

# Spatial Distribution of Natural Tourism Potentials and Rural Development of Host Communities in Some Selected Areas of Ekiti State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study examined the spatial distribution of natural tourism potentials and rural development of host communities in some selected Areas of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Natural tourism potentials gives the tourism industry great respect among other industries in Ekiti State, as well as a major concern to business men and women, tourists, government officials, and the general public. Data for this study were collected from personal survey and the random administration of one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires on respondents in the study area. Results from this study showed that tourists vary frequently, visit the tourists' potential sites, due to a large number of tourists' attraction sites in the area. This study recommended that, there is need for improvement of tourists' potential sites in the study area. This study will be of great help to tourists, environmentalists', researchers, planners and policy makers in the tourism industry, as well as boost the economy of Ekiti State and in-turn impact positively on the development of the State.

**Keywords:** Communities, Ekiti State, Natural Tourism Sites, Spatial Distribution.

## 1.1 Introduction / Background to the Study

Tourism potentials are located in our rural communities and as such, the rural communities are well endowed with these natural tourism potentials. The rural areas contribute significantly to our national development in terms of human and material resources most especially in the area of tourism and recreation activities (Bankole & Afolabi, 2010). 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 participates in and are affected by the industry. According to Ekiti State Tourism Board (2001), these are categorized into three major areas;

- a. **The Tourism:** The tourists seek for various physical experiences and satisfactions. The nature of these will largely determine the destinations chosen and the activities enjoyed by the players in the field.
- b. **The Government of the Community:** The perception of the Government here is 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.
- c. **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 members of international visitors and residents. This effect may be beneficial or harmful or both.

Cooper, et al. (2008) opined that tourism is important as non-work activities and involves accessibility and connectivity to places of tourist interest and freedom to enjoy such freedom and opportunity include visiting attraction centre, festivals, playing games, and sightseeing. Moreover, the contributions of tourism are felt from tourism industrial as well as region of where the industries of potentials are located. Robinson (1996) classified resorts into four major groupings. These groupings are:

- i. Seaside resorts
- ii. Scenic resorts
- iii. Water places
- iv. Historic –cultural centre

He also highlighted the socio-economic importance of tourism and concluded that, it will be clear that tourism could be a valuable source of income of the under-developed countries, that are desperately in short of capital for their investment “And some countries such as Morocco, Barbados, Indonesia, U.S.A, Canada, France, and United Kingdom are appreciating the importance of tourism as source of income and especially of foreign exchange at developing their tourist potentials as quickly as possible.

To this study, tourism is considered to be one of the industries capable of generating money and often a good number of employment opportunities for the people. In other words, it is an integral part of the socio-economic development projects necessary to improve the revenue base of the Ekiti State economy.

Afolabi (1992) identified two categories of tourists. The first group he said comprises 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 or on the field work. School leavers looking for jobs,

workers travelling around to explore the possibility of changing their jobs, businessmen on transaction trips, contractors going about to negotiate works and those travelers visiting friends and relatives.

The decision to travel, where to go is a greater or lesser extending outside their control. They are less influenced by price, transportation, time or distance. Their demand for travel is relating to price inelastic i.e. they are not susceptible to price inducement. Ekiti State is richly endowed with tourism potentials. In Ekiti State, the concept of Tourism, though developing at a slow pace, is generally being embraced. Therefore, the future of tourism in the state will be bright. If tourism can be well developed and managed, particularly, when facilities on ground are taken into consideration. Although, the standard cannot compete with the operations in the developed part of the world, but there could be improvement on what is presently available if put to appropriate use. The resources should be utilized in such ways that generations yet unborn would benefit and make use of it while still in effectiveness in future i.e. sustainability.

## 1.2 Aim and Objectives of Study

The main aim of this study is to find-out the spatial distribution of tourism resources and how it has helped in developing the host communities.

The main aim is to be achieved through the following specific objectives:

- i. to identify the locations of these natural tourism resources.
- ii. to find out the level of patronage of the tourism resources
- iii. to identify the impact of these resources on the host communities.
- iv. to find-out the problems militating against the development of tourism sites.
- v. to identify how the people can effectively participate in the development of the natural tourism resources in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

## 1.3 The Study Area.

### (a) Location and Boundary

Ekiti is located in the Tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons (Bankole, 2006). The state is located between longitude  $4^{\circ}45'$  to  $5^{\circ}45'$  East of the Greenwich meridian and on latitude  $7^{\circ}15'$  to  $8^{\circ}5'$  North of the equator. It shares boundaries with Kwara State in the North, Kogi State in the North East, Osun State in the West and Ondo State in the South and South East. (See figure 1.1 and fig 1.2 and 1.3 for the location of the sampled local government and villages. The sampled local governments include Ado, Ido-osi Ekiti, Ekiti South West, Ikere, Oye, Irepodun/Ifelodun and Emure. The sampled towns with in these local government areas are, Ado, Aiyetoro, Okemesi, Igbara Odo, Ikogosi, Ipole-Iloro, Ikere, Ilupeju and Emure, Aiyetoro, Igede and Iyin.

### (b) Topography

The state is an upland area. It is underlain by metamorphic rocks of basement complex rocks. These rocks are found in Ado, Eyio, Erimope, Ikere, Efon and Okemesi just to mention a few. The terrain of Ekiti are generally undulating. The nature of the topography is generally responsible for the meandering nature of the roads and other engineering purposes.

### (c) Climate and Vegetation

The State falls with the double maxima of rainfalls. It has two distinctive seasons. The raining season commences from April to October while the dry seasons is from November to March. The temperature varies from between  $21^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $28^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The heavy rainfall in the state is responsible for the tropical rainforest in the southern part while the northern region is dominated by the guinea savanna. Trees such as Obeche, mahogany, Iroko, Afra etc are commonly found in the State.

## 1.4. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review.

The Theory of Butler 1975 was applied to this study. This study is based on the theory, explained in Mason (2008). He explained that this model appeared in 1980 and he did not only acknowledge that his ideas were linked to earlier theories, but he also indicated that they were based on business/marketing concepts of product life cycle. The product life cycle is a theory in which sales of a new product are seen to slowly grow and then experience a period of rapid growth, before stabilizing and subsequently declining. When applied to tourism destinations, the model suggested that resorts develop and change over time and there are a number of linked stages: which are: During these stages, a tourism industry develops and the destination has an increasing number of tourists.

Ukpanah (1999) sees tourism as a metaphor for wealth creation as different from money creation; tourism will create wealth because it requires creativity ability to prove cash in terms of culture. It is not admonishing asset like oil so long man will express himself as a cultural being tourism will continue to grow. Tourism is becoming an important industrial and commercial section of Nigeria.

Antonia (1999) stated that tourism development is a dynamic process and is conducted in an ever changing environment, a blend of economic, political, cultural, technological and geographical realities of events.

The central task of Development is to keep fit between the development opportunities and industrial capabilities, both of which are determined by its external and internal environment respectively.

## 1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data for this study were from primary sources, which were personal survey and the administration of questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed in two forms: Open ended and closed ended questions. A total number of one hundred and fifty (150) copies of the questionnaires were randomly administered to source for information from residents of in the study area. The questionnaires were randomly administered on the residents of the area. One hundred percent (100%) response rate was achieved in the retrieval of the questionnaires administered. While the personal survey method was used in knowing, if the tourists' sites were well developed and attractive to encourage great inflow of tourists in the study area. Descriptive method of data analysis using frequency table and percentages was adopted to analyze the data.

## 1.6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Visitation to Tourism Sites

The opinions of the people were sought on how regular they visit the tourism sites in their area, see table 1. Generally speaking, 40 of the respondents representing 26.7% of the inhabitants signified that they have been to tourism sites, one way or the other. Another 70 respondents representing 46.7% had visited the sites 40 respondents representing 26% have never in their life visited tourism sites. The implication of this analysis therefore suggests that, the people are not going for recreation or tourism purposely going outside their homes for relaxation.

### Impact of Tourism

The inhabitants of the study area were asked to comment on the impacts they have so far derived from the potentials they have in their villages and their opinions were identified on village basis as well as their general perception.

As presented on the table 2, the respondents representing 21.3% indicated that they have benefitted economically in terms of the sales they made to the visitors in their community. These people who made this comments were respondents from Ikogosi, Ipole Iloro, Efon etc and of course most of the respondents were females, who engaged in trading activities. Another 39 respondents representing 26% agreed they have gained socially by way of interaction with tourists coming into their villages. In the area of physical development, 16 respondents representing 10.7% believed that, their communities had been transformed in terms of physical infrastructural provision in the area of roads rehabilitation and construction. While only 2 or 1.3% of the sample opinion asserted they have gained socially. A sizeable no of respondents totaling 61 representing 40.7% argued that they have not gained or benefited from these resources. The general opinion here therefore suggests that the bulk of the people have not seen the positive contribution of tourism to their life in other words according to the information on table 4.9 on the rating of tourism activities in Ekiti State it has not been a bed of roses at all for the inhabitants.

### Benefits Derived from Tourism Potentials

It was observed in table 4, that the people have benefitted immensely from tourism resources available in their community. It was discovered that 51 respondents representing 34% argued that tourism is capable of bringing the sons and daughters of host communities together. Another group of respondents 26 of them representing 17.3% asserted that they have benefitted economically from sales of goods and services to tourists. Furthermore, 26 respondents representing 17.3% were of the opinion, that tourism potentials own the task of transforming the entire commodities through various projects that may be initiated for their villages. In addition, 11 of the respondents (7.3%) could equally enhanced project development. 36 of the sampled opinions (24%) argued in favour of promoting unity among the inhabitants, if well harnessed and managed.

### Participation in Natural Tourism Development

The opinions of the respondents were sought on the levels of participation of groups and individual in the host communities. The overall responses were complied thus, 34 respondents (22.6%) argued that, through government active participation, a lot of tourism activities can be done if the government actually play its role very well. Only 1 or (0.7% respondents mentioned stakeholders participation. In like manner, only 1 or (0.7%) opinions believed in community participation. while 14 representing 76% asserted that both the government, stakeholders and the people are capable of developing tourism sites and location in any area they may be.

### The Natural Tourism Potentials in Ekiti State.

In view of the reconnaissance, survey conducted and the actual field work embarked upon coupled with the interaction with various communities in the study area, the available potentials were identified. Natural Tourism potentials in Ekiti State are:

Potentials	Town/Villages
Arinta water fall/kosegbe stone	Ipole Iloro
Eri Ayangba sacred fish river	Erinjiyan
Orole & Olosunta hillos	Ikere
Ikogos/Warms & cold springs	Ikogosi
Egbigbin Lakes	Aiyetoro
Olumirin Water-falls, Efon bills	Efon Alaaye
Agbona Hills	Okemesi
Elemi river	Igede
Esa caves	Iyin
Opa Aje	Emure
Oroke-Ewo hills	Ilupeju
Olota Ajo/Okeyinmi	Ado-Ekiti
Osun Agbete Swamp	Igbara odo

Source: Ekiti State Tourism Board, Ado-Ekiti and Field Survey, 2012.

The spatial distribution of these resources was provided in fig 1.3 under the study area. Although there are other natural potentials within the state, but this study focuses only the one presented in table 4.9. All these locations were visited and the photographs were taken to support the existence and locations of these resource.

### 1.7. Recommendations

In view of the findings in this work, the following recommendations were put forward for both the people and government of Ekiti State.

The government should take the issue of publicity more seriously to allow people know the activities of government so that they can be well informed at any times when programmes are being executed. Again, the government needs to give tourism education for the people to let them know the importance of recreation and tourism as it is useful to their lives and well being.

It is recommended that the participation of people is very important to any project being executed in their environment. Participation of the people at every stage of project execution is important as they feel the impact more when they participate. It is further recommended that the issue of finding should be addressed so that more tourism sites and location can be discovered and developed to a good standard.

The programme of road construction and rehabilitation by the government should continue to make all the rural communities where natural tourism and found to be more accessible. Ekiti State tourism board should be more active by discovery new locations of sites and attractions and make the board to become a full Ministry of Culture and Tourism to employ more people.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the existing natural tourism sites should be better developed in order to bring in more tourists to the state that is to reduce the low level of patronage being witnessed presently.

The host communities are to cooperate with the government in other to bring about success to any work being carried out of the government. It is also recommended that the private organizations can be brought to the state to help develop some of the tourism potentials we have in the state because the government alone cannot do everything for the people.

Some of the sites have not been managed effectively so a lot of work needs to be done to employ more competent people to work in the tourism board who will be capable of harnessing the tourism potentials of the state together for better performances.

Finally, the water from the Ipole-Iloro water-falls can be dammed to provide a regular supply of drinkable water for the people of the community since the water from the falls is constant throughout the year round.

### 1.8 Conclusion

In Ekiti State, there are vast tourism resources both natural and cultural, that can be tapped for the overall development of the state and in doing this, because these tourism resources are located in the rural areas. If they are well harnessed and develop it will surely contribute to the overall development of the state. It is hoped that if the recommendations proposed are well implemented the tourism potentials available in the state can serve as an additional avenues for employment, income generation as well as the transformation of some of rural communities in Ekiti State.

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