

Infrastructural Development as a Veritable Tool for Tourism Development in Ondo State.

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Abstract

This study is designed to identify some of the major issues related to investment in tourism infrastructure and the expansion of the economic benefits of tourism in Ondo State, Nigeria. Data were collected through the administration of structured questionnaires to randomly selected tourists and indigenes, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), personal observation and Key informant interviews, the data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while secondary data were collected from the Ministry of Tourism and Culture in Akure and the staff at the tourism sites. The results revealed that at the three selected sites (*Idanre Hills, Oke Maria and Owo National Museum and Monument*) 75% of the major tourism supporting infrastructure were not in place. Infrastructure such as power supply, water, entertainment and recreation facilities were lacking at the tourism sites. Other infrastructure such as accommodation, shopping centres, tours and travel agencies were available, but not adequate to meet the tourists' demands. The study identified the need to upgrade some infrastructures within the selected sites, such as; the road and transportation system and that, the provision of modern tourism supporting infrastructure will assist the government to increase the economic benefits of its tourism industry and meet the increased demand as well as environmental regulations.

Keywords: Infrastructure, tourism, economic, tourists, indigenes development.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The goal of infrastructural development in tourism should be to provide safe, secure, enjoyable, hassle-free world class tourism destinations to both domestic and international tourists. There is no doubt that eradicating poverty and increasing the quality of life must be seen as important objectives in any development of tourism infrastructure. While the number of international tourist arrivals continues to grow at a significant rate, and as the amount of money being spent increases, there is still concern that the benefits of tourism do not always go to the regions and communities that most need economic development. Developing countries in particular need to understand the role of investment in tourism infrastructure and how they might ensure that national policies can support sustainable development of tourism infrastructure. Often, this requires the removal of institutional and financial obstacles that make such investment difficult and, at times, counterproductive. There is growing recognition that innovative approaches must be adopted in order to maintain the economic health of many countries, communities and regions. While conditions vary from region to region, tourism has been seen as an important form of economic development. It has also been promoted as a somewhat benign agent of economic and social change, a promulgator of peace through interaction and dialogue, and a service-based industry capable of creating employment and income. The tourism sector according to Cooper et al (2008) is of sufficient economic importance and its impacts upon economies, environments and societies is enough for the subject of tourism to deserve academic consideration. Wall et al (2006) expressed that tourism impact on people by satisfying man's curiosity about the world and his quest for new experiences. According to them, it also serves to maintain and extend commercial and trade links between nations, re-unite families and enable people to fulfil their desire for leisure.

World Tourism Organisation (WTO)(2006) wrote that the tourism industry is a major force in the world economy accounting for over 10 percent of global gross domestic product. The tourism industry generates substantial economic benefits to both host countries and tourists' home countries, especially in developing countries. One of the primary motivations for a region to promote itself as a tourism destination is the expected economic development.

According to the world tourism organization, 698 million people travelled to a foreign country in 2000, spending more US \$ 478 billion. International tourism receipts combined with passenger transport currently total more than US \$ 575 billion – making tourism the world's number one export earner, ahead of automotive products, chemicals, petroleum and food (World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2004).

Ondo state is blessed with many natural resources which can support a viable tourism industry. However the state is yet to fully harness the various potentials imbedded in these resources. The tourism industry is service oriented, as such; supporting services such as adequate security, accessible roads, uninterrupted power supply, well developed telecommunication facilities and attractive environment should be made available to tourists.

When these basic infrastructures are available, the tourism industry will develop as in other states and countries where such infrastructures are readily available. Based on the above background information, the goals of this paper are: (i) to evaluate the state of the tourism infrastructural facilities in the selected towns and (ii) to determine the economic impact of the tourism resource on the study areas.

2.0 THE STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out in three selected towns of Ondo State, namely Idanre, Owo and Oka- Akoko. The three study areas selected for this study are basically the major towns with the presence of developing tourism facilities in the state. The study areas comprise, Idanre Hill in Idanre Town, Owo national Museum and Monument, in Owo Town and Oke Maria (Mary Hill) in Oka Akoko. Idanre Hill lies between longitudes $5^{\circ} 10'N$ and latitude $7^{\circ} 10'$. According to history, the hills served as fortress for the people of Idanre especially during the war. Owo National Museum and Monument lies within longitude $5^{\circ} 53'N$ and latitude $7^{\circ} 27'E$. Owo people are known to be highly skilled in a wide range of craft production and have been able to preserve and promote their material and non- material cultural heritage which has reinforced their sense of identity. Oke Maria is located about 120 km from Akure and lies within longitude $5^{\circ} 76'N$ and latitude $7^{\circ} 45'E$. The hill has extensive landscape with natural altitude. Two sets of data were collected for this study. The first sets of data were collected using well structured multiple – choice questionnaires which were administered to randomly selected tourists and indigenes of the towns. The contents of the questionnaire include questions on demographic information on the tourists and indigenes, awareness of the other tourism sites, mode of transportation to resource site, purpose of visit and economic impact of the tourism resource at the selected study areas. The second sets of data were collected using interview schedules and personal observations. During the interviews, information on available infrastructure at the tourist sites, and frequency of maintenance of the infrastructure were obtained (see table 1).

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Travel and tourism involves the movement of people from one place to the other, therefore transportation is a major tool for tourism development. For development of any destination, adequate and efficient transportation infrastructure and access to tourist destination is of great importance. The destinations which can be reached by efficient transport systems are the ones which receives the maximum number of tourists. Transport, is therefore one of the major components of tourism, since a tourist would need to get to his destination, has to travel (Bhatia 2001). The tourist industry illustrates the primary need for basic infrastructures and social amenities which include good roads, schools, hospitals, electricity, portable water, drainage systems among others. All these are of benefits to the tourists as well as the local population. When tourism is developed in a region, the local infrastructure is enhanced to meet the need of the development in that region. The local community would enjoy the lives significantly through improved infrastructure (Cooper, et al 2008)

The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) (2006) and Wall et al (2006) estimated that travel and tourism provides employment for nearly 220 million people worldwide (that is, one in thirteen workers) and is responsible for over 9% of world capital invested. Tourism is a

4.0 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Simply descriptive analysis comprising of frequency distribution, percentage, pie and bar charts were used in analysing the data obtained from the questionnaires and the interview.

4.1. Awareness

Figure 1 shows the level of awareness of respondents to the availability of other tourism resources apart from the one being visited at the time of the survey. The result revealed that respondents at Owo and Idanre with a percentage of 81.48% and 65.52% respectively were aware of other tourism resources, while only 50% were aware of other tourism resources at Oka –Akoko. This shows that people are generally aware of the various tourism resources in the state. The hill divides Idanre into the old and new settlement. Two chalets of 2 bedrooms each are located on top of the hills at Idanre. There were evidence of electricity and water in operation before but due to negligence the electricity supply has been cut off and water mains damaged. Presently the two chalets at Idanre hill lacks furniture, the locks and doors are damaged and the louvers on the windows broken or missing.

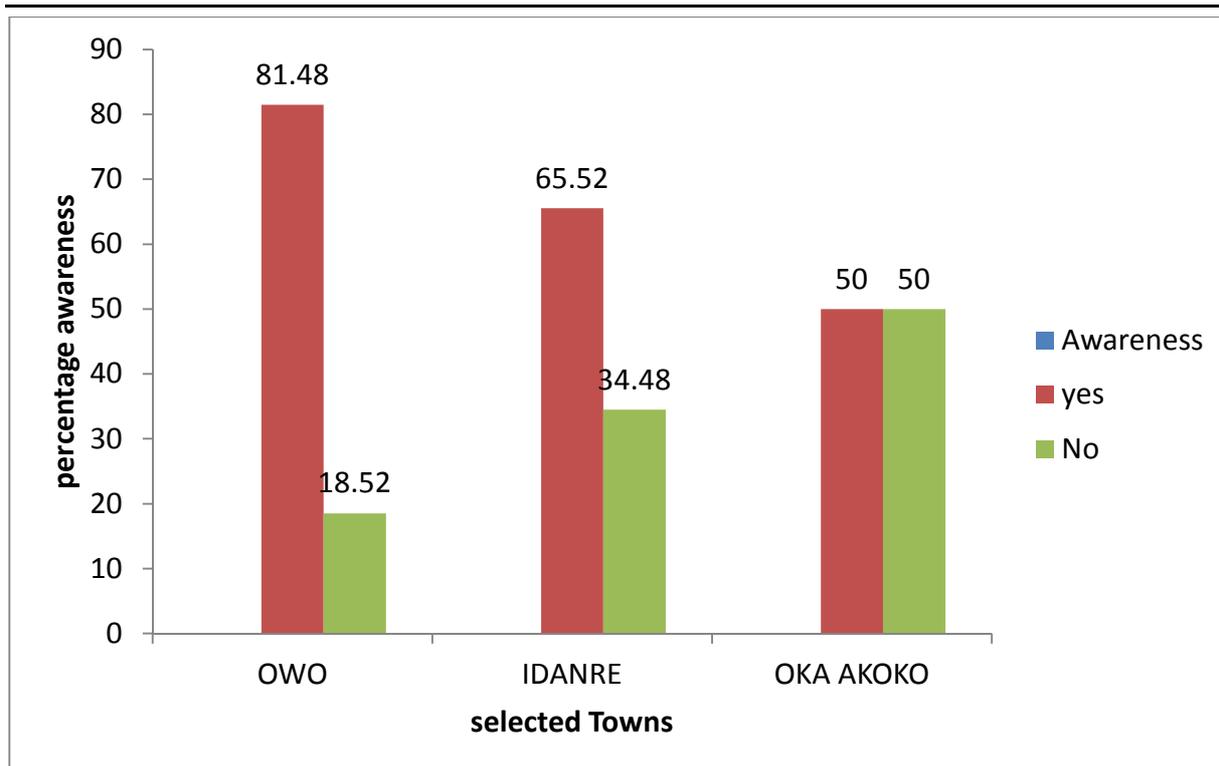


Figure 1: Respondents awareness of Tourism Resources in Ondo state.

4.2 Mode of Transport to Tourist Sites

Figure 2 shows the tourist’s mode of transport to the tourism site. At Idanre and Owo, the percentages of tourists who came with their personal vehicles was higher than those who came with either public transport or motorcycles with 41.38% and 66.67% respectively, while at Oka- Akoko (Oke Maria) the percentage of tourists who came with hired buses was 45.83% and this was higher than the other mode of transportation. The poor condition of road to Oke-Maria at Akoko was partly responsible for low patronage and the use of personal vehicles to the tourist sites (see plate 1)

4.3 Religion Tourism

Oke Maria is more of a religious tourism centre and it is effectively occupied and managed by the Roman Catholic mission; it celebrated its 70th Parish Status on the hills in 2006. The Hill is located at Oka Akoko the Local Government Headquarters of Akoko Southwest. The town is about 120km away from Akure the state capital. The road leading from the state capital to Owo town has some bad portions while the bad portion of road from Akungba has recently been rehabilitated making the trip to Oke Maria easier for tourists; although the road that leads directly to the tourism site is still not in good condition as shown in Plate 1. The Oka hills which has one of the most beautiful scenery of rocks and hills and is an example of religious tourism is not well developed and the little development that has been done so far is by the catholic church who are spiritually attached to the site,

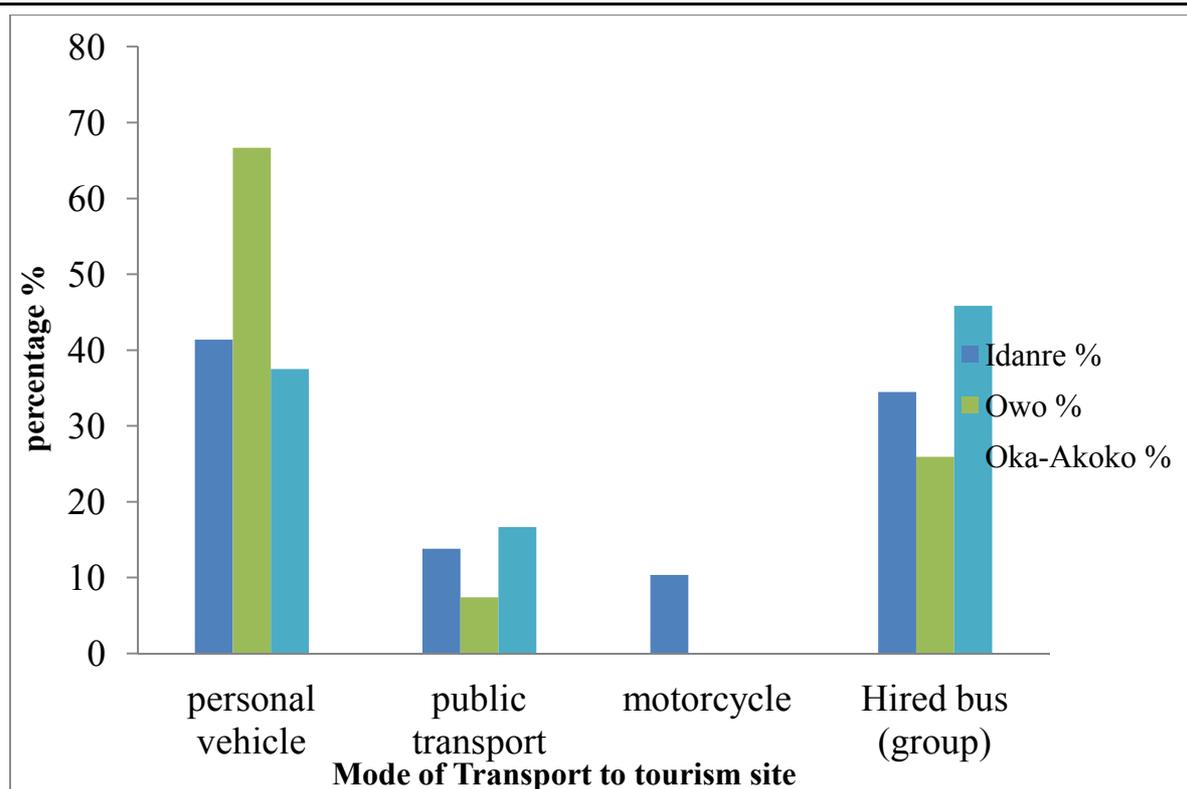


Figure 2: Tourists mode of transport to tourism site

4.4 Purpose of visit

Figure 3 shows the tourists purpose of visiting tourism sites and the figure reveals that majority of the tourists at Idanre, Owo and Oka-Akoko went for recreational purposes, with their percentages as 44.45, 68.97% and 62.5% respectively. These result was higher than that of visiting for research purpose (university based) and educational (Primary to secondary school visits) purposes.

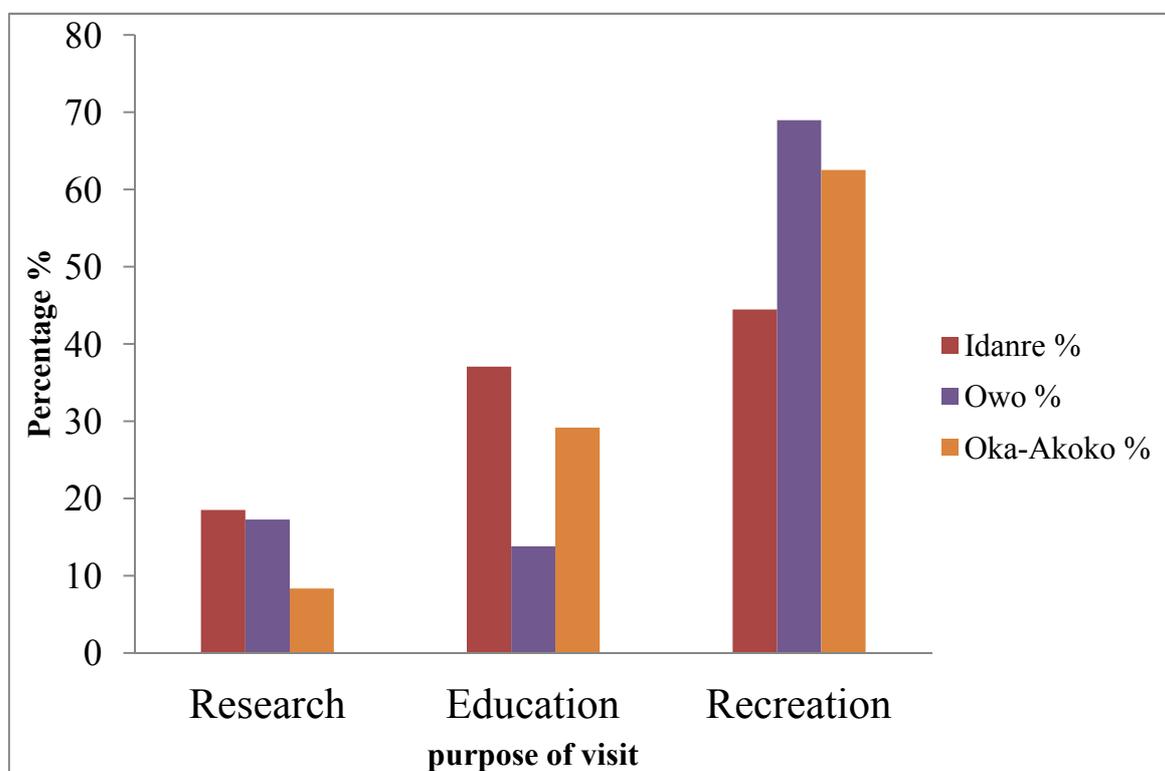


Figure 3: Purpose of visiting the site

4.5 Impacts of Tourism

As shown in figure 4, in all the study areas, indigenes believed that both employment and business opportunities were the major benefit or development brought to their various towns as a result of the presence of the tourism resources. At Owo, 51.85% were of the opinion that employment was a major development tourism brought to them due to the presence of the National Museum in the town, while 44.45% believed that the business opportunities has increased significantly. At Idanre Hills, 82.76% were of the view that the business opportunity improved while only 17.24% voted for employment. At Oka- Akoko, indigenes believed the business opportunities were higher, as most of the visitors who stay overnight and also come to the yearly feast buy various items such as food, water and toiletries from the inhabitants in the communities.

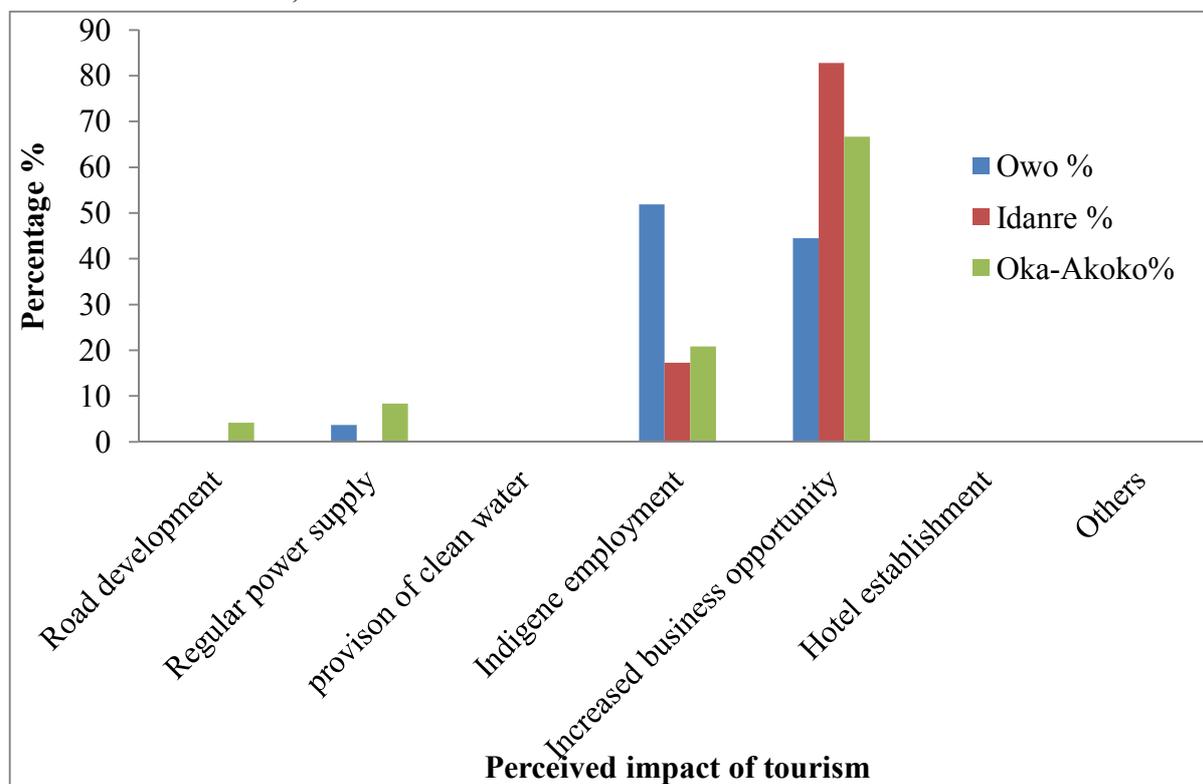


Figure 4: Respondents' 'perceived impacts of tourism' on the selected towns

Table 1: Available infrastructure at the selected tourism sites

Infrastructure	Owo museum	Idanre	Oke- maria
Good motorable road	Fair	Fair	Poor
Souvenir shops	Good	N/a	Good
Constant power supply	Poor	Poor	Poor
Clean portable water	Poor	N/a	Fair
Provision of public toilets	Poor	N/a	N/a
Security post	Good	Fair	N/a
Telecommunication services	Fair	Fair	Fair
Dedicated mode of transportation	N/a	N/a	N/a
Hotel	Fair	Poor	Poor
Health centres	N/a	Fair	N/a
Waste disposal	Good	N/a	N/a
Fire station	N/a	N/a	N/a

N/A – Not Available. Source: Field assessment by the Authors, 2013

In terms of infrastructure and provision of facilities as examined in table 1, none of the tourist sites was in good standing. They were all deficient in infrastructure and needed to be rescued, if they are to meet the purpose they were established for.



Plate 1: The Road leading to Oke-Maria in Oka-Akoko

Plate 1 shows the deplorable road to Oke-Maria in Oke-Akoko, one of the tourist sites in the study area. The poor state of the road contributed to the low level of patronage of this tourist site. Similarly, the only source of water supply at the site as shown in Plate 2 was found to be poorly mentioned. Evidently, the poor condition of infrastructures in the tourist sites was of major concern and this needs the attention of government and other stakeholders.



Plate 2: Bore Hole provided by the Catholic Church at Oke- Maria

5.0 Policy Recommendations.

The place of tourism in improving the economy of a state or country cannot be over emphasized. Based on this, the following recommendations are put forward:

- The tourist chalets on to the Oke Idanre Hill should be rehabilitated and made habitable for tourists with foods, drinks and other refreshments. In addition, some indoor games should be made available.
- Road is an essential facility to a functional tourist site. It is recommended that the guttered, narrow and busy roads leading to these tourism centers should be given urgent attention with the provision of street lights.
- The sanitary conditions in the villages and towns where the tourist sites are located should be given prompt attention.
- It is recommended that Oka Hill tourist site should be developed and guest chalets built to accommodate the tourists and pilgrims who come for various activities at the centres. This will indeed generate money for the state and the federal government like it does in countries like Jerusalem (by Christians), Tibet (by Buddhists), Mecca (by Muslims) and San Francisco (for Eckankar faithful).
- Lastly, to fulfill the goal of providing a safe, secure, enjoyable and hassle-free world class tourism destination, government must be ready to invest in the various infrastructure that are lacking at the selected sites and other supporting infrastructures that are grossly inadequate to satisfy both domestic and international tourists must be provided.

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