

TOURISM POTENTIALS: A TOOL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has been defined in various ways but could be seen as a relationship and phenomena, arising out of the journeys and temporary stay of people traveling. Primarily for leisure or recreational purposes. Data for this study were collected from primary sources. This was done through personal observation and the administration of questionnaire. A total number of six hundred (600) questionnaires were administered on categories of respondents in the study area. Descriptive statistical data analysis was adopted using frequency table. Results from this study revealed that tourism impacts on the environment are economic, socio-cultural, educational, infrastructural and environmental betterment. Some of the cultural tourism in Ekiti State are losunta and Orole Festivals, lkere-Ekiti, Orogbo Festival, Erimope-Ekiti, Agan Festival Erimope-Ekiti, Lauremo Ceremony Ado-Ekiti, Alafanyo Ceremony, Ado-Ekiti, Udiroko Festival Ado-Ekiti. This study therefore recommends that there is need for government at all levels in the state, as well as investors to seek innovative ways by which undeveloped tourism potentials in the study area can be developed and put to use.

KEYWORDS: Potentials, Tourism, Problems, and Development.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The various governments at different times have tried to develop tourism in Nigeria by providing infrastructure, facilities i.e. economic and social for the ever-increasing population. Also by providing facilities for rural areas to make them comfortable, as opposed to the present situation where rural-urban migration is the order of the day. Also, by the development of information gathering, maintenance and evaluation of existing infrastructural facilities, so as to determine the inadequacy, shortcomings and areas requiring urgent attention and development.

To achieve all these, policies which will operate at National, state and local government levels are made to deal with demographic and economic aspects and the distribution of population respectively. At the National level, it is expected that apart from helping the state to perform its roles. National policies strives to provide strong incentives to promote industrial growth in other parts of the country especially by establishing labour intensive industries in other regional centre such as state capitals.

In an effort to improve the level of social and economic prosperity, developing countries in general and African countries in particular have in recent times been looking at tourism as an economic tool for regional development, whose potential must be tapped, developed and managed. For many of the developing countries in the world, tourism has been a major input to their development process (Tourism seminar organized in Nigeria, 2001). Although development is a concept, which has many meanings, for most countries, it is seen, as been essentially a measure of economic progress. As such development indications centers or changes in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Product (GNP), or per capita income. Although, these concepts are usually quite difficult to quantify, especially in the developing countries as statistical data is scarce and usually unreliable.

However, tourism is a great industry to be tapped because the oil industry which is taking about 90% of the nations income and the fluctuating fortune of the oil industries with its adverse consequence on the nation's foreign exchange earning had more than ever before necessitated the need for alternative source of revenue of the nation, which would go a long way in the development of many regions. Hence, the federal and state government should show commitment towards the development and management of

tourism, which should therefore be seen as a pressing need to diversify the revenue generation base of the country.

Tourism has been defined in various ways but could be seen as a relationship and phenomena, arising out of the journeys and temporary stay of people traveling. Primarily for leisure or recreational purposes.

The duration of these stay many vary. For statistical purpose, a four night (4) minimum is commonly accepted for domestic tourism but stays of only twenty-four hours are universally recognized in the case of international tourism (Gun, 1979). Tourism primarily involves people, who are visiting a particular place for sight seeing, enjoying beautiful scenery, and seeing interesting people, enjoying historical and geographical sources of attractions, taking vacation and having good time. They may spend their time engaging in various activities such as sports, singing and taking rides, touring and reading or simply enjoying the environment.

However, in an attempt to fully talk about what tourism is or to define tourism and its scope, it is good to consider the various groups that participate in and are affected by the industry.

There are three (3) identified.

1. The tourist: The tourist seeks for various physics of physical experiences and satisfaction the natural of these will largely determine the destination chosen and the activities enjoyed.
2. The government of the community or Area: government in tourists, as wealth factor in the economy of their jurisdiction. Their perspectives are related to the income their citizen earns from the business. Government also considers the foreign exchange receipt from international tourism as well as Tax Receipt Collected from tourism expenditure, either directly or indirectly.
3. The host community: Local people usually see tourism as a cultural and employment factor of importance to this group for example, is the effect of the interaction between large, number of international visitors and residents. This effect may be beneficial or harmful or both.

Afolabi (1992) identified two categories of tourists:

1. The first group is said to comprise of those who have particular places to visit. The group is said to comprise of those who have particular places to visit. The group includes students who are either on excursion on fieldwork, school leavers looking for jobs, workers travelling around to explore the possibility of changing their jobs, business men on transaction trips, contractors going about to negotiate works and those travelers visiting and relatives. The decision to travel, where to go is to a greater or lesser extent outside their control. They are less influenced by price or distance. Their demand for travel is relating price inelastic i.e. they are not susceptible to price inducement.

CULTURAL TOURISM RESOURCES IN EKITI STATE

1. Olosunta and Orole Festivals, Ikere-Ekiti
 1. Orogbo Festival, Erimope-Ekiti
 2. Agan Festival, Erimope-Ekiti
 3. Lauremo Ceremony, Ado-Ekiti
 4. Alafanyo Cermony, Ado-Ekiti
 5. Udiroko Festival, Ado-Ekiti
 6. Egbibun lakes, Ayetoro-Ekiti
 7. Traditional Dances all over the state
 8. Ipole Iloro Water falls, Ipole-Ekiti
 9. Esa-cave-Iyn-Ekiti
 10. Ijesu festival all over Ekiti State
 11. Ina Ogun-Ira, Ira-Ekiti
 12. Ogun festival, all over the state
 13. Pottery works in Isan Ekiti
 14. Mat wearing in Ogotun and Ipoti Ekiti

15. Various archeological and historical sites
16. Erin Ayonigba River, Festival, Erinijyan Ekiti
17. Opa Orere or Opa Aje Ceremony, Emure Ekiti
18. New Yam Festival, all over the state
19. Epa Festival, Ishan Ekiti.

Source: Bankole and Afolabi (2010)

Tourism Attraction Centres

Some of the tourism attraction centres in Ekiti state are Ikogosi warm spring, Erin Ayonigba River, Olosunta and Oroole hills, Oguru rock, cave and ancestral staff, Egbigbu Inland Lake, Arinta water fall, Ipole natural vegetation, Efon Range of hills, which are all physical in nature.

1.2 GENERAL OBJECTIVE AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF STUDY.

The general objective of this study is to examine the environmental mechanism that boost tourism potentials as impetus to the development of Ekiti State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives were:

- i. To examine the problems militating against tourism potentials on the development of Ekiti state.
- ii. To determine socio-economic impact of tourism potentials on the development of Ekiti State.
- iii. To investigate the level of harnessing tourism potentials for the development of Ekiti State.
- iv. To recommend appropriate remedial measures on the factors militating against tourism potentials in the development of Ekiti State.

1.3 THE STUDY AREA

Ekiti state was created in 1996, carved out of the old Ondo state. The creation of Ekiti state on the 1st of October, 1996, and the naming of Ado-Ekiti as its administrative headquarters has witnessed rapid population growth and urbanization. (www.ekitigov.ng (2011) With the growth rate of 2.5% per annum, the projected population for Ekiti state can be put at in 2006. However, the provisional census figure of Ado-Ekiti released by the National Population Commission (NPC) is (National Population Commission, NPC, 2009).

The relief of Ado-Ekiti consists of undulating plains. The highest contour line of 540m above sea level is found around the North-eastern limit of the town.

Ekiti state is endowed with tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons, which can be described as Koppen's climate (Adebayo, 1993). Ado Ekiti has a total annual rainfall of about 1400mm with a low coefficient variation of about 30% during the rainfall peak months, and with an average of about 112 rainy days per annum, (Adebayo, 1993).

The soil IN Ekiti state belongs to the rock debris; hydromorphic and ferralitic soil groups (Adeniyi, 1993). The rock debris are usually hard and stone like in character, the soil type is developed on the gmatitic and quartzitic rock units.

The Yoruba tribe dominates the people in Ado-Ekiti. However, there are other ethnic groups such as Ebiras, Igbos, Hausas, Urhobos, Edos, the Tivs and Idonias.

The land use type in Ekiti state are mainly for residential, recreation, tourism, religious, commercial, agriculture, circulation (road), education, socio-economic, infrastructures, local and cottage industries.

1.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK/LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of sustainable Development is applied to this study. The concept of Sustainable Development was propounded by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED in 1987). This concept noted that Sustainable Development is a development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs.

Development involves the purposeful change of the inherently complex environmental system. Consequently, the effect of bad management, are often wide spread both economically, socially and geographically, (Birch, 2007). From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that, tourism centres, social activities, human needs and relaxation are independent. Thus, a systematic analysis or assessment of tourism centres and patronage should be part of the overall planning process, in making developmental decisions, efforts to maintain or improve tourism potential centres and environmental quality should be part of the overall planning process, in making developmental decisions, efforts to maintain or improve tourism centres should be given sufficient weight.

This is the basis of the concept of sustainable development, an ideal first proposed in the eighties by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Rilwani and Osayande, 2001).

In essence, sustainable development is a process of change, in which the exploitation of tourism resources the level of patronage, services and investment. The orientation of technological development and the needs of the people and the environmental system are all in harmony. And as such enhances both the present and future potentials to meet human needs and aspiration.

On the review of literatures, Anthina (1999) stated that tourism development s a dynamic process and is conducted in an ever changing environment, a blend of economic, political, cultural, technological and geographical reality of events. Thus, the central task development opportunities and industrial capabilities, both of which are determined by its external and internal environment respectively.

Seaton (1996) linked tourism resources to the demand and preferences of actual potential tourists. Tourism development aimed to maximize and optimize the overall performance of tourism system, which may be measured in terms of its direct and induced impacts on the economic, social and physical environment.

Cooper (1997) affirmed that tourism is important as non-work activity, and involves accessibility and connectivity to places of tourist interests, and freedom to enjoy such freedom and opportunity include visit attractive centres, festivals, playing, games and sight seeing.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The primary sources of data collection was employed in this research. The primary sources of data collection includes personal observation of tourism potential sites and the administration of six hundred (600) questionnaires on categories of respondents in the study area.

Ekiti state harbours three senatorial Districts, the three senatorial districts, Ekiti Central, Ekiti North and Ekiti South Senatorial Districts were the area of concern. Thus, in Ekiti Central Senatorial Districts, two local Government Areas were purposely selected Ado Local Government Area and Ekiti West Local Government Area. In Ekiti North Senatorial District, two Local Government Areas were equally selected, Ikole Local Government and Ido-Osi Local Government Area, and in Ekiti South Senatorial District two local government areas were equally selected, Ikere Local Government Area and Emure Local Governmetn Areas, these areas were selected based on the facts that they are areas with high tourism potentials. The questionnaires were then administered on them.

Descriptive statistical method of data analysis was adopted in this research work.

1.6 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Males	266	44.3
Females	334	55.7
Total	600	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011.

Findings from table 1 revealed that 266 (44.3%) of the respondents stated that they are males, while 334 (55.7%) of the respondents at tourism potential sites noted females. This implies that females patronizes tourism potential sites more than males, and as such contributes to more to the state, through tourism in the study area.

Table 2: Purpose of Visit of Respondents.

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage
Recreation/Leisure	520	86.6
Research	80	13.4
Total	600	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011.

Results from table 2, showed that 520 (86.6%) of the respondents noted that their main purpose for visiting tourism potential site is for recreational purpose, while 80(13.4%) of the respondents stated research purpose.

This suggests that majority of people visits tourism potential sites in the study area, majorly for recreational/leisure/pleasure purposes.

Table 3: Tourism Impacts on the Study Area.

Impacts	Frequency	Percentage
Economic	208	34.5
Socio-cultural	152	25.4
Educational	100	16.6
Infrastructural Development	44	7.4
Environmental Improvement/ Dilapidation	96	16
Total	600	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011.

Findings from table 3, revealed that 208 (34.6%) of the subject observed that tourism impacts on the study are is economic contribution, 152(25.4%) noted socio-cultural impact on the development of the study area, 100(16.6%) identified educational impact of tourism potentials, 44(7.4%) of the respondents opined infrastructural improvement, while 96 (16.0%) of the respondents stated that the impact of tourism potentials in the study area is environmental improvement/dilapidation. This indicates that the major impact of tourism potentials on the study area is economic contribution, through revenue and income generation and provision of employment opportunities for the inhabitants.

Table 4: Occupational Distribution of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Students	102	17.0
Civil servants/public servants	200	33.4
Private Personnel	88	14.6
Business Men Women	60	10.0
Self employed	150	25.0
Total	600	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011.

Results from table 4 occupation distribution of respondents, 102(17.0%) of the respondents stated that they are students, 200 (33.3%) noted civil servants, 60 (10.0%) stated Business men/women, while 150 (25.0%) identified themselves as employer and 88(14.6%) stated private personnel. This indicates that Ekiti state is more of civil servant/public servants and as such, civil servants in the state patronizes tourism potential sites to refresh themselves after a hard work day.

It was discovered in this research work that tourism development in the study area is at a slow rate, owing to the fact that some of the potentials are not well managed, while a large area is yet to be harnessed to encourage patronage.

Tourism provides job employment and a source of income generation to people, as well as revenue generation to government, and equally as a source of foreign exchange earning.

Tourism industry in the study area equally contributes to the local economy. As the environment is a basic component of the tourist industries assets.

Tourism industry also projects hosts communities to limelight e.g. Ikegosi Town, is one of the most popular towns in Ekiti state, simply because of its cold and warm spring tourist attraction features.

In Ekiti state, despite the fact that most people are engaged in farming activities, a large proportion of the population are employed at various tourist centres, both skilled and unskilled workers. Some work as tourism professional, others are employed to provide support services for the industry e.g. the restaurateurs, bar owners and traders located within or close to tourist centres.

1.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an urgent need for a viable policy on tourism, which should contain feasible and general development of host regions and the state at large.

Legal framework of the Nigerian Tourism Board (NTB) should be channeled towards its expected functions. At the state level, Ekiti state Tourism Board should not hesitate to explore and imitate current innovations on the development and management of all existing tourist centres in the state.

There is need for government at all levels in the state, as well as investors to seek innovative ways by which undeveloped tourism potentials can be developed and put to use within the state.

Adequate and effective publicity should be carried out within and outside the state, showcasing to the world, all the tourism potentials in order to boost the patronage of tourism potential centres in the study area.

Accessibility should be provided adequately in tourism potential centres by government at all levels and investors to encourage and maximize the exploration and development of tourism potentials e.g. Ipole Iloro Waterfall, Egbigbun lake and other cultural tourism in Ekiti State.

1.8 CONCLUSION

The importance of tourism all over the world, no doubt is great. It generates high level of revenue to the government, income to the people, employment opportunities, it contributes to local economies, it stimulates infrastructural development, and more importantly, it is environment friendly. These potentials are yet to be appreciated in Nigeria generally and Ekiti state in particular. This may be attributed to low level of incompetency of tourism officials, or due to low level of information that is known about the attributes of tourism.

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