



Assessment of the Perception of Tourist and Community Development of Olumirin Erin Ijesha Waterfall, Osun State, Nigeria

*¹OLUBUNMI-OJO, TT; ²ANOSIKE, UM; ³OMOTOBA, NI; ⁴OSAMOR, M

¹*Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Federal University, Oye Ekiti, Nigeria*

²*Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Federal University, Oye Ekiti, Nigeria*

³*Department of Tourism Studies, National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria*

³*Department of Tourism and Events Management, ABUAD. Ado Ekiti, Nigeria*

*Corresponding Author Email: tabitha.olubunmi-ojo@fuoye.edu.ng

Other Authors Email: ugochukwu.anosike@fuoye.edu.ng; nomotoba@noun.edu.ng

ABSTRACT: This study assesses the perception of tourist and community development of Olumirin Erin-Ijesha waterfall, Osun state, Nigeria using Semi-structured questionnaire to collect information from one hundred and fifty (150) respondents. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results of the demographic characteristics of the respondents reveals that 85% of the respondents in Olumirin Waterfalls are male and 60% of the respondents are married and those with secondary education has the highest representation 90%. The age distributions with the higher percentages are 32 – 38 with 75%. Category of the tourist showed that 94% of respondents are Nigerians (local/regional tourism or inbound tourism). Those staying for less than 24 hours have the higher percentage 94% indicating that tourists are mainly excursionist. Visitors' control and management that charging of entrance fees has a higher representation (90%) as indicated by the employees. The table further revealed the visitors and site management in which visitors' influx into the site has been on the increase as claimed by all the employees. Table 4 revealed the tourists appreciation, participation and sensitivity to the site, it was revealed that 54% of the respondents claimed they do not patronise the wares sold in the site and community while 38% does. All the respondents indicated that they would like to re-visit the site. The tourist perception towards ecotourism in the study area showed that 78% of the respondents indicated that ecotourism does more good than harm while 12% gave no answer to the question. Self-assessment by Tourists on their knowledge about ecotourism shows that 38% have excellent knowledge about what ecotourism is. The contribution of Olumirin waterfall to community development revealed that 84% of respondents believed that the development of facilities/infrastructures is due to the presence of the waterfall in the community while 16% indicated otherwise.

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Tourism developments as a multidisciplinary nature influence the culture and other areas of the society (Ajulo *et al.*, 2017). It has been proven by different authors that there is a big empirical evidence that exist between the society and tourism as a whole (Ajayi and Eveso, 2017). Tourism as a whole involve the activity of travel from one destination to another, visiting places, lodging in an hotel because tourism provides accommodation for guest and also tour guides, with all these mentioned above tourism industry has gone above buying and selling of gift items and aesthetics (Arowosafe and Adebayo 2014). Ecotourism is one of

the fastest expanding tourism markets receiving much attention in developing countries and economically impoverished regions around the world. Ecotourism accounts for a large share of some countries' gross domestic product, and so contributes to livelihoods of many people, as in Kenya, Madagascar, Nepal, Thailand and Malaysia (Akerlof and Kennedy, 2013). Some of the economic benefits which local communities can derive from ecotourism are employment opportunities, development associated with infrastructure (e.g. better road network and water) and ecotourism businesses (Adejumo *et al.*, 2014).

*Corresponding Author Email: tabitha.olubunmi-ojo@fuoye.edu.ng

Therefore, the objective of this study is to assesses the perception of tourist and community development of Olumirin Erin-Ijesha waterfall, Osun state, Nigeria

and northwest by thick forest of Odojesa, Atakumosa East/West Local Government.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area: Erin-Ijesha is one of the not less than 200 small towns and villages that constitute the Ijesha kingdom (Ibokun, IpetuIjesha, IjebuIjesha, Esa-Oke, Ipole, Ifewara, Iwara, Imesi-Ile, Ikeji-Ile, EsaOdo, Kajola,etc) of Osun state of Nigeria located on Latitude 7°E4'N and 15°71'N and Longitude 4°41'E and 4°55'E of the Greenwich meridian in the eastern part of Oriade Local Government Area of Osun state. Erin-Ijesha is situated along the hills along the Ilesha-Akure expressway and bounded in the east by Ekiti state boundary, southwest by Erin-Oke and Ipetu-jesa

Olumirin (Erin-ijesha) Waterfall: Olumirin (Erin Ijesha) waterfall situated in Osun state is one of the wonders God has endowed the human race with. It was discovered 1140AD during the migration of Ife people to Erin-Ijesha by a woman called Akinla, the granddaughter of Oduduwa. The waterfall is situated within latitude 7°30' and 8°45' North and longitude 4°31' and 5°East. Erin Ijesha is located on the Ilesha Akure road, just about 10 km after Ilesha. Erin-Ijesha waterfall is an assemblage of seven distinct cascades located on the south western slopes of the lush Efon Ridge, 2km off Erin-Ijesha town. The inhabitants thereafter named the fall “Olumirin” meaning another god whose power over the whole area was only similar to Akinla, the founder of Erin Ijesha town.



Fig. 1: Map of Osun State showing Oriade Local Government Area where Olumirin waterfalls is located
Source: Osun State Ministry of land and Physical Planning and Urban Development (2012)

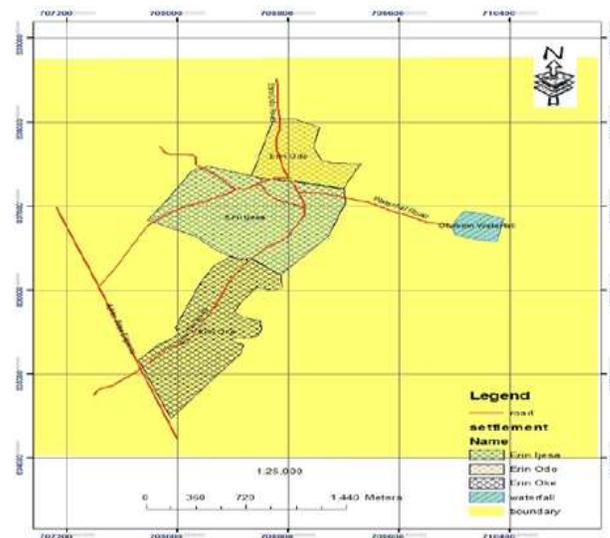


Fig. 2: Map of Olumirin Waterfall and its host Communities

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Target Population: The target population involve all the staff members, tourist, and community members living in Olumirin Waterfalls environs, Osun State, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The research adopt simple random sampling method to pick 150 respondents out of the entire population of the selected staff members and people living within the Olumirin Waterfalls communities in Osun State, Nigeria. Information was collected from the respondents through the use of questionnaire.

Data Analysis: The data collected from respondents were statistically analyzed using simple percentage and descriptive analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the demographic characteristics of the respondents are revealed in Table 1. The result reveals that 85% of the staffs in Olumirin Waterfalls are male while the remaining 15% are female. Like wisely 60% of the respondents are married and those with secondary education has the highest representation 90% followed by those with primary 5% and tertiary education 5%. The age distributions with the higher percentages are 32 – 38 with 75% followed by 39-45 which is 15% and 25 – 31 with 10%.the table further revealed that 56% of the tourist are male and majority of them are single (52%). 74% of the tourist have tertiary education, 14% has secondary education, 2% has primary education while the remaining 5(10%) failed to answer the question. Tourists within the age distribution groups of 18-24 and 25 – 31 have the higher representations of 28%and 26% respectively. Majority of the respondents in the communities are males with 58% while the remaining 42% of the respondents are females. The married makes up the majority with 52%, 40% of the respondents are singles while the remaining 8% of the question are not ticked. Majority of the respondents (52%) have secondary school certificate followed by primary certificate with 44% while the remaining 4% respondent living in the community failed to fill their education status. Age group 25 – 31 is mostly represented with 52% in the community. Table 2 showed the category of the tourist, in which 94% of respondents are Nigerians (local/regional tourism or inbound tourism). Those staying for less than 24 hours have the higher percentage 94% indicating that tourists are mainly excursionist. Those visiting for the first time have the highest percentage of 68% followed by those on their second visit 18%, above three times 8% and three times 6%.Visitors control and management are showed in table 3; the table revealed that charging of

entrance fees has a higher representation (90%) as indicated by the employees. The table further revealed the visitors and site management in which visitors' influx into the site has been on the increase as claimed by all the employees. 80% of the respondents indicated that tracks are available in the site, 70% claimed the presence of trails while 30% indicated otherwise.85% of the respondents asserted that accidents do not occur in the site while 100% claimed rare occurrence of accidents. Table 4 revealed the tourists appreciation, participation and sensitivity to the site, it was revealed that 54% of the respondents claimed they do not patronize the wares sold in the site and community while 38% does. The site level of development is fair according to 58% of the respondents while those that indicate that the level of development is good and poor have the same percentage of 20%. The highest percentage of 44% was recorded for respondents that claim that the level of development of the community is poor. This is closely followed by 38% for fair level of development while 12% indicated that the level of development is good. 90% of the respondents were impressed with the site while 10% claimed they are not. All the respondents indicated that they would like to re-visit the site. From Table 5, 20% of the respondents declare they would like to explore on good roads when next they visit, followed by the percentage who wants the management to Build a Hotel 16%. 12% want construction of recreation facilities, 10% want a lift to be constructed so as to access the higher levels easily. An equal percentage of 8% of the respondents want the construction of steps and tour guide operations establishment. 6% wants provision of more seats, 4% advocates for improved waste management, provision for signage and others, 2% for swimming pool, trail maintenance and provision for education centre simultaneously and 2% left the question unattended to. Table 6 showed the tourist perception towards ecotourism in the study area, in which78% of the respondents indicated that ecotourism does more good than harm while 10% said otherwise. 12% gave no answer to the question. Self-assessment by Tourists on their knowledge about ecotourism shows that 38% have excellent knowledge about what ecotourism is. 14(28%) claimed fair knowledge closely followed by 26% of good knowledge. 6% indicated that their knowledge of it is poor while 2% avoided the question. Table 7 revealed the contribution of Olumirin waterfall to community development; it was revealed that 84% of respondents believed that the development of facilities/infrastructures is due to the presence of the waterfall in the community while 16% indicated otherwise. 3.33% in Erin Ijesha did not respond to the question.66% concurred that the establishment of hospitality centres is as a result of the presence of

Waterfalls while a slightly higher percentages of 50% believe otherwise. 10% and 66% of the respondents avoided the question respectively. Majority of the respondents asserted that the presence of Olumirin Waterfalls has not brought settlers into the communities.76% indicated that their household do not benefit in terms of employment in the community while 52% of the respondents claimed their household benefit in terms of recreation.

Table 1: Demographic ratings of respondents

Status	Staff		Tourists		Residents	
	F	P (%)	F	P (%)	F	P (%)
Sex						
Male	17	85	32	56	29	58
Female	3	15	18	44	21	42
Marital status						
Single	12	60	26	52	19	40
Married	8	40	20	40	25	52
Divorced	0	0	2	4	0	0
Widowed	0	0	0	0	0	0
Missing data	0	0	2	4	4	8
Religion						
Christianity	8	40	39	78	27	56
Islam	12	60	10	20	19	40
Others	0	0	1	2.00	2	4
Education						
None	0	0	0	0	0	0
Primary	1	5	1	2	22	44
Secondary	18	90	7	14	26	52
Tertiary	1	5	37	74	0	0
Missing data	0	0	5	10	2	4
Age						
Below 18	0	0	6	12	0	0
18 – 24	0	0	14	28	2	4
25 – 31	2	10	13	26	26	26
32 – 38	15	75	7	14	10	20
39 – 45	3	15	3	6	10	20
Above 45	0	0	6	12	2	4
Missing data	0	0	1	2	0	0
Occupation						
Blue collar	18	90	2	4	47	
White collar	2	10	8	16	0	0
Students	0	0	40	80	3	
Citizenship						
Indigene	17	85	2	4	48	96
Non indigene	2	10	47	94	-	-
Missing data	1	5	1	2	2	4

Table 2: Category of Tourists

Factors	Variables	Frequency	(%)
Nationality	Nigeria	47	94
	London	3	6
Length of stay	Less than 24 hours	47	94
	Over 24 hours	1	2
	Missing data	2	4
Status of visit	First timer	34	68
	Second	9	18
	Third	3	6
	Above 3 times	4	8

The ecotourism destination; Olumirin Waterfalls, one of the outstanding wonders of God with unique landscape, alluring vegetation, beautiful and clear waters that creates challenges for mountaineering and

opportunities to enjoy the energizing waters as well as mesmerizing in the serenity of the environment has attracted visitors from far and wide. Majority of these tourists 47 (94%) are excursionist visiting for less than 24 hours. This site is to a higher percentage visited by students 40(80%) and people between ages group 18 – 24 years: youths. The number of visitors this site holds has been on the increase from time to time with records of first timer tourist of 34 (68%). Most tourists (52%) came about the knowledge of the Waterfalls through their friends.

Table 3: Visitors control and management

Statement	Variables	Frequency	(%)
Charging of entrance fees	Tourists	Yes	20
		No	0
	Residents	Yes	18
	No	1	
	No response	1	
Trend of Tourists number	Increasing	20	
	Decreasing	0	
Specified number of visitors into site	Yes	20	
	No	0	
Available structures	Tracks	Yes	16
		No	4
Trails	Yes	14	
	No	6	
Signage	Yes	18	
	No	2	
Car park	Yes	20	
	No	0	
Occurrence of accidents	Yes	3	
	No	17	
Rate of occurrence	Frequently	0	
	Rarely	20	

Table 4: Tourist Appreciation, Participation and Sensitivity to Site and Community

Statement	Variable	Frequency	(%)
Patronage of wares	Yes	19	
	No	27	
	No response	4	
Site's level of development	Good	10	
	Fair	29	
	Poor	10	
	No response	1	
Community's level of development	Good	6	
	Fair	19	
	Poor	22	
	No response	3	
Feeling about site	Impressed	45	
	Not impressed	5	
Re – visitation to site	Yes	50	
	No	0	

Different categories of visitors: singles, loners, families on retreat, married folks, tour groups, etc seek the pleasures (recreation, education, mountaineering and / or enjoyment of the environment serenity) of this site. There are 3 permanent staffs who are natives of Erin Ijesha community employed as Clerical Officers,

1 Site Manger and representatives from the Osun State Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Table 5: Improvements tourists want to see on next visit

	Frequency	(%)
Good roads	10	20
Tour guide	4	8
Lift	5	10
Steps	4	8
Hotel	8	16
Swimming pool	1	2
More seats	3	6
Recreational facilities	6	12
Education centre	1	2
Improved waste management	2	4
Trail maintenance	1	2
Signage	2	4
Others	2	4
No response	1	2
Total	50	100

Table 6: Tourists' Perceptions of Ecotourism

Statement	Variable	Frequency	(%)
Ecotourism does more harm than good	Yes	5	10
	No	39	78
	No response	6	12
Knowledge about what ecotourism is	Excellent	19	38
	Good	13	26
	Fair	14	28
	Poor	3	6
	No response	1	2

Table 7: Contributions of the Waterfall to Community

Statement	Development		
	Variables	Frequency	(%)
Infrastructure / facilities	Yes	42	84
	No	8	16
	No response	0	0
Establishment of hospitality centres	Yes	15	30
	No	33	66
	No response	2	4
Settlers into community	Yes	14	28
	No	36	72
Benefit to household Employment	Yes	12	24
	No	38	76
	No response	0	0
Recreation	Yes	26	52
	No	24	48

There are few women representatives on the management team. Issuance of tickets, documentation of tourists' number, sales of pamphlets containing background history and information as well as cleaning of the environment are responsibilities of the staffs. Information on the number of tourist received was however not provided to me. The results of whether or not entrance fees are charged to all visitors (tourists and community residents) was affirmative. Tickets are issued at the entrance after payment based on the category the tourists belong to. It was asserted by all the employees that there is no specified maximum number of tourists that can be allowed entrance into the site. This factor is peculiar to almost all Nigerian tourist destination with income generation as the driving force with little or no consideration of

ecological problems such as soil compaction and reduced fauna and flora resources that can ensue. The long term effect of people treading a bare pathway is minimized by the construction of hard path from the ware displaying ground to the first level of the Waterfall. It was also observed that a concrete chair was available at the environs of the first level for visitors to sit. This however is not sufficient for the number of visitors that troop into the Centre. Hiking trails are present in the site which leads to the different levels and to the Abake community at the top of the hills. The trails are seldom maintained except those that run through the farms of villagers and could be walked without the guidance of tour guides provided the hiker knows where to go. No interpretative media or signage of any sort: regulatory or informative is provided on the trails. Tourists are at the risk of wandering amiss on the torturous journey to the seventh level of the waterfall as well as endangering their lives on the difficult terrain. Accident though rarely occurs during the course of mountaineering. Car park is present just at the entrance of the site. The findings also revealed that the site has Tourist Garden. Hard paths (lined on each side by *Tectonagrandis*) are present which leads to the five round chalets contained in the garden. Concrete seats are available in each chalet. The garden is mainly for picnicking but converted to changing rooms most especially by students. Waste bins are also situated beside all the chalets but despite this, litters are still found almost everywhere. Waste management is done by the provision of waste bin at strategic points in the site but this is absent along the hiking trails. Some garbage such as beverage cans and disposable plates were however still observed along the trails and at the waterfall levels especially the first and the seventh. The tourists claim to patronise the wares displayed in the site while a considerably higher percentage of 54% said otherwise. This might be because many tourists bring their packaged food and drinks when visiting as observed. 58% of the tourists rated the level of development of the site as fair, 20% good and poor each. However, all the tourists interviewed asserted that they would like to re-visit with over four-fifth claiming to be impressed with the site. About four-fifth of the respondents interviewed advocated for improvements such as provision of more seats at the first level environment, construction of lift or seats for easy access of the higher levels, provision of more recreational facilities, tour guide operations, interpretative media such as signage on the hiking trails, trail maintenance, building of education centre so as to communicate information to the tourists about the site and what it stands for, etc. A considerable high percentage emphasized on the improvement of the road condition that leads to the centre.

These suggested improvements by the tourists shows that they have indeed visited the site not only for fun (participation) but also appreciate the resources and equally sensitive to the prevailing situation. Falade (2012) identifies constituency building to promote conservation as one of the four key benefits of nature-oriented tourism. This comes into play when tourists to a particular site act as advocate for the site visited by encouraging family and friends to take similar visits and also donating their time and energy to lobby for or against policies or activities which threaten the area visited. The highest percentage of visitors on tour to the centre came about the knowledge of the existence from friends; this suggests an already established advocacy for the site by the tourists. Examining it from another perspective of having a member of the House of Representative or Assembly or Minister as a family member; let's say the father of a tourist to Olumirin Waterfall who though enjoyed the visit maximally found the journey stressful because of the deplorable condition of the road can be an advocate for the centre. The development level of the community is poor from the point of view of about half of the tourists interviewed while 38% see it as fair. It was observed that the not all roads are tarred but construction of more drainages is ongoing. The type of settlement in the community is the linear type where buildings are congregated along roads.

Conclusion: This research work concludes that one of the magnificent wonders of nature; Olumirin Waterfalls pulls tourists both home and abroad. Numbers of tourists into the site has been increasing which creates avenue for the development of the host community: Erin Ijesha and her environs. Contributions majorly have been to the State Government of Osun State in respect to the revenue generated from the sales of ticket to tourists. Aside small scale establishments related to tourism such as photography, transporters ('Okada' riders) and petty trading operated within and outside the centre and the employment of few residents as staff, the local community benefits are minimal.

All forms of tourism no matter how environmentally sensitive it is, is associated with some negativity; the extent which varies. It is therefore recommended for the State Government to further develop the site to meet international standards as well as the host and surrounding communities. The development of the community can be in regards to infrastructural and social amenities such as roads which can enhance the convenience at which the site is accessed. This would not only increase the numbers of tourists that patronise the site but also provide employment opportunities for more residents.

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