Assessment of Community-Based Tourism Potential and Inventory in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District, Akwa Ibom State

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to carry out inventory and maps the distribution of community-based tourism attractions in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State. The study was descriptive in nature and adopted purposive sampling method to select ten (10) communities for the study. The communities were drawn at least one from each of the Local Government Areas. Data for the study were obtained through questionnaire forms, interviews, focus group discussions and personal observations. The questionnaire forms were administered to a total of four hundred (400) respondents who were randomly selected among the ten (10) selected communities. The result of the study shows that community-based tourism potential are decaying in the local community due to ignorance of the local communities on tourism benefits and lack of involvement and participation in community-based tourism activities. However, new tourism potential/attractions were discovered during the inventory. We concluded that community-based tourism if well managed and restructured is a functional tool to driving sustainable tourism development. Therefore, it is recommended that the local communities should effectively participate and be involved in community-based related activities and they should be integrated in decision-making and management in the tourism industry to aid the sustainability of tourism development in the district.

KEYWORDS

Community-Based; Tourism Potential; Attractions; Inventory;

INTRODUCTION

Tourism in recent time has gained more recognition with some motivational changes due to the upgrade in the industry. Ekong and Imikan (2017) noted that people like to spend good times with families and friends while at the same time exploring various tourist places across the globe which are natural or man-made. Similarly, ICLEL (1991) cited in Konwar and Chakraborty (2014) asserted that the primary products of tourism are not produced by the industry but of heritage, wealth and expected legacy of the community that serves as the tourists’ destination. These factors together with technical facilities and basic tourism infrastructure constitute the foundation of a tourist attraction for a given destination and help to deem the destination as either suitable or unsuitable for visiting and receiving visitors (Dincu, 2015).

Community-based tourism (CBT) is a bottom-up approach to sustainable development used in developing countries to enhance the conservation of natural resources, preserve traditional culture, and generate income at the local level. Nowadays, tourists lay more emphasis on local communities, cultural heritage and the quality of tourism destinations.
with safety, cleanliness, and environmental friendly. Therefore, tourist choice of destination is based on the extent of destinations’ attractiveness and its ability in influencing tourists’ satisfaction (Ekong, 2021). To assessing the tourism potential of an area, Suryawanshi (2014) pointed out that what is needed is to identify the possible centres or regions within the areas and determine if these have any uniqueness in themselves so as to become the possible centres of tourist attraction. Tourism activities according to Popichit et al. (2013) are regarded as the major indicators in bringing satisfaction, enjoyment and happiness to tourists. These tourism outcomes result in tourists’ revisiting in the future and recommendation to others to visit tourism destinations. Increase in tourism activities is due to the availability of basic infrastructures and the variety of tourist products offered by various destinations. According to Slehat (2018) lack of easy access is a major drawback to the feasibility of future tourism activities.

In Akwa Ibom State, several tourism development initiatives have been designed without any mechanism to incorporate the knowledge and needs of the community people in the process. Overtime, great tourism potential and activities declined in usage and practice. Most of the existing and potential tourism attractions and activities are neglected while some are not tourism integrated. Sequel to negligent in harnessing tourism attractions, there is a decline in tourist flow to the attraction sites and tourism related activities practiced in those communities and it is however, not guaranteed that the tourists stay for a longer period. Thus, any tourism activity in a region according to Formica and Uysal (2006) cannot begin unless its potential is identified, categorized, assessed, and realized. Therefore, the study aim to carryout inventory and map the distribution of community-based tourism attractions in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Tourism has promoted culture as well as encouraged local people to realize the value of their ethnic arts, culture, natural resources and environment (Sangkakorn et al. 2014). Based on these, Vystoupil et al. (2017) viewed tourism products as a package of wide range of destination services and environment. Therefore, tourism does not occur randomly, and success varies from one region to another, depending on tourism potential to attract tourists. Using descriptive technique, Okonkwo and Odey (2017) examined the reasons why Cross River State is been chosen over other Nigeria’s tourism destination. The result shows that tourists likes cross river state due to its serene natural environment and availability of parks, hosting of tourism driven festival such as Calabar Christmas carnival, Obudu mountain race and the Leboku festival host in the biggest village in West Africa. Chigbu et al. (2013) carried out inventory on Abia State’s tourism attractions and found out some major tourism attractions in the state to include Isiukwuato water fall, Azumini Blue River, long juju of Arochukwu, War Museum, Amakama cave, Ohafia war dance, Textile weavers and other caves. However, Asmelash, (2015) assessed the bases of tourism product in Ethiopia and found out that the basis of Ethiopia’s tourism product is cultural, historical and natural sites.

Furthermore, Popichit et al. (2013) outlined the processes in assessing tourism destination potential to include the examination of destination value or equity, physical aspects of destinations, readiness of destinations in terms of infrastructure, accessibility, environment, reputation and safety. Slehat (2018) descriptively assessed tourism activities and found out that tourism activities involve three major elements which are service seekers (tourists), service providers, and a place. However, researchers (Swarbrooke, 2012; Boniface et al. 2016 and Navarro, 2016) have made an attempt to classify and categorize
tourism potential and resources. In an attempt to classify tourism resources, Boniface et al. (2016) evaluates the potential of a site for development as a tourist attraction into two distinct features; physical features and cultural features. Using descriptive method, Swarbrooke (2012) classifies resources for tourism on a national scale and split it into four categories; Natural features (caves and scenic features); Man-made structures, buildings and/or sites which are not originally designed to attract visitors for touristic purposes (cathedrals and castles); Man-made structures, buildings and/or sites which are built in order to attract visitors for touristic purposes (museums and theme parks); and Special events (sporting or religious events and festivals). However, one of the most recent classifications of tourism potential is that of Navarro (2015) who classified tourism resources into three subgroups, the origin of a resource (natural, cultural, or human); materiality (tangible or intangible); and movability (moveable or unmovable).

Tourism development requires varieties of information about potential tourism resources which will assist developers and decision-makers. Slehat (2018) noted that once tourist destination interest has been identified, it is therefore essential to inventory and classify existing and potential tourism resources. In line with Boniface, cooper and cooper (2016) tourism inventory includes information about natural and cultural resources, together with tourism services and facilities. Jannin and Camalig (2014) used a qualitative method to inventory existing and potential tourism resources as baseline data to promote Cavite, in the Philippines. 159 existing and 24 potential tourism resources were invented, of which 25 potential were natural resources (14 existing and 11 potential); 52 were cultural resources (48 existing and 4 potential), and 82 were man-made (73 existing and 9 potential).

Furthermore, Lopez, Solis, Aguerro and Chavez (2015) conducted an inventory of tourism resources for the Zona Altiplano in San Luis Potosi, Mexico based on governmental reports, institutional information, fieldwork, and interviews with area residents. The result of the inventory indicated that a total of 270 tourist attractions abound within 15 municipalities which include 86 natural and 184 sociocultural tourism resources. The invented attractions were mapped and analyzed using Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis to describe the potential for tourism development. In Albacete, central Spain, Abellan and Gonzalez (2010) carried out an inventory of tourism potential based on fieldwork to provide baseline data. The result revealed 802 potential in the area which were grouped into three classifications: 174 natural resources; 471 historical and monumental, technical, ethnological and artistic resources and 157 folkloric, festival, and event-scheduled resources.

Tourism resources have also been assessed to classify specific forms of tourism (Slehat, 2018). This form of tourism may include Nature-based tourism (Rahayuningsih et al., 2016; Marzuki, 2016); cultural tourism (Asmelash, 2015); and agri-tourism (Brian, 2013). In line with Slehat (2018) priority should be given to identifying existing and potential tourism resources in a particular area and its surrounding. Thus, tourism resource inventory will provide the first framework for tourism resource classification. Therefore, Determining destination potentials can be accomplished by inventorying and summarizing indicators which represent tourism resources and infrastructures (Jannin and Camalig, 2014; Atuk, 2014; Asmelash, 2015). Moreover, numerous criteria and indicators according to Slehat (2018) have been used to evaluate tourism resources (for example, accessibility; health facilities; roads; education, infrastructure, entertainment facilities; political stability; popularity; importance; seasonality; diversity) according to the type of tourism being examined. Varying techniques are applied as strategic tools to support the decision-making process, such as GIS, multi-criteria analysis techniques, and multi-criteria decision
methods (Gadakh et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the alternative evaluation methods are based on fieldwork, for example interviews and group discussions (Asmelash, 2015; Puscasu, 2015).

**RESEARCH METHODS**

Purposive sampling method was used to select ten (10) community-based tourism attractions for the purpose of this study. These attractions were drawn from at least one community in each local government areas. However, a total of four hundred (400) questionnaire forms were distributed among the selected (10) communities. Each questionnaire forms were distributed to each community based on percentage of the population. Simple random sampling method was used to administer the questionnaire forms in various communities and were properly filled and returned. To support the quantitative data in the study, in-depth interview was conducted among thirty (30) purposively selected key informants (three informants in each of the community) and three (3) focus group discussions were held from three selected communities (Obotme, Afaha Obong and Raffia Communities) basically the community heads and the entrepreneurs to help elicit information on the distribution of community-based tourism resources and their experiences, skills and knowledge highly related to the problem. Descriptive analytical technique was adopted. The researchers collected data via field observation about the community-based tourism resources and infrastructural facilities and services based on the checklists, and GPS was used to record the X/Y co-ordinates of the tourism attractions.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Tourism attractions have made up the basis why tourists choose their destination or place of visit. This is due to its attractiveness, unique features and the destination’s capability to satisfying the tourists. To assess the tourism resource base and their suitability for developing community-based tourism for sustainable tourism development, inventorying and identification of existing and potential tourism attractions in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District were carried out. Places of tourist interest were identified, an inventory of the attractions were taken and categorized in three categories (Man-made tourism attractions, Socio-cultural tourism attractions and the Natural tourism attractions). However, the selected tourism attractions were considered priority with it basis for community-based tourism in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District. In addition to check list, information were gathered from Focus Group Discussions (FGD), Interviews and Direct Observations.

Furthermore, Man-made attractions identified in the study area include Raffia centre (Market), Blacksmith Industry, Art and Craft; Socio-Cultural tourism attractions found in the study area include Water-yam Festival, Palm Harvest Race, Annang Festival of Arts and Culture (AFAC), Obo-Annang International Market, Offiong-Aran International Market, Oil Palm Village, Traditional/Spiritual Shrines, Ikot Okoro (Iso Obot) Resort, Ukpom Day Festival, Usaka Forest (Gulder Ultimate Hunt) and Utem Usung Festival; Natural tourism attractions identified in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State include the Blue River and the Waterfalls.

**Table 1. Summary of Tourism Attraction Inventory in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man-made Potential</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Cultural Potential</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Potential</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result of the inventory carried out in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District shows that Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State has a total of twenty-six (26) tourist attractions that are community-based related. Six (6) of the tourist attractions are Man-made tourism attractions which represent 23.1 per cent of the total tourist attraction identified in the study area. Seventeen (17) tourist attractions identified are Socio-cultural tourism attractions which represent 65.4 per cent of the identified tourist attractions in the district while three (3) are Natural tourism attractions representing 11.5 per cent of the total tourist attraction identified in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State. However, some of the existing tourism attractions have decline in terms of tourists visit and the involvement of the locals while some potential need to be developed for sustainable tourism in the District.

Table 2 shows the locations of community-based tourism attractions identified in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District. Out of all the tourism attractions found in the district, the palm harvest race is the most occurring event in about seven locations. These locations are found within the Annang ethnic communities (Abak, Ikot Ekpene, Essien Udim, Ukanafun and Obot Akara). The second populated community-based tourism attraction is the Art and Craft found in four locations (Ikot Ekpene, Essien Udim, Etim Ekpo and Ikono). Similarly, festivals are the third populated community-based tourism attraction in the senatorial district and are located within Abak, Oruk Anam and Ikot Ekpene local government areas. In addition, the waterfall and the International markets are fourth in the row (Ini and Oruk Anam; Essien Udim and Ini) respectively. However, Man-made attractions are found in Ikot Ekpene, Etim Ekpo, Ikono and Essien Udim Local Government Areas; Socio-cultural attractions are found in Abak, Ikot Ekpene, Essien Udim, Obot Akara, Ukanafun, Ika, Oruk Anam and Ini Local Government Areas While the Natural attractions are found in Ukanafun, Oruk Anam and Ini Local Government Areas. These indicate that the two ethnic groups (Annang and Ibibio) that make up Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District are endowed with great community-based tourism attractions and are well presented in the research.

**Table 2.** Community-Based Tourism Related Attractions and their Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Tourism Attraction</th>
<th>Community/LGA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Man-made Attractions</td>
<td>1. Raffia Int’l Market</td>
<td>Ikot Ekpene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Blacksmith Industry</td>
<td>Adiasm Ikot Ondo, Essien Udim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Socio-cultural Attraction</td>
<td>1. Water-yam Festival</td>
<td>Afaha Obong, Abak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Annang Festival of Arts and Culture (AFAC)</td>
<td>Annang Community, Ikot Ekpene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Obo-Annang International Market</td>
<td>Iboho-Ukana West, Essien Udim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Offiong-Aran Market</td>
<td>Itak Ikot Obo Ise, Ini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Palm Harvest Race</td>
<td>Afaha Obong, Abak; Amayam, Ikot Ekpene; Ikpe, Essien Udim; Nto Ekpu Ikot, Obot Akara; Ikot Etim, Ukanafun; Ikot Akpan Afaha, Ukanafun; Ikot Ndem, Ukanafun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Traditional/Spiritual Shrines</td>
<td>Ika Community, Ika</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Tourism Attraction</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Utem Usung Festival</td>
<td>Eka Ediene, Oruk Anam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Oil Palm Village</td>
<td>Adad Ifang, Ukanafun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Usaka Forest (Gulder Ultimate Hunt)</td>
<td>Usaka, Obot Akara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ukpong Day Festival</td>
<td>Ukpom, Abak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ikot Okoro Resort</td>
<td>Ikot Okoro, Oruk Anam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Natural Attractions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Blue River</td>
<td>Edem Idim, Ukanafun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Waterfall</td>
<td>Obotme, Ini; Utu Ikot Iwara, Oruk Anam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of inventory on community-based tourism activities and attractions, the researcher found out that Ikot Ekpene senatorial district is enormously blessed with various forms of tourism potential and attractions. Some of these attractions are untapped and need to be developed while some need to be harnessed to meet tourist demand. However, in the course of the research, new community-based tourism related attractions and activities were discovered in some communities with unique attractions. These attractions include Waterfalls, Offiong-Aran International Market, Obo-Anang International Market, Arts and Crafts, Annang Festival of Art and Culture (AFAC), Blacksmith industry, Raffia International Market, Palm Oil Village, Utem Usung Festival, Ikot Okoro Resort, Ukpong Day Festival, Water-yam Festival, Traditional/Spiritual Shrines, Usaka Forest, Blue River and the Palm Harvest Race.

![Figure 1. Locations of Community-Based Tourism Attractions on the Map of Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District](image)
The Nkwot community in Ikono Local Government Area is known for their decent and unique local mat weaving. However, the raw materials for the production of the local mat are gotten from the community. Though other communities like Mbiaobong Ikon II do also have the raw material gotten from the bank of their stream. It is worthwhile to note that the raw materials are gotten within Ikono local government area of Akwa Ibom State. Similarly, In Essien Udim Local Government Area, the researcher discovered Arts and Crafts in Ukana Ikot Akpabin community. The community is known for their good works in wood carving especially local drums.

![Figure 2. Woodcarving Process in Ukana Ikot Akpabin Community](image)

![Figure 3. Carved Products by Ukana Ikot Akpabin Community](image)

In Iwere community, the Obotme water fountain (waterfall) was discovered as a unique tourism attraction. The Obotme water fountain (waterfall) is a great tourism potential which, would be of great significant to the community and the Akwa Ibom State tourism industry. The waterfall is the only and frequent natural source of drinking water in the community. It was also discovered during a focus group discussion (FGD) with the community heads and stakeholders of Obotme community that the waterfall is healing water. Though there is an interruption in one of the waterfall healing strength, its aesthetics still remain. It was revealed by Mr Jackson (one of the community leader) that youth corps members deployed to the community during their community development service (CDS) made construct to the mouth of the waterfall to enable community members fetches water fast through two channels. He added that since then, the pressure of the waterfall reduces and thus influenced the healing strength. This has minimized the natural healing effectiveness of the waterfall which may hinder specifically the development of health tourism in the community. The health significant of this particular Obotme waterfall was that it heals bone fracture and dislocation.
This shows that the interrupted construct is as the result of ignorance of the community people in promoting health tourism and that of the government not facilitating in its development. According to the youth leader of the community - Mr Kufre Solomon Ememe, photograph of the waterfall cannot be taken if not authorized by a community member or a tour guide from the village. If attempted, would blank the device or the device disappeared. The act is the community’s traditional ethics and obligation responsible to safeguarding the waterfall from damage by strangers. He added, to maintain its effectiveness, rituals and sacrifices are performed as at when due. The waterfall as a tourism potential could attract the tourists to experience the uniqueness of the waterfall and its health significance. However, lack of clear strategy to promoting the tourism products becomes a limiting factor that influences the development of the tourism potential in the community. Similarly, Utu Ikot Iwara community in Oruk Anam local government area also have a waterfall with unique attraction which attract tourist to the area.

Also, the researchers discovered the Obo-Annang international market as a unique tourism attraction in Ikot Ekpene senatorial district. It is the oldest, biggest and most populated market in the Annang land. Significantly, the market day is used traditionally in counting the calendar year of the Annang society which ends in the month of October and it is always celebrated with the “Awire” or “Èbre” (Water-yam) festival in Annang and Ibibio dialect respectively. The market is sold on a weekly base (once a week) and only on the “Obo” market days. It attracts people from other ethnic society, states and beyond who comes to buy and sale as well as tourists who want to experience the uniqueness of the market. However, the market is managed by the community which make it a community-based tourism attraction. The Offiong-Aran international market just like its counterpart (Obo-Annang international market) is one of the international market in the Ibibio society located in Itak, Ini Local Government Area. The market is also a weekly market sold only on the Offiong market days.

In the Annang society, the entire Annang communities celebrate their annual Arts and Culture festival (AFAC) which takes at least three (3) to five (5) days activities. It is a yearly event that brings all the indigenes of Annang together to celebrate their different arts and cultures in a grand style, preserving and conserving their cultural heritage and thus promoting sustainable tourism development in the area. The event feature activities such as the Annang carnival (cultural floats), tours to heritage sites, exhibitions of different kinds, cultural displays, dances and a quiz competition (Annang language quiz competition) among others. Furthermore, the researcher also discovered a community event called the “Palm Harvest Race” (locally term iwuko eyop) as a community-based tourism attraction. According to the village head of Ikot Inyang village (Chief Akpan Patrick Essien) in Afaha Obong community during a focus group discussion, the palm harvest race is basically done once or twice a year.
In this event he added, each person or family will have their individual palm fruit harvesters for the race. Once the signal is given by the community, all the harvesters start competing on who would be the best harvester and who would harvest seven bunch of palm fruit in a tree which the person would be given an incentive. This kind of race could be developed to promote tourism in the community viz-a-vis community-based tourism while conserving the natural resource base of the community. The village head of Ikot Ibit Ekpe (Chief Godwin Effiong Akpan) in Afaha Obong community during the Focus Group Discussion revealed that the palm harvest race in the community is mostly scheduled before the water-yam festival to enable the women used the oil in preparing the water-yam dishes. This is the indigenous knowledge of conserving the natural resource for sustainable development. It was also discovered that the palm fruit in raw or processed form brings economic benefits to the community people.

Figure 5. Harvested Palm Fruits

Furthermore, in Afaha-Obong community, the water-yam festival was discovered. It is a yearly festival used to appease the gods of the land for fruitful harvest of the year and also solicit for protection and more fruitful yield in future. It featured many dances and play from the youths and women in the village, and also other cultural troupe such as Uko Akpan cultural troop. Masquerade displays such as Ekpo, Obon, Ekpe, Ekoŋ, Obio-okpo, Okorekpim and Utu-ekpe among others are also featured.

Figure 6. Ekoŋ Masquerade Display at Water-yam Festival
Augustine Michael Imikan, Nsisong Christopher Ekong, Malachy Ugochuckwu Okoroji

Figure 7. Masquerade Display at Water-yam Festival

This festival is done during the water-yam harvest period basically in the month of October. No one is expected to eat new water-yam till the festival day. Water-yam is sold in large quantity and in low price to buyers mostly tourist who comes to experience the season’s festival and business people who want to buy in bulk for business purpose. With this, the tourists have the chances of contacting the local farmers/suppliers and buying directly from them at cheaper rate. The event is basically the cultural/traditional pride of the Annang especially the Eastern Annang.

Figure 8. A Section of the Water-Yam Festival Market

In Ukanafun local government area, the researcher discovered an Oil Palm Village called Adad Ifang community. In this community, oil palm processing is its major activity and there comes the origin of the community name “Adad Ifang” which means “How many (palm fruit) is ripe”. According to Mr Akpan Peter, almost (if not) all the families are engaged in the palm oil processing. It is of significant that when a family in the community wants to give their daughter’s hand in marriage, it is mandatory that the in-laws must give a palm oil processing machine (Ukwak Eyop) to the family – a major and compulsory item in the marriage list according to Mr Effiong Akpan (an elder in the community) during an interview. With this, it was discovered that almost all the families/compounds in the community have their oil palm mills in their compounds. This shows the existence of agro-tourism in the community which could be harnessed to suit the international standard through partnership and agro-tourism awareness. This will help enhance sustainable tourism development while preserving, conserving and promoting the rich culture and the image of the destination community making it a unique tourism destination for tourists especially in the Agro-tourism industry.
Augustine Michael Imikan, Nsison Christopher Ekong, Malachy Ugochuckwu Okoroji

The State Akwa Ibom is highly reputed and rated amongst the very best in the world in traditional arts. Raffia and cane craft have particularly been developed to the extent that a prominent city in the state - Ikot Ekpene, hosting the main cluster of raffia craft has been nicknamed the “Raffia City” which hosts the Raffia International market. Fashion accessories, decorative items and lawyer’s wigs are today being made from raffia products and have gained international recognition and prominence as export goods and special souvenirs. According to Imikan (2010) cited in Ekong (2016) the transparent-like fibre derived from the upper surface layer of the raffia palm leave could be dyed into various colours, weaved into bags, shoes and other fanciful materials for household usages. In Rivers state, Imikan, (2010) cited in Ekong (2016) observed that the raffia palm is of great important to rural dwellers as the leaves are used as thatches for roofing houses.

In Ikot Okoro community, the researcher discovered a local resort near the bridge and river bank (Ikot Okoro River). This resort attracts many tourists (within and outside the state) who want to experience local dishes and delicacies such as bush meat of all kinds, palm wines and other local drinks, traditional melon cake among others. The community is known for these activities as member earned more from the resort business through hunting, palm wine tapping, alcohol production “kai-kai”, and general sells from their proceeds.

The researcher discovered another natural attraction called the Blue River. Blue and White River located at Edem Idim village in Ukanafun Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State is indeed a mysterious handiwork of God where White and Blue-coloured gush of water meet in a course and flow along a waterway without each changing its original colour. It is a great sight to behold. The blue river could be recognised as the most clean and clear expanse of water in Nigeria. It is easy to spot fish darting underneath the transparent surface.
CONCLUSION
Community-based tourism is a functional tool to driving sustainable tourism development in Ikot Ekpene senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State if measures are put in place to sanitize and restructure the system. However, this research would enhance the development and management of community-based tourism attractions in the district. Mapping of the tourist attractions in the district would give the tourists a view of the varieties of community-based tourism attractions available in the district thereby projecting the image of the community destination globally. Therefore the researcher recommends that the locals should be greatly involved and participate in community-based tourism related activities in the district. The untapped community-based tourism potential and attraction should be harnessed for tourism development in the community. This would improve community-based tourism activities in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial district and thus enhance the chances for employment, increase income and revenue generation, promotes local crafts and artefacts, enhance community development, preserved and conserved cultural heritage ad natural environment.

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