

Marketing the Tourism Potentials of Owo Community for the Development of Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the tourism potentials in Owo Community and their contribution to the socio-economic development of the people. The study made use of purposive sampling method. Systematic random sampling was used to administer questionnaires at interval of 10th respondents targeted at house hold heads. The results show that the level of patronage of tourism potentials in Owo is relatively high as revealed by the data collected. The impacts of tourism potentials in the study area included boosting of income, employment and business. The study concludes that tourism potentials in Owo community has high patronage and has positive impact on people's socio-economic lives, but there are many challenges facing the sector in the study area. Some of which are lack of accommodation, lack of awareness, inadequate water supply, lack of support by both Local and State governments for both *Igogo* and *Ero* festivals. The study recommends proper funding of *Owo Museum* by the federal government as well as appropriate packaging and marketing of *Igogo* and *Ero* festivals to meet international standards among other recommendations.

Key words: Tourism, travel, festive, tourism potentials, and development.

1.0 Introduction

Tourism is a leisure activity, involving the movement of people to destinations away from their usual residences. It was promoted by the introduction of regular and paid holidays, increasing income, differences in the seasons, and the breaking down of distance barriers by improved transportation and communication systems (World Tourism Organization Journal, 1995).

Tourism generates employment directly through hotels, restaurants, night clubs, taxes and sales of souvenir and other related items. Also, the supply of goods and services needed by tourism related businesses have been other sources of employment and income generation. According to World Tourism and Travel Commission (1992), tourism support 7% of the world's workers. Adejuwon, (1993) discussed tourism as the movement of a person or a group of persons from his/her abode to a place far or near, for the purpose of leisure. Emmanuel (2005) observed that tourism helps people to escape from boredom of their locality and job, provides fun and relaxation and also enhances the physical health of individuals.

According to Emmanuel (2005) observed that in the year 2002, international tourism was the largest export earner globally. This makes it a major foreign exchange earner in the world economy. He observed that some countries in East Africa, such as Kenya, Ethiopia etc thrives on tourism, as substantial fraction of the population is dependent on it for employment and income generation. These countries earn a great deal of foreign exchange from tourism. The same source observed that, tourism is more developed and therefore generates more income in the continents of Europe and America: other dimension of tourism, especially space tourism is fast springing up. Those advanced countries of the world such as USA, are committing huge investments into researches and the developments of the space tourism systems.

Nigeria which is richly blessed and endowed with both physical and cultural tourism potentials has been relatively insignificant on the world tourism map (Olugbamila, 2005). This is because the Nigeria national economy has essentially been petroleum-driven, with the result that tourism does not play any significant role in the economy. Much prominence has been given to oil production as the major source of revenue, particularly, foreign exchange at the expense of other industries including tourism. Research further proves that tourism industry in Nigeria is still in its infancy, although emphasis is now being placed on its development by the federal, state and different private organizations, in realization of both its recreational values and contributions to the growth of the economy. Yet there are still rooms for further and great development that has not been tapped into.

In Ondo State, much concentration is still on cultural tourism. It is about promoting the culture through festivals and celebrity. The state also has natural resources which are natural phenomena that are usually of interest to tourism worldwide and which if developed, will help to generate employment for the people and boost the local economy (Emmanuel, 2005).

Based on this assertion, this research tends to study the tourism potentials in Owo. So as to identified further tourism activities like museum, *Igogo* festival and *Ero* festival and other tourism festival that abound in Owo Community, Owo local government area of Ondo State and assess their contributions to the socio-economic development of people in the study area.

2.0 Study area

Owo local government area lies on latitude $7^{\circ}11'$ of the equator and longitude $50^{\circ}35'$ of the Greenwich meridian. Owo is bounded on the East by Ose local government area, on the west by Akure south local government area and on the south by Edo state. Owo is situated on 48 kilometer East of Akure, the state capital and 400 kilometer North of Lagos state in Nigeria (Ileoje, 1978.)

2.1. *Climate and Vegetation*: The study area lies within the tropical climate belt. The temperature is relatively high throughout the year (about 27.50°C - 32°C). The rainfall is equally high throughout the year (about 1600mm - 2000mm). Two peak periods of rainfall (double maxima) are recorded in the study area. The first is July and the other October. In between is the august break. The relative humidity is very high (about 80%). However, the study area is also influenced by two prevailing winds. The south west monsoon wind which originated from Atlantic Ocean. It is warm and moist. The North East trade wind which blows across the Sahara desert. With adequate rainfall and high temperature all the year round, Owo is associated with economic trees as a result of her location within the rain forest zone. It is rich in varieties of timber and other forest products. The area supports the growth of cocoa and cola nut trees.

2.2. *Population*: According to 1963 population census, the population of Owo was 80, 413 and in the year 1991, the population increased to 157, 181 with increase in the establishment of government and private offices and institutions of higher learning. Recently, the population of the study area has increased tremendously with 2006 population census putting Owo at 218,886. Therefore, the population projection of the study area from 2006 to 2012 is 261,361 using 3% growth rate.

2.3. *Economic Activities*: Agriculture forms the mainstay of the economy of Owo local government area, making the people of Owo area predominantly farmers. They cultivate mostly cash crop like cocoa, cashew food crops like yam, cocoyam, maize, cassava and vegetables. The secondary productive sector of the economy of Owo is dominated by medium and small scale agro-manufacturing activities and activities like saw milling industries.

3.0 Conceptual Framework And Literature Review

3.1 Concept of self expression

The concept of self-expression is relevant to a study of this nature. Self-expression theory is the relevant theory that is applicable to tourism development and planning. The theory was propounded by Elmer and Bernard (1973). They saw tourism primarily as a result of the drive for self-expression. They further observed that man was perceived, as an active dynamic creature with a need to find outlet for his energy to use his ability and to express his personality.

The specific type of activity that man engages in according to Mitchell and Mason (1972) is influenced by such factors as his physiological and anatomical structure, his physical fitness level, his environment, his family and his social background. Mitchell and Mason further observed that the wishes of man were influential in shaping tourists attitude and habits.

Based on the assertion by Elmer and Bernard (1973) that man engages in tourism for self-expression, it is therefore expedient that tourism sites must be developed to satisfy or to meet the needs of the tourists.

Considering the above, there is need to ensure that tourism potentials in Owo (the study area) are improved in terms of environmental landscaping, designing and beautification with the provision of necessary facilities and services so as to ensure maximum satisfaction for the visiting tourists.

These features and the provision of efficient transportation infrastructure are the inertia that could enhance the self-expression drive of potential tourists.

3.2 Literature Review

Tourism globally has been viewed by different authors, scholars and organizations from various angles which reflect individual professional background. Like a circle, a tour represents a journey in that it is a round-trip. That is, the act of leaving and then returning to the original starting point. The one who takes such a journey can be regarded as a tourist.

The tourist sector has over the years grown to become a major industry with significant socio-economic and environmental consequences. According to world tourism organization (WTO, 1995) about 25 million people crossed international boundaries for tourism purposes and generated a receipt of about 2 billion US Dollars in 1950. By the year 2002, the international tourist arrivals rose to 718 million while the corresponding receipt was in excess of 474 billion US Dollars.

Similarly, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) research in (1992) shows that Travel and Tourism was the world's largest industry approaching, 3.5 US dollars trillion in gross product, the leading industrial contributor, producing 6.1% of the world's Gross National Product (GNP) and the leading producer of tax revenue of 303 billion US Dollars. The sector was also estimated to contribute about 7.1 trillion US Dollars in gross output by the year 2006 while total taxes will be in excess of 1.3 trillion US Dollars.

Tourism has become a global leisure activity. The same source observed that in 2010, there were over 940 million international tourist arrivals. This is a growth of 6.6% when compared with 2009 where we had 880 million with 4%. The source further asserted that international tourism receipts grew to 19 billion US Dollars (Euro 693 million) in 2010, corresponding to an increase in real terms of 4.7%.

Tourism according to World Tourism Organization in the year 2010 is vital for many counties such as France, Egypt, Greece, Lebanon, Israel, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Thailand, the Bahamas, Fiji, Maldives, Philippines and the Seychelles. The same source observed that tourism brings in large amounts of income in payment for goods and services contributing an estimated 5% to the world Gross Domestic Product (GPD) and creates opportunities for employment in the service industries associated with tourism. These service industries include transportation services such as airlines, cruise ship and taxi cabs; hospitality services such as accommodation including hostels and resorts; and entertainment venues such as amusement parks, casinos, music venues and theatres.

Adejuwon (1993) sees tourism as the movement of a person or group of persons from his/her abode to a place far or near for the purpose of leisure. This movement according to him could be for the purpose of relaxation, sight-seeing or other forms of recreation. Pocock (1991) gives detail account of how developed countries have been marketing their tourism attractions to the world. He pointed out that a place deserted of natural endowment could be better enriched in tourism with well-developed peculiarities. Examples are the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, the liberty status in New York City, voice of America in Washington D.C. and a number of famous sky scrapers in Chicago all in USA. London is notable for the popular London Tower, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace etc.

In the same perception, Hohuhotz (1994) in his research work pointed out how tourism industries in developed countries are seen beyond investment and development of physical natural spot. Emphases are being made towards investing and marketing of the cultures, religious and work of arts of the people. He made reference to China on how culture is considered as a living and dynamic product which can be packaged to tourists.

Olomo (1993) considered tourism potentials as a veritable tool, for salvaging the socio-economic status of a nation. He said all would be variety if there is no concrete information both in verbal and visual forms on such sites of attraction. He further said information is vital to a successful programme on tourism development and promotion and that the mental images of prospective tourists about facilities and condition available in tourism destination could only be achieved through information. He therefore submitted that more efforts should be intensified in the publicity of all the tourism potentials.

Onwofonwan, et al (1998) viewed tourism as an important component of modern economies, creating in several countries high net returns. Thus, any nation wanting to diversify its economic base, make efforts to access the potential of natural resources available for tourism and other uses.

Omotosho (2005) asserted that there is no point attracting visitors to tourist centres when there is nothing to show them, he stressed that a tourist centre must possess all facilities that will make Life pleasant for the visitors

Olugbamila (2008) while studying tourism potentials in Nigeria was of the opinion that poor management hindered the development of the tourism industry. He went further that this is evident in the nuclear definition of the role of the three tiers of government and the private sector on the development of tourism. The local government which should have been mandated to cater for local tourism activities was totally neglected. Besides where the federal government decided to collaborate with the state government in the development of certain centres, there has been some bickering and uncoordinated efforts thus leading to conflict and resource mismanagement

In view of the above literatures on tourism, this research work stands a better chance of touching or covering areas yet to be covered in studies on tourism research.

4.0 Methodology

This study made use of purposive sampling method because the respondents were drawn from the central area of Owo township. This is because the central area is where the tourism infrastructure and tourism activities are located. The central area was therefore divided the traditional four Quarters. These are the quarters directly abutting *Owo Museum* and the king's palace popularly called *Olowo Palace*. These four quarters are *Iloro Ehinogbe*, *Idimepen* and *Igboroko*. The study therefore draws its samples from the total number of residential buildings in the four quarters mentioned above. The total number of buildings in the four quarters constituting the central area is 1,521 (Field survey, 2012). This formed the sampling frame for the study. The sampling size was drawn from a total of 1,521 buildings in the core area. This is distributed in the table below:

Based on the total number of buildings in these quarters as shown in table 1, 10% was taken as sampling size, (i.e. 10% of 1,521). This amounted to 152. As a result of this, 152 questionnaires were administered for the study. These were targeted on the household heads. So, one household head was interviewed in every residential building. Also, a questionnaire was administered to the, management of the museum. A systematic random sampling method was employed in administering questionnaire to respondents in the study area. The sampling interval was 10, meaning that every 10th building in each of the quarters was selected for interview. The starting point was determined through simple random sampling, balloting was done to avoid bias and to ensure that each house have equal chance of being selected for interview.

5.0 Major Findings and Discussion

5.1 Discussion of Findings

This aspect can be referred to as the discussion of the relevant data collection or data analysis to derive a meaningful conclusion towards the area of research study. The data will be analysis under this heading in other to avoid ambiguity and be straight forward to the scope of study.

From table 2, 87% of the respondents responded that level of patronage of tourism potentials in Owo is high, 38% responded that the level of patronage of tourism potentials is moderate, while 27% responded that the level of patronage of tourism potentials is low. It is clear from this table that the level of patronage of tourism potentials in Owo is high and it therefore has positive impact on the people's socio economic lives.

Table 3 shows that out of the 152 questionnaires administered, 10.7% of the respondent responded that they do patronize tourism activities in Owo weekly, 13.1% responded that they do patronize tourism activities in Owo

monthly, 23.6% of the respondent responded that they do patronize tourism activities in Owo yearly, while 52.6% of the respondent responded that they do patronize tourism activities in Owo during festivals. This indicates that people patronize tourism activities mostly whenever there is Igogo or Ero festival.

5.2 Tourism Potentials in Owo

Tourism potentials in Nigeria and Ondo State had been earlier discussed, but it is necessary to examine tourism potentials at the local level. The tourism potentials that abound in Owo community (the study area) are Owo museum, Igogo festival and Ero festival. These potentials are discussed one after the other as follows:

5.2.1 Owo Museum: Owo museum is a museum in Owo, Ondo state, Nigeria. The museum was founded in 1968 to accommodate the antiquities which were formerly in the Olowo palace. The museum contains significant archeological artifacts and ethnographic materials discovered in and around Owo. The Owo site was first excavated in 1969 -1971 by Ekpo Eyo under the auspices of the department of Antiquities of the government of Nigeria. Due to the location of Owo (between the two famous art centres of Ife and Benin) the site reflects the artistic traditions of Ile-Ife and Benin kingdoms. Important discoveries include terracotta sculptures dating from 15 century. Despite the fact that the Owo museum is being managed by the Federal Government of Nigeria, findings show that the museum is still battling with some problems, these include lack of awareness, lack of support by both the local and state governments and inadequate preparation on the side of the organizers.

Findings also show that there are problems being faced by this museum. The problems include poor maintenance, lack of spaces to keep things, inadequate water supply and physical deterioration. Others are lack of awareness and poor location of the museum. The management of the museum on their part agreed that the volume of patronage of the museum was relatively low (between 101-150 people per month). This is due to the poor marketing of the museum. This shows that the government must do something urgently to save the life of the museum. The picture below (plate I) shows the museum.

5.2.2 Igogo Festival

Igogo festival is a festival attracting population from within and outside Nigeria to Owo whenever it is being celebrated. The ritual performances of Igogo are directed toward spiritual sanctification while the greater part of the festival is geared towards entertainment. The festival is conducted once in a year, usually comes up in the month of September.

Osewa (2005) described Igogo as being in existence for six hundred years. Story had it that this king (Olowo) fell in love with *Orensen*, a very beautiful woman, unfortunately for the king, the woman was a goddess who could not live with human being. He further explains the exciting psychology behind the festival as a story that should be told in other to attract tourist.

It was also observed by this study that Igogo is an annual festival in Owo which lasts a total of 17 days featuring a number of ceremonies including the blessing and release of new yams. During the period of celebration, drumming is banned in Owo town, instead, metal gongs (Agogo) are used. This was where the name "Igogo" was coined. The Olowo, who during the festival usually dress in coral beaded crown, plaits his hair like a woman. The Olowo leads his people including the chief priest and male youths from Iloro quarters to dance round the whole town.

Igogo festival is usually started for 19th of September and ended on the 8th of October annually The picture below (Plate II) shows dancers and men carrying pot on their head and men with gongons (Agogo) during Igogo festival in Owo and Plate III shows the picture of Olowo and the Priests.

5.2.3 Ero Festival

Ero festival in Owo is an aged group festival which is unique in nature. It simply connotes retirement from active service. But it is only meant for the male child in Owo, who have attained the position of '*Ighare*' in the community (Osinnuwa, 2011). Ighare status is meant for sons of Owo who have reached the Age of 60 and above.

According to the oral interview conducted with some of the participants, the festival comes up regularly every 7 years, but whenever the king, that is, the Olowo is to participate in the ceremony, additional two years must be added in order to honor the king. The celebrants jubilated to the Oba's palace while the Oba presented different gifts to the participants and blessed them while dancing with them.

As observed by this study, the following are the community group who participated in Ero festival for the year 2011. They are *Iloro, Ijebu, Ehinogbe, Isaipen, Omo-Lowos* and *Ora*. Ero festival started on the 8th of October and ended on the 15 of October, 2011. The picture below shows the participants of Ero festival in Owo, Nigeria.

According to findings of this study, people patronize tourism resources mostly whenever there is Igogo and Ero festival. Results further show that the level of patronage of tourism potentials in Owo is slightly above average (57.2%) and it was found that patronage contributes positively to the socio-economic lives of the people in that there were a lot to be bought and sold during these periods. Lots of visitors were seen. Hotels in the town were usually fully booked. Business atmosphere was always active..

6.0 Summary of Discussion

The research findings have revealed that people's perception of tourism has been very shallow in Owo local government. During an interview with the inhabitants of Owo, 60% of the respondents responded that they do not have passion for tourism while 40% of the respondents indicated that they have passion for tourism. Findings also showed that people's perception on tourism is related to their income, level of education and awareness. Those earning huge amount of money or those that are economically buoyant constitute the largest percentage of tourists. Level of education and awareness are indisputable in tourism. For instance, the educated ones have awareness; this constitutes 95% of the tourists while the non-educated ones were only 5%.

Findings further revealed that Owo museum is associated with the problems of inadequate water supply, unorganized parking space, physical deterioration of the museum, poor management, lack of accommodation and absence of relaxation centres for tourists and inadequate office accommodation for staff among others. Another finding is that the volume of patronage to Owo museum per month is between 101-150 people. This is relatively low patronage. This is due to the poor and inefficient marketing of these resources.

This study has been able to point out that tourism, to a considerable level has improved the economy of Owo Community in the areas of boosting the income of traders in Owo, most especially during tourists' visits to the museum and during Igogo and Ero festivals. However, tourism potentials in Owo can further be enhanced by the recommendations of this paper as put forward below.

7.0 Recommendation

These aspects are divided into three (3) sections. Recommendations are based on Owo museum, Igogo festival and Ero festival. Therefore, the following recommendations are put forward.

7.1. Owo Museum

- The federal government of Nigeria should ensure that this museum is developed to meet national and international standard.
- Water supply should be made adequate for the consumption of tourists to the museum.
- Accommodation should be made available for the tourists. If this is provided within the museum, it will generate income to the purse of the management of the museum, tourists mind will be at rest that accommodation is available for them within the museum and there will be no need of looking for hotel accommodation in the city.
- Office accommodation should be made adequate for the staff of the museum for comfort ability and smooth running of the museum.
- Provision should also be made for an organized parking space at the museum.
- The federal government should also ensure that the museum is renovated and beautified for the people to know that it exists if it cannot be relocated from where it is presently. The museum is located inside the compound of "Olowo of Owo".
- Provision should be made for relaxation centre around the museum.
- Awareness capable of attracting tourists from near and far should be duly created. Like creation of website displaying the facilities available, radio and television advertisement, pasting of postal and installation of the bill boards at strategic junctions or roads that enter Owo.

- The public should be enlightened through the creation of public enlightenment programme on the importance and benefits of tourism.
- In order to ensure efficient management of the museum, the federal government should train personnel.

7.2. *Igogo Festival*

- The organizers of Igogo festival should create awareness whenever the festival draws near. Apart from radio and television announcement/advertisement, postal or bill boards should be installed at every junction or roads that enter Owo.
- More activities that will attract tourists nationally and globally should be introduced along with the festival. These should include marathon race, football matches, relay race etc.
- Owo local government should partner with the organizers of Igogo festival in order to improve the various activities of the festival to meet both national and international standards.

7.3. *Ero Festival*

- Since the festival usually comes up every 7 years, it should be celebrated in a mega form. The organizers of this festival should create awareness on radio and television stations in Nigeria. Awareness should also be created on the internet, so that foreign tourists will come and witness the festival.
- Sporting activities like football matches, marathon race, relay race, long jump etc should be organized in the name of the festival.
- The local government of Owo should render full support to the organizers of this festival.
- Private sectors should also render support or collaborate with the organizers of this festival in order to promote it.

8.0 Conclusion

This research work has assessed the tourism potentials in Owo Community in Owo local government area of Ondo State, Nigeria. It is observed that tourism potentials in Owo are developing at a very slow rate. Owo local government can boast of its tourism potentials if they are well developed and efficiently managed. If this is done, it will attract tourist from all over the country and the diaspora world. It will as well catalyze and boost the economy of Owo Community and the income generation of the people of Owo would improve. It will equally provide employment for the unemployed and the country will benefit directly from this, particularly in the area of wealth creation, employment, income generation and poverty alleviation. The planning and development of this sector, not only at local or community level, but also at national level will be a right step in the right direction by all tiers of govern

Table 1: Total number of buildings in the central area of Owo

Quarter	No of Buildings
Idimepen	369
Ehinogbe	452
Iloro	427
Igboroko	273
Total	1,521

Source: Field survey, 2012.

Table 2: Level of patronage of tourism potentials in Owo

S/N	Level of patronage	Frequency	%
1	High	87	57.2
2	Moderate	38	25.0
3	Low	27	17.8
Total		152	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012.

Table 3: Regularity of patronage of tourism activities

S/N	Regularly Patronized	Frequency	%
1	Daily	-	-
2	Weekly	12	10.7
3	Monthly	20	13.1
4	Yearly	40	23.6
5	During festivals	80	52.6
Total		152	100

Source: Field survey, 2012.



Plate 1: Showing Owo Museum



Plate II: Showing Dancers igogo festival in owo



Plate III: Olowo and the priests



Plate IV: Participants of Ero festival in Owo.

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