest of the tourist destinations located around the region.

Festivals from our perspective creates forum for exhibition of culture on one hand, and on the other hand opens opportunities for marketing Culture. From our survey thus, we observed that the most visited destination where cultural tourism thrives depends on the richness of its festivals. People travel for purpose of adventure. People are curious, they want new discoveries and as such, festivals that attracts are festivals that have rich contents. In Nigeria, the Argungu International fishing festival has assumed an international status attracting both local residents and foreigners to Kebbi State to participate in the annual fish catch. According to Ayo *et al*, “the importance of the festival to the economy has led the government to conserve fish stock by prohibiting use of gill nets and cast nets”.

There are also other outstanding festivals like the Animal Salah Durbar in Kastina State, the Gidan Housa in Kano State, and the Farns Bacchanal Annual festival in Adamawa State. There is also the Eyo and Ka Bukor Yam festival in Lagos State (Aremu, 2010). All these are outstanding and attractive festivals that are worth every tourists’ visit to Nigeria.

Back in Cross River, we also have the Atumbi festival, which is celebrated by the Ogoja tribe, it involves a musical war dance and ritual. It is so exclusive that only the initiates and priest of Atumbi know the chants used. It is significant in that it brings the old and new generation together reminding the younger ones that war is evil and should be avoided (crossrivertourism.com).

The Calabar Christmas festival, which is the main focus in this study, has been heralded by many stakeholders in the hospitality industry as the most marketed amongst the series of festivals in the country due to its multidimensional and multifaceted nature. It is seen as a well-groomed and packed tourism product by both the private and the government, both at local and the state levels. The festival is a *mélange* of activities ranging from display of dances, culture, drama, showbiz, cuisine etc. It is usually celebrated from the 1st to the 31st of December. The events of the day are tourism products that stand the taste of time, they are as follows the HIV/AIDS City Walk, Musical concerts, Traditional drama displays, Boat regatta, Cultural carnival, Mountain race, film festival etc and the prestigious Carnival Calabar which is a *mélange* of Afro American products, Caribbean colorful and glamorous carnivals and a product of the diaspora culture which has found its way into the state.

Stimulating discussions on foreign language skills

According to Ashipu and Umukoro (2014),

One of the many areas in human activities where language plays a vital role is law. Legal activities have been very dominant in the life of man and lawyers, judges, and even defendants employ language as a weapon to articulate their views (Abstract).

By the above assertion, everyone needs language and by extension, everyone needs a second language skill. Language is very vital in human existence, and for tourism, language becomes an indispensable tool as it acts as a connecting factor between the tourists and the destination. There are so many reasons why anyone and everyone should learn at least one more foreign language in general and in the case of this study, French language in particular. In my perception, communication, being a life wire to human existence in any gathering and the society at large, plays a vital role in enhancing effective communication, without which there will be no communication.

Thus, following this perception, in the case of this study without the presence of an international language skill, it will be difficult to communicate with the visitors who speak the language and as such communication will be impossible. Furthermore, a tourist whose language is spoken in the country or town of his visit will find his or her trip greatly enhanced in terms of communication, hospitality, movement, interaction and the general intention of the travel will be highly fulfilled.

There is a popular saying that “he who speaks a second language lives a second life” (French proverb). This in our opinion in this study is completely true, we have learnt so much about the French people in all the years we have learnt the French language; for instance we have learnt how to “faire la bise”, which is typical amongst the French, as French students during our immersion programme in the Francophone countries where we went for our “Year Abroad” programmes, we found ourselves falling in love with the popular French baguette, today whenever I visit a bakery, even here at home, I don’t leave without a baguette. I also don’t joke with my break periods a habit I learnt during my “year

abroad” in Togo. These and many more are practices I never knew about until I began to study French. Also, my sense of fashion has improved tremendously, and we also observe that 90% of our French students transform their “Look” after the “Year Abroad” programme.

Language and culture go hand in hand. Speaking another person’s language shows respect for their culture and also the people. People will always feel pleased when one makes an effort to speak their language, even if all one can say is “Bonjour” and “Guten morgen”, “Gracias” etc to a tourist and this will also make a tourist want to know for instance how “Bonjour” and other survival phrases are said in Efik or Ejagham as the case maybe, these which are some prominent dialects in the state. Speaking another language apart from your own language makes one enjoy the literature, the music, the poetry, as it is presented in the original language. For instance, though I was in love with the rhythm of Awilo’ songs, I began to appreciate his songs better when I understood the lyrics because of the French phrases present in his songs.

Let’s take a look at the business world, if you had a new product you wanted to introduce into the business world and of course as a business person with ambition you wouldn’t just want to localize your product, therefore to increase its marketability, you would rather employ a marketer who doesn’t just speak one langue, take for instance just English or Chinese as the case maybe. And, since the global economy depends greatly on communication, language skills become very imperative to your business. You would rather go for a bilingual and better still a multilingual marketer, knowing that this is an added advantage for your product to break into the global market.

Why foreign language skills?

The Christmas Festival is characterized by sounds, dances, beauty from the Carnival. It is referred to as the “Africa’s Biggest Street Party” (Carnival Calabar Survey, 2009). In 2008, the Carnival Calabar attracted 1.2 million on-site spectators. In 2010, the survey showed an estimated 1.5 million on-site spectators and 5,346 on-site participants attended the event. It was also recorded that both sexes were well represented, though the sample showed slightly more females than males, and the survey showed that 23% of the total spectators were foreign visitors from Europe, Africa, North America and Asia all of which speak French and other foreign languages. In 2012, there was a considerable increase in the number of Continent of visitors as follows; North America 14%, Africa 36%, Asia 14%, Europe 36%, CRSTB Statistical Report (2012), see fig.1.

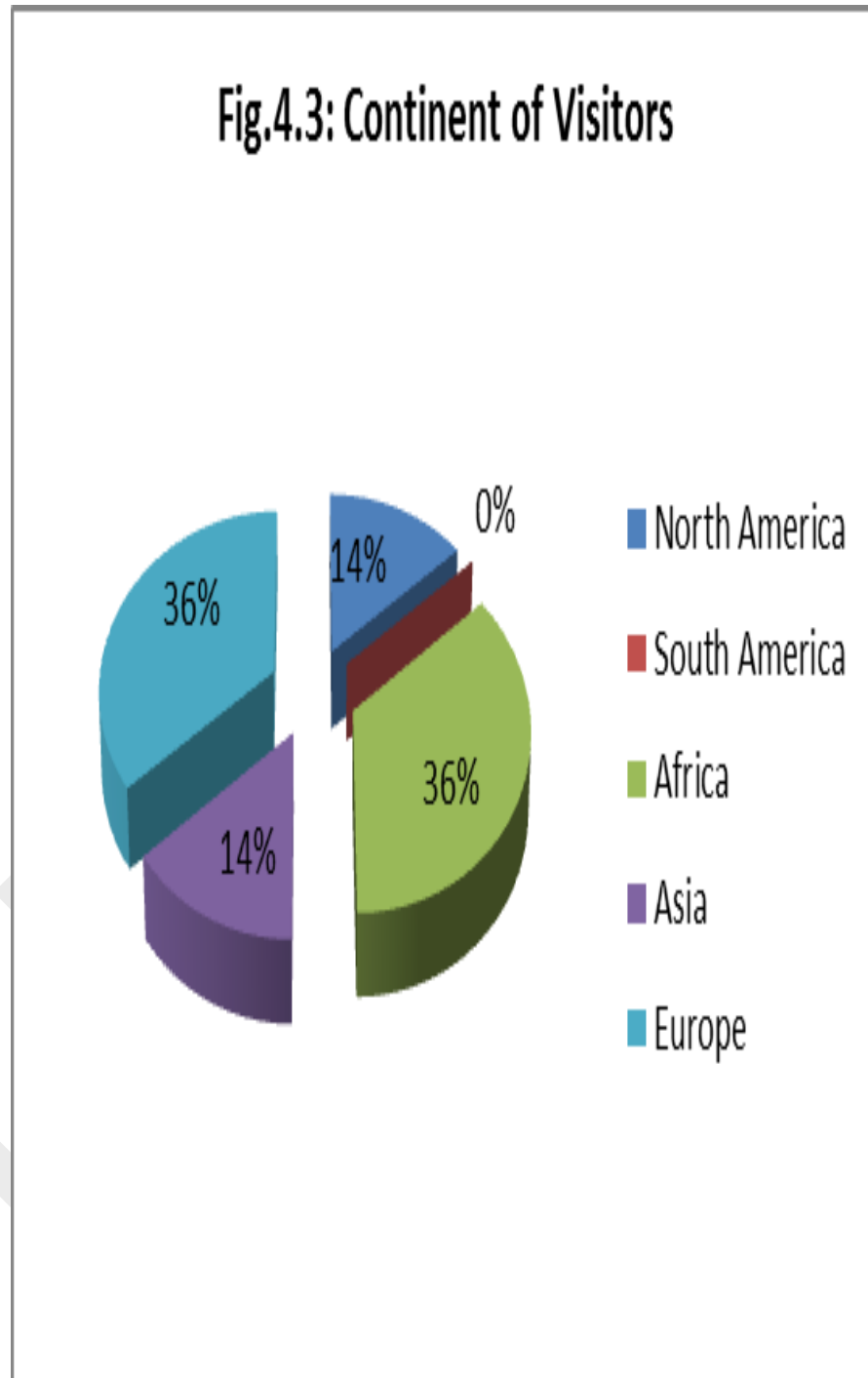
From the above, we observe that the number of foreigners dropped by 3% and the proportion increased from 3% to 15% in 2012. Now, though the survey never indicated the reason for the fluctuation, it is believed that certain reactions related to communication were responsible.

For this study thus, 3000 questionnaires were distributed on site and 2,550 were recovered. Our survey showed that between 2012 and 2013 festival and carnival, International Tourist though were pleased with the tourism activities and indicated

willingness to attend subsequent festivals, expressed dissatisfaction with the inability to communicate adequately with the locals especially in rural areas where some very outstanding tourist sites like the Monoliths at Nkarasi are located.

Our survey also showed that about 70% of the foreigners were first timers, this was also an indication that some of those who attended the festivals in the past did not attend subsequent festivals due to some dissatisfactions. The survey also showed further that about 75% of the Africans who visited were francophone. The survey further showed that most of the foreigners who were sited at the various tourist sites like the Obudu Cattle Ranch, the Marina Resort, the Drill ranch where our questionnaires were distributed speak other languages and needed the services of tour guides who spoke their language. We also discovered that over 85% of the hotels in Calabar and other tourist towns in the state did not have bilingual services, and in almost all cases, TV channels in other languages like TV 5 were not subscribed for.

Fig 1



Source: Cross River State Tourism Bureau

It was also drawn from our survey that due to the fact that there were no available bilingual or multilingual tour guides, tourists often faced some difficulties ranging from petty fraud, cheating, and theft by small gangs and at times mis-directions to tourist sites.

In 2007, I was called upon by the then Deputy Chief of Staff of Cross River State to work part-time as a tour guide/interpreter for 28 male and female adults who accompanied the Renowned Makossa Dancer/Singer Awilo who was one of the performing artists at the festival that year. The interesting part for me then was that, I had a job for two weeks and again had an opportunity to speak French continuously to not just one individual but 28 adults on a daily basis for two weeks.

And then, I began to wonder how many more tourists out there needed these services during the festival activities? How many more tourists were stranded out there while looking for direction to a particular place? How many more tourists were stranded even in their hotel rooms due to the fact that there was no staff who spoke at least a second foreign language other than English?

Recently, I read in one of the current editions of the research magazine “Awake” and the writer puts this across:

There are more than 3000 congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses throughout Italy, and many of these congregations are reaching out to people who speak languages other than Italian. (15).

And this study emphasizes this concern and maintains that out there in the City of Calabar during the Christmas Festival, there are more than 500 tourists who speak languages other than English. There is therefore need at every point in time for foreign language skills in the state and as a matter of fact in the nearest future the number of tourists will continue to increase. Our results further confirm that between 2011 and 2013, the number of tourists has tripled and the number of foreigners continued to increase.

Following its large influx of foreigners however, the need for second language in Cross River State cannot be overemphasized. This need however has gained little or no attention in the past. It is also observed that there is a lack of articulation of this need among tourism organizations in the state. In a hospitality and tourism industry, it is necessary that not less than two foreign languages should be introduced. Ludwig Wittgenstein states that “the limits of my language are the limits of my universe”. It is therefore necessary to note that a tourism and hospitality industry without the presence of two or more foreign language skills is limited to the international world.

Who then needs foreign language skills? We all do. But for the sake of this study, it is pertinent that the following stakeholders are equipped with foreign language skills:

- (a) Attendants at Souvenirs shops
- (b) Management and staff of Hotels
- (c) Tour Guides
- (d) Writers of Tourist Literature
- (e) International and Local Airline Employees
- (f) Immigration and Custom officials.
- (g) Security Agents
- (h) Health Workers

- (i) Management and Staff at the Tourism Bureau and the Carnival Commission
According to Essien (2006) “Language is a system of structured vocal symbols by means of which human beings make meaning and communicate and interact with each other in a given community” (2). Our main focus in this regard is the ability to communicate and interact. These stakeholders in the hospitality and tourism industry need the foreign language skills to be able to communicate and interact with international tourists during activities. A situation was Hotel attendants do not have foreign language skills, how do they communicate with foreign visitors who come into the state in large numbers during the Christmas festival? This has been a serious problem faced by tourist, which this paper seeks to highlight

Why French?

We all learned French because it is beautiful, because it is the filter through which a great number of people perceive the world and act within it, because it is the instrument through which a rich culture has been transmitted ... because it affords the student the opportunity to become virtually another person, part of another cultural community while still remaining in their own culture Kinmpton (1975, 783). If for the beauty of the language, the French language is worth learning. I loved French during my nursery school days because I enjoyed listening to the French teacher, pronounce French words in the manner she did, to me it just sounded so beautiful and different.

Before I go into this, let me ask, how many of us are bilingual? How many of us speak one or two more international languages other than our indigenous languages? Learning another language can help one understand his language. Many languages have contributed to the development of the English language, which is spoken by approximately 375 million people (wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

English language is the Lingua Franca in Nigeria and in Cross River State, which is the focus of our study. French language is one language that has an enormous impact on the English language. One experience I have had as a student of the French language is that, learning French has enhanced my vocabulary in English, for instance there are words in English that I would naturally not have had any need of using and as such never bothered e.g. the word “Rendezvous”, etc.

Thus, according to Laura Lawless, ‘learning French, as a second language, after English will greatly increase the number of English words the learners know’. This is true in the sense that the percentage of modern English words derived from French is 29%, while 17% of other languages. The sources go further to reveal that a great number of word of French origin have entered the English language to the extent that many Latin words have come to the English language (Wikipedia free), this in my opinion is a credit to the French language. To further uphold this assertion; Finkenstaedt (1973) opines that “nearly 30% of all English words have French origin”. Going by this assertion, in my opinion, over 100,000 English words are of French”. ‘Statistically, French is spoken as a native language in more than two dozens countries on the five continents’. ‘French is spoken by 72 – 99

million native speakers and another 190 million secondary speakers'. And, 'French is the most commonly taught (second) foreign language in the world after English' (About.com)

Now taking these facts and figures into consideration, the fact that tourists, as discovered in our survey, who visit Calabar during the festival came from the five continents of the world. We can therefore categorically say that at least 5 out of every 10 tourist speak or understand French.

Furthermore, French is an official working language in many international organizations including the United Nations (UN), International Olympic Committee (IOC), and International Red Cross (IRC). These are very renowned world organizations and membership is drawn from around the world. "And did you know? Originally, English and French were established as working languages at UN" (working language, wiki free)

French is a Lingua Franca of culture including arts, cuisine, dance and fashion. France, has won more noble prizes for literature than any other country in the world and is one of the top producers of international films, this again puts the French language on the lime light and makes it more famous than any other foreign language after English.

Let's have a look at the Internet; French again is the second most frequently used language on the net. According to George Weber, "French is ranked the second most influential language in the world." with 72 million native speakers and 190 million secondary speakers. And according to Adefemiwa (2000),

Nigeria's geo-political situation commends the French language to us from many perspectives; political, economic, social, cultural and from the security point of view. Take away the boarder along *the* Atlantic Ocean; all are shared with Francophone sovereign states with which we have interacted since the beginning of life in this part of the world. (xi).

Francophone countries bordered Nigeria. In 1996, French was publicly declared the second official language of the country by the then Head of State, Gen. Sani Abacha. This was a surprise speech made by the president before the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs and ever since his declaration; schools have been scrambling to find qualified French speakers to teach the 18 million primary and 5 million secondary students.

Let's come further home, Cross River State. 'Charity, they say begins at home', you can't give what you don't have, and what do we have in Cross River State in terms of Language Skill? Lets begin with our schools, if you say to a nursery school pupil, 'Bonjour', he or she will respond, 'Bonjour Madame comment allez-vous?' etc., but if you greet 'Gutten Morgen', the child will be wondering what you are talking about. What are we saying here? French is the only foreign language taught in schools in Cross River State. Again, the only foreign language school in Cross River is the French language center. Again don't be surprised, for every 35 foreigner you may find living and working in Cross River, especially Calabar the capital city, 25 will be from the francophone countries. Now, surprisingly, if you are leaving the country through Cross River State, the first country you will encounter is a francophone country.

Thus, Cross River State already has French language, all she needs to do is to articulate, emphasize, create awareness and enforce its usage for the benefit of the tourism sector, the State and the Country at large. French language is already very present in Cross River state and will succeed if government pushes a little further to articulate its presence especially in the tourism sector which is our main concern in this paper.

Survey findings

The Christmas festival is characterized by sounds, dances, beauty and energy as we have already highlighted. All these are seen in the diverse tourism activities displayed during the festival. The Calabar festival has attracted over 1.8 million visitors who troop into the state on a daily basis during the 31 days of festival jamboree in the state. From the over 1.8 million visitors, our survey was carried out on specific activities venues and designated time according to the schedule of events.

For this research, we distributed 3000 questionnaires at selected venues; however, we recovered up to 2,550 questionnaires on site. We also had oral interviews with some tourists as well as stakeholders at some tourist destinations. The stakeholders interviewed were hoteliers, transport agencies, airport workers and some workers at the Tourism Bureau and Carnival Commission respectively.

However, from both our primary and secondary sources, we discovered that the tourism sector in Cross River State consists of the government who provides an enabling environment through legislation and investment friendly policies for the overall progressive development of the industry, the private sector that are in charge of supplies such as accommodation, transportation, entertainment, shopping facilities etc. we also discovered that there are also the travel agencies whose operations depend on the regulations and guidelines of the Air Transport organization. These travel agencies involve in the creation of awareness of the existence of tourism services in the state. They also offer consultancy services and travel plans and visa procurement to tourists and travelers. We also gathered that government has done so much to promote and sustain the industry, as declared by the former Executive secretary of the Carnival Commission, “we have faced many challenges in staging Carnival Calabar but we refuse to give up”, she continues “this even is too important for the people of Cross River and the many loyal visitors who attend. It empowers them and brings them together” Elenda Dokubo (2009, 5)

Another very pertinent stakeholder we discovered are the Tour operators. They play a greater role in the development and marketing of tourism products in the State. These tour agents are expected to be conversant with the destinations. They also purchase a separate element of transformation, accommodation and other services in the package, which they sell directly or indirectly to the tourists.

However, our Survey results are summarized as follows:

1. Nigeria is surrounded by well over 300,000 francophone people. Most of them school and work in the Calabar metropolis.

2. More tourists desire services in other foreign languages and are asking for them.
3. Tourists are uncomfortable asking for services from locals since they can't be easily understood.
4. Tourists do not know what bilingual services are available, if there are and where to locate them.
5. There is no provision for bilingual health professionals during the festival.
6. There is no commitment amongst stakeholders to meet the need of foreigners in terms of language barrier.
7. Generally, services are not tailored to meet the needs of non-English speaking visitors

Recommendations

In the course of our survey, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. At least one foreign language should be introduced in every tourism and hospitality programme in schools. Thus, the Tourism Bureau, the Carnival Commission, all government and private hospitality departments should work together with the Ministry of Education to spread the message of the need and importance of foreign language skills in the tourism industry.
2. The transport sector cannot be left out. A local flight attendant and even a steward at a local transport company who speaks several international languages is an asset to that agency. Local transport companies, taxi drivers, motor park boys should be encouraged to study at least one foreign language.
3. Tour guides who work in museums, monuments and other tourist sites in the state as well as tour guides in private outfits that offer tour packages like boat rides should have foreign language skills.
4. As sited in the 360 magazine (32), the state tourism boards are key players in the tourism industry. Thus they should be able to formulate policies which are applicable to their areas, in accordance with the national policy. Therefore, this study recommends that they should as well be partners in the implementation of relevant strategic, objectives geared towards a formidable language policy to boost the industry.
5. There are other closely related hospitality industries like restaurants, hotels, camps, resorts etc all these outfits should be properly disposed to accommodate international visitors.
6. Health workers/medical team during tourism activities should have an international language skill to be able to communicate effectively with a foreigner who has need of their services. The committee in charge of medical services should make available bilingual health workers with reasonable access to bilingual health services.
7. There is need for security agencies to have basic language skills. During festival activities, there is bound to be a high level of security related situations due to the increase in the number of people drifting in and out of the state, thus to ensure the safety, knowledge of one or more foreign language is necessary.
8. There also has to be designated areas for these bilingual services during these activities.

9. Government should therefore organize intensive foreign language training programmes for tour guides, security agents, medical personnel, hotel management, transport agencies etc and other stakeholders in the tourism industry.

Conclusion

Amongst the most commonly cited problems faced by international tourists during the Christmas Festival is the absence of International Language Skill among stakeholders. It is difficult to underestimate the importance that an understanding of linguistic differences plays in international tourism. These difficulties with language can be gross translation problems, the problems in conveying subtle distinctions from language to language and culturally based variations amongst speakers of the same language. Some of these levels of difficulties are often faced by international tourists during the festival. For instance, how does a simple villager who can hardly speak English which is the lingua franca of the state communicate adequately and convince a French man to appreciate and purchase his artifacts or souvenirs and an American tourist who visits Nkarasi to see the monoliths will definitely need a tour guide who can understand the American way of speaking English and is able to interpret same in Pidgin English to the man in the village.

There is need therefore, for the tourism bureau, the carnival commission, transport co-operations and all other stakeholders in the hospitality industry to work together to spread the message of importance of foreign language skills in the industry. This will definitely make it easy for tourists who come into the state to enjoy their stay.

Furthermore, we have in this paper stated that the Calabar Christmas Festival has a high economic value on the economy of the state and as such should be encouraged. The tourism industry in Cross River State has a competitive edge over other destinations in Nigeria in view of its market position. It is adjudged the most preferred tourists destination in Nigeria and thus is supported by the brand "Destination Cross River". And according to the D.G NTDC, "discussing tourism without Calabar is like having dish without water", Otumba Runsewe (44)

While the Calabar Festival occupies the largest festival market share in Nigeria, the Calabar Carnival has a huge attendance which is comparable to the Caribbean Festival and Nothing Hill Festivals. As a market leader, it has become the pacesetter in the carnival festival industry to the extent that other states have begun to use the destination as a model.

Again, the Carnival and festival operates in a fast growing and attractive market which comprises of young educated and economically viable Nigerians and foreigners. The destination is blessed with brand loyal customers going by the number of repeat visitations in the past years.

The economic impact of the Calabar Festival is obvious; it has created tremendous business opportunities for the business community in Calabar. We have observed that, there are direct visitors spending on goods and services during the festival which increases the tempo of business during the period. It creates a good number of new jobs in a host of

ancillary industries. These include telecoms, ground transportation, auto rentals, catering, tour operators, printings, event managements, handcraft sales and carnival industry.

Finally, all said and done, there is still a lot to be done in terms of language barrier faced by the tourists during their visit, and if carnival started in Cross River State and is now being celebrated by more than 8 states of the federation, then the implementation of foreign language skill to boost the tourism industry can be achieved.

References

-Ashipu, K. B and Umukoro, G. M. "A Critique of the Language of Law in selected court cases in Nigeria", Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy, Vol. 5, No. 8. 2014

-“A visit to Italy” Awake Magazine, January Edition, 2014.

-Adefemiwa, Ola. "The Career of a French Graduate in the foreign service of Nigeria". Proceedings of the 2nd annual conference of the Nigerian University French Teachers association. (2002) : vi-xiv.

-Article 50 of the Rome Statute of the International criminal court. Accessed 20 January, 2014.

-Ayo. A, and Ahmed. Y. "Management of inland capture fisheries and challenges to fish production in Nigeria" federal College of freshwater fisheries technology. Accessed 28 Feb. 2014.

-Bachleitner, R. and Zins, A. Cultural Tourism in Rural Communities: The Resident's Perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, (1992): 199- 209.

-Cross River State Executive Summary of the Committee on Monitoring and Evaluation (2011).

-Cross River State the New Paradigm: A Publication of the Office of the Chief Press Secretary/Special Assistant on Media to the Governor.

“Calabar Nigeria” <http://www.visitcalabar.com/> accessed 20 Jan, 2014.

-Dokubo, Elenda. "Out of adversity comes Excellence", Carnival Calabar Preview, (2009): 5.

-Egbaji, S. Tourism Development in Nigeria. The Cross River State Experience. Lagos Elaspire Ltd, 2007.

-Essien, Okon. Language and Reforms Agenda in Nigeria in Ozomekuri Ndimele, et al (Eds). Mand J. Grand Orbit communications Port Harcourt, (2006) : 1-14

-Finkenstaedt, Thomas. Dieter Wolff (1973). Ordered profusion; studies in dictionaries and the English lexicon accessed on 28 Feb. 2014

-Hospitality net, 2013.

-Hugo Magazine, Special Edition, 2012.

<http://www.crossrivertourism.com/activities> accessed 28 Feb., 2014.

-“Introduction to Welcome to Paradise”. www.crossriverstate.gov.ng, accessed October 18, 2013

-“International Tourist Arrivals”, <http://hospitality.onttg-commo> accessed Nov. 20, 2012.

-Kimpom, Jon. “What is French for?” *The French review*, Vol. 4, xiv, 1975.
List of English words of French origin Wikipedia free.

-“Nigeria’s Hottest Festivals”, 360⁰ Tourist, Calabar, (2012): 32

-Okpoko, P. and Okpolo. A. *Tourism in Nigeria*, Nsukka, Afro Obis Publication, 2002.

-Shone, A. & Parry, B. *Successful Event Management: A Practical Handbook*, (2nd ed.)
London: Thomson Learning (2005).

-Smith, M., *Seeing a New Side of Seasides Culturally Regenerating the English Seaside Town; International Journal of Tourism Research* (2004).

-UK Sport (2004). *Measuring Success 2: The Economic Impact of Major Sport Events*;
Retrieved on the 4th November, 2009 from http://uk/page/world.class_events_research.

-Umukoro, Gloria. “Le Bilinguisme un atout pour le développement du Tourisme au Nigeria”. *Le cas de l’État de Cross River*. Ph.d diss., University of Calabar, 2012.

-Wittgenstein, Ludwig, “Logico Tractatus philosophy”
http://en.wikipedia/wiki/Tractatus_Logico_philosophicus accessed 20 January, 2014.
www.ladybrillemag.com.accessed, accessed 14 February, 2014.