



Potentials for development of rainforest tourism in Cross River National Park

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Abstract

The preservation of forests for tourism has been shown to be an efficient form of land use. Tourism has also provided the impetus for effecting conservation of the biological and cultural diversity of rainforest regions. The present study was necessitated by perceived low utilization of Cross River National Park (CRNP) for tourism and aimed at assessing the potentials for development of the park for optimal tourism utilization. Features of tourism interest were identified from the park's resources inventory. Questionnaire was used to identify the tourism strengths and weaknesses of the destination from tourists and park officials. Identified attractions were presented in two tourist circuits. Existing attractions circulated around rainforest experience, game viewing, birding, mountain and rock features, and aquatic activities. The study revealed abundant potentials for tourism development in the park. Poor tourism infrastructure, facilities and services formed major weaknesses of the destination. Concerted efforts at developing tourism infrastructure and improving facilities through public / private partnership (PPP) was recommended.

Keywords: Potentials; Development; Rainforest Tourism; Cross River National Park; Nigeria

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1. Introduction

Contemporary forest use increasingly tend to transcend traditional forms of utilization such as source of timber, hunting and gathering, or slash and burn agriculture to lean toward tourism use (Lenhard et al, 2010). The importance of bringing together tourism and forestry has been recognised not only in forest management context but also in rural community development through community participation in ecotourism. Tourism use of forests has also provided a valuable incentive for conserving local ecosystems (Bori-Sanz and Nikanen, 2002; Font and Tribe, 2005). As a result of growing worldwide interest in rainforests as travel destinations (Carter, 1994; Chokor, 1993; Lucas, 1987; Riney, 1997), a number of national parks in rainforest setting now attract large numbers of foreign tourism; generating substantial foreign exchange earnings, and making significant contributions to national economic development (Eltringham, 1984; Obua, 1997). Countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Nepal, India, Costa Rica, Hawaii, Dominica, and Brazil are already harnessing their potentials for rainforest tourism (Lameed, 1999; Save the Amazon Rainforest, 2004). Bruton (2011), working on the *Pajaro Jai Project* in the Darien Rainforest of Panama, showed that it is possible to generate substantially higher income per acre of rainforest and encourage native owned enterprises by keeping it intact than with current development practices; added to tourism's incentive for preserving the Amazon's biological and ethnic diversity. This can be achieved through tourism's ability to provide alternative economic activities to reliance on natural resources by local populations (Holland et al, 1989).

Development of tourism in rainforests has, however, often been hampered by a number of problems. For instance, the lack of reliable data for planning purposes; poor tourism infrastructure, facilities and services – good roads, airports, hotels tour guides - coupled with tropical diseases, crime and vandalism have been identified as major factors limiting optimal development of tourism in the Amazon inspite of its abundant tourism potentials (Save the Amazon Rainforest, 2004). The emergent thinking of developing tourism in rainforests is based on the principle of generating income from economic paradigms designed to take advantage of the strengths inherent in the environment and local cultures of an area (Buyeke and Akama, 2010; Lenhard et al, 2010).

In Nigeria, the the use of wildland for tourism is a novel experience which has greatly been hampered by the dominance of cultural attitudes toward their utilization. Modern concept and systems of natural resource conservation such as national parks were introduced as an imposition from colonial authorities that excluded the socio-cultural and economic systems of the local communities. Management of formal systems of natural resources conservation has remained highly centralized and conditioned by government policies of the colonial and post colonial eras (Ajayi, 1979; Ayeni, 1995; Maguba, 2002; Reo et al, 2009). In many cases, the local people had lived and depended on the land and its resources for their livelihoods prior to the establishment of such reserves. Consequently, formal systems of natural resources conservation has continued to sound alien to the average citizen; as it has been difficult to convince local people that restricted protected area access has valuable benefits (Lameed, 1999).

However, one major reason for constituting national parks in Nigeria is tourism (National Park Service, 2000). Specifically, great opportunities are believed to exist for capturing revenue through encouragement of

tourism in the study area (CRNP, 1990). Lameed (1999) studied the eco-tourism potentials of the park, and reported that the park has great attributes to offer to visitors a protected rainforest larger and more accessible than most others in Africa. Ngoka (2007) surveyed the tourism potentials of the park and corroborated that it harbours great potentials for eco-tourism development. Studies have revealed patchy use of the reserve for tourism. Lameed (1999) reported low utilization of the park for tourism. Ngoka (2007) reported 3.5% capacity utilization of the park for tourism during the period 2002 – 2006. Of this, 74.3% was composed of local utilization; while 25.7% was foreign utilization. Lameed (1999) had reported 23.6% local and 67.4% foreign utilization for the same destination.

This brief exposition suggests underutilization of the park for tourism, and also disparities in reports of tourism use from different studies. Factors which affect utilization of existing tourism potentials of national parks have been identified to include environmental conditions; distance from large city(ies); publicity of park's tourism potentials; local hospitality; accessibility and environmental impact (Eltringham, 1984; Holloway, 2006). Further, the state of park infrastructure and facilities such as hotels and lodging facilities and services, park - viewing tracks/trails, communication facilities, and quality of management, often affect destination marketing (Eltringham, 1984; Oriero, 1993). Lameed (1999) and Ngoka (2007) attributed the low capacity utilization of CRNP to poor or sometimes non-existent tourism infrastructure; added to the characteristic rugged terrain of the park. Due to its highly forested nature and criss-crossing streams, recreational pursuits are done mostly on foot, a situation that calls for a great deal of patience and endurance. Also, sighting of animals within the park is rare due to low visibility through the dense rainforest vegetation (Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation NTDC, 2012). Only a self – motivated rainforest traveler might dare the dense, humid forest of the park with the associated rugged terrain (Lameed, 1999). Hence, the greater part of the park has remained intact and inaccessible (Ayodele and Falade, 1993).

In the context of present emphasis on tourism development in Nigeria, a detailed study of Nigeria's potentials in tourism makes sense. The present study leans on the belief that enhancing the strengths for tourism development and mitigating identified weaknesses can increase the volume of visitation to the park and lead to concurrent increase in revenue accruable from tourism. This study thus explored the prospects for development of the park for optimal tourism use.

2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- Identify the tourism potentials of CRNP.
- Assess the weaknesses and threats to optimal utilization of the park for tourism.
- Identify ways of mitigating the identified weaknesses.

3. The study area

Cross River National Park covers an area of 4,000 km² in the lowland rainforest South-eastern corner of Nigeria. It is located between latitude 6° 05' N and longitude 9° 02' E in Cross River State of Nigeria

(Oshuntokin, 2001). Lying South-east of the loop of the Cross River, it extends along the Cameroon border. The Park is composed of two divisions - the Oban Division which lies southwards and named after the Oban Hills, and the Okwangwo Division lying northwards (Obot, 1996). The Oban Division, composed of the former Urban Forest Reserve covers an area of 3000 km², and directly borders the Koroup National Park in the Cameroons. The Okwangwo Division was created from two pre-existing forest reserves of Okwangwo and Boshi. This division occupies 1000 km². This division is linked to the West to the Takamanda Forest Reserve in the Republic of Cameroun via the Mbe Mountains and the Afi Forest Reserve.

The CRNP is the largest protected forest in the moist forest zone of Nigeria, a region where greater than 90% of the original forest has been lost or degraded. As such, it represents one of Nigeria's most important natural resource assets, supporting fisheries, protecting watersheds and climatic stability. It preserves genetic resources and provides opportunities for eco-tourism (IUCN, 1988). The park is home to 199 mammal, 63 frog and toad, 20 reptile, 380 bird 48 fish and 950 butterfly species (NTDC, 2012). Eighteen of 23, representing some 78% of primate species recorded in Nigeria are found here; two of which - the Cross River gorilla, (*gorilla gorilla deihli*) and the chimpanzee (*pan troglodytes*) - being highly endangered hominids (National Parks Board NPB, 1995; NTDC, 2012). Other primate species include the drill monkey (*mandrillus leucophaucus*), the golden poto (*actocebus calabarensis*), mona monkey (*cercopithecus mona*), putty-nosed monkey (*cercopithecus nictitans*), grey-cheeked mangabay (*cercopithecus albigena*), preussis guenon (*cercopithecus preussi*), crowned monkey (*cercopithecus pogonias*); all highly endangered (Mbelli, 1999). There is also the forest elephant (*loxodonta africana cyclotis*), which migrates between the park and the Koroup National Park in Cameroun (NPB, 1995).

The Park's management has developed a research cum tourism station in Kanyang, Okwangwo Division. This is designed to conduct scientific research particularly on the lowland gorilla. Also, the Butatong Base Camp was initiated and developed by the EU/WWF/Okwangwo Project, and contains several office facilities, staff quarters, guest lodges, botanic garden, and recreational facilities. The park's head office is located at Akamkpa, 30km outside Calabar. It contains the General Manager's residence, some staff houses, canteen, a well-equipped community centre, and sports facilities.

The park's tourism attractions spread over distant and varied terrain across two sectors located scores of kilometers apart. Ranger stations have been established at strategic positions in the park to protect the park and tourists alike. There exists some 41km of nature trails constructed to enhance park viewing (Figure 1).

A number of the attractions which form part of the park's tourist circuit are located outside the confines of the park and not owned or directly managed under CRNP. A bilateral understanding between the Park's Management and the Cross River State Tourism Bureau (CRTB) whereby the two organizations cooperate to operate virtually the same circuits; each relying on each other's sites and facilities for enriching the tourism experiences of visitors coming from either party. Consequently, the tourism potentials of CRNP spans outside the confines of the park's boundaries; stretching from Calabar, through the Oban and Okwangwo sectors of the park, to the Afi and Mbe Mountains, and up to the Obudu plateau. The CRNP regards such sites as adjuncts of its tourist circuit. The present study covered such sites.

Study of this destination was premised on the assumption that enhancing the strengths for tourism development and mitigating identified weaknesses will increase tourist arrivals and lead to optimum utilisation of the destination.

4. Methods

For the purpose of this study, the park with its adjunct attractions and facilities was demarcated into two circuits - the southern, and the northern. The southern circuit comprised mainly of the Oban sector of the park and adjunct hotel facilities in nearby Calabar metropolis. The northern circuit covered the Okwangwo sector of the park, the Drill Rehabilitation and Breeding Centre (Pandillus or Drill Ranch), the Kanyang Gorilla Station/Tourist Village, and the facilities of the Obudu Cattle Ranch. The explorative research design was used, which involved surveying the study area for tourism attractions and exploring existing strengths and challenges facing the development of a tourism programme in the area. Kothari (2004) explains that the explorative design is suited for exploratory research. In this study, tourism attractions and the existing facilities were deemed to represent the strengths of the destination; while the adversities represented the weaknesses and threats.

Features of tourism interest whether already developed for tourism, or yet to be developed were identified from the park's resources inventory as kept by the National Parks Service. This was followed by field survey to confirm the physical existence of the features. Park officials provided assistance and logistics during the field survey. The constraints to optimizing tourism development and utilization of the park were identified from tourists and park officials using questionnaire. The population for this aspect of the study comprised 685 respondents. This was made up of 7 park officials and 678 tourists. The officials included the recreation officer of the park, the camp officers of the two sectors of the park and the gorilla station/tourist village at Mbe, and the station officers of three ranger stations. The 2 divisions included the Oban Sector with base station at Erukut Gate and the Okwangwo Sector with its base at Butaton. The ranger stations included the Gorilla Station; the Drill Rehabilitation and Breeding Centre at Buanchor, and the Becheve Nature Reserve on the Obudu Plateau. The 678 tourists were those who visited the park between July and September, 2006. The sample comprised 105 respondents, made up of the 7 park officials and 98 tourists. The park officials were exclusively having been deemed to be in good position to have detailed knowledge about, especially, the managerial problems limiting optimum development of tourism in the park. The tourists were an accessibility/convenience sample used by virtue of their presence in the park during the period of the study, and their G18 willingness to complete the questionnaire used for the study. According to Woodward and Francis (1988) convenience sampling frame is used in research when it is not possible to reach the entire population, wherefore only the most convenient sampling units are used. Tourists usually leave the park after their tour. It was thus not possible to reach the entire population who visited and left at different times for selection of a random sample.

Observation checklist and an open-ended, structured questionnaire were used for the study. The observation checklist was used to crosscheck the potentials of the park as identified from the park's

resources inventory. The questionnaire was used to elicit responses about the constraints to optimum tourism use of the park (weaknesses and threats of the destination) from respondents. The questionnaire listed militating factors against tourism development as compiled from literature and each respondent was requested to tick \checkmark against those which applied to the park, and mark 'X' against those that did not apply to the destination. The researchers also embarked on a guided field survey of the park to confirm identified attractions, ascertaining the statuses of their development for tourism use (developed; or yet to be developed). The survey also tried to confirm the prevalence of the weaknesses and threats identified by the respondents. Identified tourism attractions (the strengths), and the militating factors (weaknesses and threats) were reported as identified.

5. Findings

Table 1 shows the attractions of the southern circuit. The circuit contains mainly the attractions of the Oban Sector; which included tropical rainforest experience, nature trails, waterfalls, birding, salt licks, rock cave, sport fishing, boating, camping, natural swimming pool, and game viewing. Hostel facilities, sporting facilities, snack bar and restaurants also exist at the park's head office in Akamkpa and the base stations at Erukut Gate and Butaton. Because of the proximity of the southern circuit to Calabar - a port city and capital of Cross River State, tourists operating in this circuit often use hotel facilities in Calabar metropolis, except when deep in the forest, carrying all required supplies and sleeping in tents. Team tourists rely on hostel facilities at Akamkpa and Erukut Gate for accommodation.

Table 2 shows the attractions of the northern circuit. They consisted mainly of the attractions and facilities of the Okwangwo Sector, the Drill Ranch or Pandrillus, and the Obudu Cattle Ranch. Tourism attractions of the Okwangwo sector included rainforest experience, nature trails, guest lodges, botanic garden, and the gorilla tracking.

Flowing from the Okwangwo Sector is the Afi River ecosystem containing the Afi Forest Reserve and mountain ranges along which the Drill Ranch is located. Pandrillus is a Nigerian NGO founded and directed by Peter Jenkins and Liza Gadsby to promote the survival of a highly endangered primate - the drill monkey (*mandrillus leucophaeus*) (Pandrillus Information Pamflet, 2000). Pandrillus' main activity is the Drill Rehabilitation and Breeding Project. The 'Drill Ranch,' as the center is popularly called, started in 1991 in Calabar with 5 drills which arrived as tiny orphans whose mothers were shot by hunters for *bushmeat*. By 1996, when the monkey population of the center had increased, the first drill group was flown by helicopter to their present home. Their new home consists of solar-powered electrified enclosures of natural forested primate habitat, located in a community forest adjoining the Afi River Forest Reserve (see Figures 2a & b). Today, the Centre has 6 groups cordoned in forested enclosures of areas ranging from 1-20 hectares each. One of the 6 enclosures contains orphan chimpanzees as well (see Figure 3).

The Drill Ranch has become an important tourism destination that receives tourists from across Nigeria and abroad. Tourists enjoy viewing especially primates from canopy walk in the beautiful rain forest

environment. Also, the surrounding mountain ranges linking the hills of the Obudu plateau provide ample opportunities for mountaineering.

Table 1. Tourism Attractions of Cross River National Park Southern Circuit) and Statuses of Their Development for Tourism Use

S/No.	Attraction	Utilization Status
1	Tropical rainforest experience (in the Oban Sector)	√
2	Nature trails (in the Oban Sector)	√
3	Boating (at Nsofang)	√
4	Waterfalls (at Iyang)	√
5	Birding	X
6	Salt licks (at Ekang)	X
7	Rock caves	X
8	Game viewing	X
9	Natural swimming pool	X
10	Hostel accommodation (at Erukut Gate)	√
11	Snack bar (at Akamkpa & Erukut Gate)	√
12	Table Tennis pool (at Akamkpa & Erukut Gate)	√
13	Camping	X
14	*5 – Star Hotel facilities (in Calabar)	√
15	Sport fishing	X

Key: √ Developed and currently utilized for tourism
 x Not developed and not utilized
 * Adjunct tourism sites

The Obudu Plateau located at an average elevation of 1,500m, is a western offshoot of the Bamenda Highlands of South-western Cameroon, which extends into South-eastern Nigeria. The Obudu Cattle Ranch, with an area of 400km², is situated on this plateau. The entire plateau now serves as a prestigious mountain-top retreat with the following attractions:

(A) The Becheve Nature Reserve (BNR) has an area of 70 hectares, and lies within walking distance from the Ranch Resort situated on the plateau. The forest of the Becheve flows down the plateau, extending southwards into the Okwangwa Sector of CRNP. The CRNP maintains a ranger post on the Obudu Cattle

Ranch primarily for its interest in the BNR, although the Reserve is managed by the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF). The BNR boasts of the following attractions:

- **Birding:** The BNR is recognized as one of Nigeria's Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The IBA programme is a globally focused project being implemented world-wide by Birdlife International (BI), in conjunction with Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), UK, and was established in Nigeria in collaboration with the NCF (NCF, 2005). The birds of the plateau constitute an important attraction of visitors to the destination.
- **Tree House:** The tree house is 20m high with three platforms; each of which can accommodate ten persons at a time. The tree house is ideal as a high hide for bird watchers and adventure seekers.
- **Nature trails:** There are 5 trails of various lengths through the Reserves' forest. Monkey Face trail is 920m in length; Tree House trail is 965m; Fern Tree Grove is 350m long; Guatemala trail is 760m long, while Leventis Loop is the longest.
- **Canopy walk:** A 73m canopy walkway exists in the Nature Reserve. This enables visitors to walk through the canopy of the trees to see birds and other attractions at close range.
- **Camping:** There are a number of designated campsites. The reserve staff guides desiring tourists to the sites. Tourists would have equipped themselves from home for forest camping expedition.

(B) Weather: The plateau has a temperate climate - the so-called Manbilla climate - which is similar to the Mediterranean type of climate. The weather is cool, with annual temperature range of 15°C to 22°C. This beautiful weather makes the plateau free of mosquitoes and tsetse flies, and constitutes an important attraction of tourists to the Ranch.

(C) Scenery: The drive to the plateau right from Ikom through Obudu town presents a splendid view of varied terrain; ranging from tall, dense forest with canopies of branches that completely shaded the highway, to the ambience of mountain escarpments, which adorn the terrain. The final 16km of drive from the lowland area to the Cattle Ranch takes the visitor up a winding road, giving spectacular views of the surrounding highlands; before arriving at the Ranch and hotel facilities on the plateau.

(D) Cable car: Recently, a 4 km (15 minutes) cable car ride (Figure 4) has become a faster alternative to the winding road - drive up and down the plateau. It also presents the visitor with a scenic view of the surrounding rolling hills and valleys.

(E) Air strip: The Babi Air Strip is located 45km to the Ranch Resort from Obudu town. Flights are possible from Calabar and other airports in Nigeria.

(F) The Ranch Resort: This is a five-star hotel en-suite guest units equipped with heaters. The Obudu Mountain Resort as is now called is an important attraction of tourists to Obudu Cattle Ranch. The facilities of the Resort include sports facilities such as tennis, hiking, swimming, golf and horse racing.

The weaknesses and threats identified include poor infrastructure, low quality, or (in some cases) non-existent accommodation facilities and services especially within the park, coupled with the rugged terrain of the region (Table 3). Threats to the integrity of the park in the forms of hunting, gathering, lumbering, and encroachment of cropping activities into reserve areas were also identified.

Table 4 shows the measure for mitigating adverse impact to ensure sustainability of tourism in the park as identified and their ratings. These included the provision of access roads, adequate transportation facilities, power and water supply, accommodation and communication facilities, control of illegal activities, and adequate facilities for park viewing along nature trails.

Table 2. Tourism Attractions of Cross River National Park (Northern Circuit) and Statuses of Their Development for Tourism Use

S/No.	Attraction	Utilization Status
1	Rainforest experience	√
2	Nature trails (at Okwangwo Sector, Drill Ranch & BNR)	√
3	*Sport fishing (at designated places)	X
4	Tourist camp/accommodation (at Butaton Base Camp)	√
5	*Camping (on the Ranch)	√
6	Botanic garden/arboretum (at Butaton Base Camp)	√
7	Gorilla Research Station (at Anape)	√
8	*Drill Rehabilitation and Breeding Centre (at Buanchor)	√
9	*Becheve Nature Reserve (on the Ranch)	√
10	*Splendid scenery (the park, drive to & up the plateau from Ikom)	√
11	*Weather (on the Ranch)	√
12	*Birding (at BNR)	√
13	*Tree house (at BNR)	√
14	*Natural swimming pool (near the pandrillus)	X
15	*Canopy walk (at the Pandrillus & BNR)	√
16	*5 - Star Hotel (the Ranch Resort)	√
17	*Mountaineering (at Boshi Extension, Afi, and Mbe Mountains)	√
18	*Golf (at the Ranch Hotel)	√
19	*Swimming Pool (at the Ranch Hotel)	√
20	*Air strip (at Babi)	√
21	Cable car (up the Ranch)	√

Key: √ Developed and currently utilized for tourism
 x Not developed and not utilized
 * Adjunct sites

Table 3. Ratings of the Identified Weaknesses and Treats to Optimal Tourism Development of CRNP Using 12-Point Cumulative Weighted Scores No. = 104

S/No	Weakness/Threat	F	*Sum of Sores	Weighted Mean	Rating
1	Poor access roads	90	1080	10.4	1st
2	Poor transportation facilities	76	912	8.8	3rd
3	Inadequate accommodation facilities	75	900	8.7	4th
4	Poor communication facilities	45	540	5.2	9th
5	Poor light quality inside the tracks/trails	72	864	8.3	5th
6	Fear of insecurity	08	96	0.9	12th
7	Threat to the integrity of park through illegal activities	32	384	3.7	10th
8	Lack/inadequacy of travel agencies	64	768	7.5	8th
9	Poor power (electricity) supply	66	792	7.6	7th
10	High pricing of tours/facilities	22	264	2.5	11th
11	Poor water supply	82	984	9.5	2nd
12	Poor maintenance culture	70	840	8.1	6th

*Weighted scores / Table 3 shows the ratings of the identified weaknesses and threats to optimal development of CRNP for tourism by tourists.

Table 4. Ratings of Identified Measures for Mitigating Existing Weaknesses and Treats to Optimal Tourism Development of CRNP Using 8 - Point Cumulative Weighted Scores No. = 104

S/No.	Measure	F	* Σ Scores	Weighted mean	Rating
1	Provision of access roads	92	736	7.1	1 st
2	Provision of adequate transportation facilities.	86	688	6.6	2 nd
3	Provision of adequate power supply	84	672	6.5	3 rd
4	Provision of adequate water supply	80	640	6.2	4 th
5	Provision of adequate accommodation facilities	78	624	6.0	5 th
6	Provision of adequate communication facilities	74	592	5.7	6 th
7	Control of illegal activities	65	520	5.0	7 th
8	Provision of adequate nature trails for park viewing	56	448	4.3	8 th

*Weighted responses / Table 4 shows the measure needed to be taken in order to permit optimum development of CRNP as perceived by tourists seen in the park.

6. Discussion

The tourism attractions of CRNP reflect the ecological setting of the park's location. The ecological setting of the park also affected the kind of tourism attractions especially game animals present in the park.

Because the Park is situated in rain forest and partly mangrove setting, dense, high, humid and steamy continuous primary forest, coupled with poor light quality within, it hides game animals and renders sighting of animals difficult except occasionally when seen in the trees. For instance, most of the park's fauna are nocturnal. However, the park is reputed for its primates such as gorilla, chimpanzee, drill and a host of other species of monkeys. It is known to be home to over 78% of the primate species found in Nigeria (Lameed, 1999). Safari on truck is an unlikely activity in the park.

The dense, high, forest and rugged terrain of the park can, at best, allow for nature trails. There are several kilometers of well-laid out nature trails in each of the two sectors of the park; although the greater part of the park has remained intact and inaccessible (Ayodele and Falade, 1993). Currently, however, only a self-motivated rainforest traveler might dare the dense, humid forest of the park, with the associated rugged terrain (Lameed, 1999). This might go to explain the low capacity utilization of the park reported (Lameed, 1999; Ngoka, 2007). Hence, Ganda (1999) and Lammed (1999) ascertained that tourism activities are promoted, conditioned and influenced by the environmental circumstances, such that national parks tourism is inherently inserted into the ecological system with which it interacts.

In the context of recent drive toward tourism toward tourism development by the Nigerian Government, the time has come for the stake holders to transcend media and civil service beaucroatic retorics to embracing the practical laying of the rudiments for development of the tourism sector. If indeed generation of revenue from tourism was envisaged for the creation of the CRNP, the project execution will be incomplete in the face of constraints and threats which deter tourists from visiting the park. Tourism as an economic activity can hardly be realised in the present situation whereby the attractions and detractions of the destination seem to balance and thus cancel out. Presently, lack of the basic tourism infrastructure, facilities and amenities especially within the park is thought to deter many visitors to the park especially the lack of accessible road network in the region. Holloway (2006) noted that accessibility, especially, greatly affects destination marketing.

Sustainability of the Support Zone Development Programme (SZP) which mitigates threat from human activities by local communities is also a factor that might ultimately threaten the integrity of the reserve area. The SZP is a programme developed and implemented by the National Park Service (NPS); which seeks to assist the support zone communities through the establishment of social amenities in return for their cooperation in protecting the reserve areas. The programme has proved most effective in CRNP relative to other national parks in Nigeria (Maguba, 2002). Presently, the NPS relies on donations from international donour agencies for funding the SZP programme. If at any time the programme is hampered due to reduced flow of aids, the local people may turn to the forest which will adversely affect the integrity of the park. Unreliable source of funding for the SZP programme leaves considerable cause for worry, and thus a threat to development of sustainable tourism in the area. Lack of funds to develop infrastructure and improve facilities has remained a serious problem.

7. Conclusion

This study identified ample potentials for tourism activity in CRNP, including the potentials for both linear adventure tourism and stay - put passive holidays. However, while attractions abound, the lack of tourism infrastructure, basic facilities, amenities and services constitute the major weakness of the destination. Accessibility poses a major challenge. Taking tourism beyond the present limited number of strictly self - motivated rainforest visitors (especially within the confines of the park's territorial boundaries) requires decisive action by the National Park Service (NPS) and the relevant stake holders to upgrade infrastructure and necessary facilities and services; as only that might make the existing attractions meaningful for effective marketing.

8. Recommendations

- There is the need for concerted efforts at implimenting development of the park for optimum tourism use through provision of tourism infrastructure, facilities and ameniries needed by tourists.
- Creation of the awareness of the tourism potentials of the park through environmental education and advertising need to be embarked upon to increase in tourism visits to the park.
- The NPS might consider contracting out the tourism component of park management to competent private interest; who should operate within set guidelines, while the NPS concentrates on the protection component. This is deemed necessary in view of the seeming lack of public funds to develop and properly manage a viable tourism outfit within the park.

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Figures

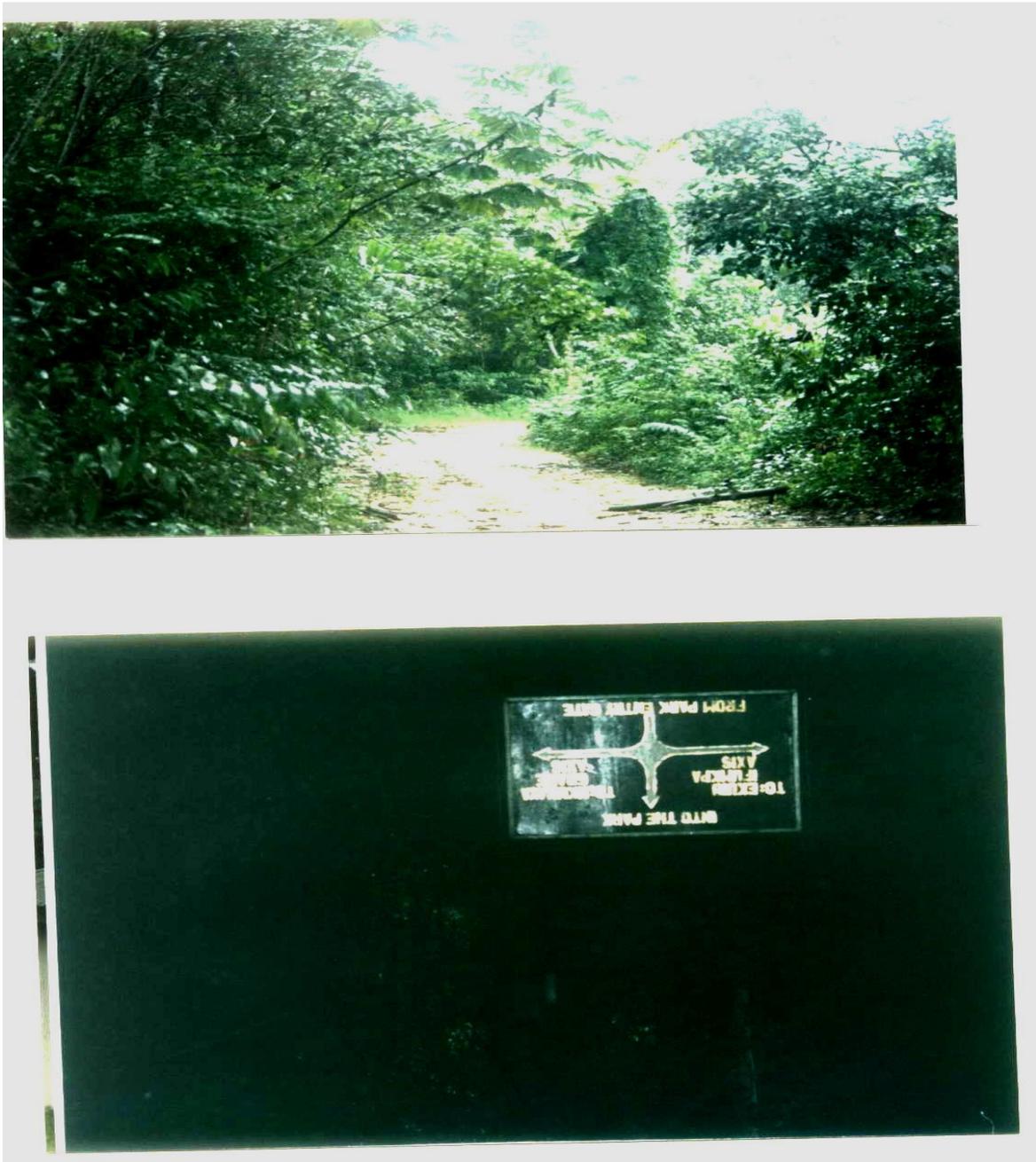


Figure 1.

(a). entrance to nature trails (from the base camp at Erukut Gate);
(b). Sign posting of nature trails showing destinations of the network of tunnel-like tracks through vast, dense, high, steamy – dark, primary forest. Like jeep tracks in savannah setting, nature trails also demarcate the ranges of protected rainforests for managerial purpose.



Figure 2. (a). Male drill at the Drill Ranch.
(b). Solar panels that power the Drill Ranch.



Figure 3. Chimpanzee, also protected in the Drill Ranch



Figure 4. A Cable Car in-between the Longest Span of 1.4 km on its way up the Plateau