

PATRONAGE PATTERN OF TOURISTS TO IDANRE HILLS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The level of poverty in developing countries no doubt is one of the major problems confronting patronage of tourism as well as its development in Africa Sub-Region. Few of the affluent are involved in tourism but more in recreation activities. A larger proportion of the teeming populations use their leave bonus as well as their leaves for other economic purposes rather than for tourism. This study therefore identified facilities that attract tourists to Idanre hills and attempt to determine pattern of patronage of tourists to the centre. Four hundred (400) tourists were randomly selected during the Easter holiday when the tourists centre usually witness one of its peak of attraction during the year. A questionnaire designed to elicit information on the points of origin of tourists, distance between their homes and the tourist points, their perceptions of the hill and their perception on how to improve the centre was designed for the study. The result shows that the longer the distance the less the patronage to the centre (distance decay effect). The study also revealed that not much is heard about the tourist centre outside the major Yoruba ethnic groups where the centre is located. The paper noted that one of the major problems confronting tourism development is the patronage to the centre which is not encouraging and by extension reduces income to such centres. The paper suggested that patronage of tourists should be enhanced using handbills, radios, televisions, face book and other relevant media as means of publicity. It was also recommended that distance should be used as a yardstick to determine the medium of advertisement to be used.

Key Words : Idanre Hills, Recreation, Patronage, Ancillary Business, Souvenir

INTRODUCTION

The pattern of journey from home to work places have received considerable attention in some urban or regional studies¹⁻³ while that of home to tourist centres is yet to assume this position in developing countries including Nigeria. This is partly due to the attitudes of Nigerians to tourism activities as well as the low level of importance attached to it by the Government. This is in spite of the fact that some countries in Africa especially in East Africa have continued to encourage growth in tourism by increasing their budgetary allocation to this sector. In addition to this, policies supporting growth and development in tourism were also given priority in their Government Administration.

Sustainable tourism is a concept developed during the late 1980s and early 1990s⁴⁻⁶. It is derived from the idea of sustainable development and applied in the tourism context⁷. Due to the growing knowledge of the negative impact from tourism and the essence of a well-being nature and community, the concept of sustainable tourism was developed⁶. UNWTO has defined sustainable tourism as "Development that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. Tourism is envisaged as a means of managing all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support system⁸. The aim of

sustainable tourism is to capture the economic benefits of tourism without damaging or degrading the resources upon which tourism ultimately relies.

Tourism has become increasingly important to communities around the world and the need to make it sustainable has also become a primary concern of all the stake holders⁹. The growth has therefore increased considerably such that nations all over the world strived to develop one thing or the other in order to attract tourists. What therefore makes the difference of course is the way tourism facilities are packaged for both local and international consumption¹⁰. Probably because of this reason, tourism has multiplied in recent decades, with tourism based on natural resources increasing most dramatically¹¹.

Patronage to tourism centres has been very low in developing countries. This lukewarm attitude to tourism is, to some extent, a reflection of low patronage by the proprietors of tourist centres. To a large extent, tourists in some cases are not aware of the richness of such centres as publicity through print and visual media are absent. Potential tourists therefore may not be fully harnessed, if they are not aware of the location and richness of tourist centres. This is one of the major problems confronting tourism in this part of the world.

Tourism development in the third world countries has been very poorly developed. This has made the regions to be relegated to the background when the issues of tourism are being discussed. Such regions also lose the benefits which accrued to regions where tourism has been given priority and developed. However, areas where some of these resources had been developed, their continued maintenance so as to meet the prescribed standard has always been a mirage and in some cases impossible.

The full potential of tourism industry as a development option is yet to be realized in many of the developing countries that have embraced it. This is because tourism as a form of industry has not been accorded the deserved priority in some countries' development plans. Today, the situation has changed as people all over the world are now aware of the signifi-

cance of tourism as a major source of income to Government and individuals when they are properly developed and harnessed.

HYPOTHESIS

One major null hypothesis was tested using the data generated on the field to arrive at some conclusion discussed in the paper. The null hypothesis is that "distance is not a determinant of the volume of tourists to Idanre Hills"

The main purpose of this study is to determine and account for the pattern of patronage pattern to Idanre hills and ways by which it could be enhanced for the benefits of the future generations.

The Study Area (Idanre hills)

The study area is Idanre hills situated in Idanre town of Ondo State, Nigeria (**Fig. 1**). The historical Idanre hills are awesome tourists' attraction with massive granite rocks. The town (Idanre) is divided into ancient town which is at the hill top (**plate 1**) and the new settlement at the foot of the hill (**plate 2**). According to Ondo State Tourism Board (2010), the people of old Idanre settled first on the hill tops and lived there for between 800 and 1000 years. The people of Idanre later migrated on 14th day of October 1928 with about 11,648 people to the new town (down hills). The reason for their movement include reduction in inter-tribal wars which pervaded 18th and 19th century, need to expand their territory and the exigencies of modernization which entails having accessibility to people as well as Government infrastructures.

To get to Idanre hills, you need to climb 640 steps with five (5) resting points along the steps (**Plate 3**). The journey from the foot of the hill to the top of the hill for a fast climber will take close to one hour with rest at resting points. Interesting points on the hills include the ancient courts and king's palace which are over 1000 years old (**Plate 4**). Also on top of the hills are caves of different dimensions and sizes, and the first school in the town located on the hill which is over 400 years (**Fig 2**).

Facilities that attract Tourists to Idanre Hills

Idanre hills consist of numerous rocks with different

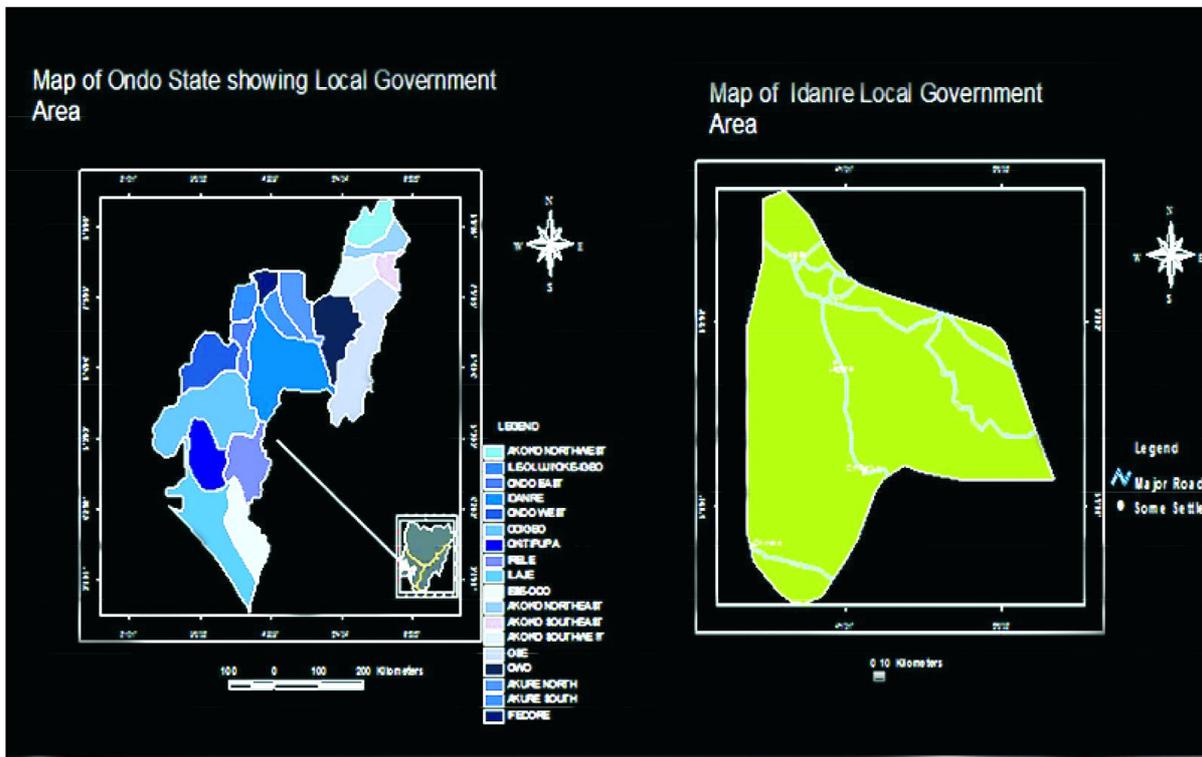


Fig. 1 : Regional Setting of the Study Area

shapes that enabled tourists to appreciate the work of nature. It has been attracting tourist for long because of the role which it played in the past by housing thousands of people before their relocation to the new Idanre as at 1928. The tourists are always eager to visit the hills in order to study the relics of the settlement and its pattern.

Idanre people are also descendants of Oduduwa, the progenitor and father of all Yoruba race in Nigeria. While migrating from Ile-Ife, in the 18th century, they carried along with them some properties that were of interest to the current generation which Idanre people still kept in the old palace on top of the hill till date. Such properties include Otitibiti which is a magical wrapper cloth with pattern resembling those that were displayed during the Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977 in Lagos, Nigeria

Joregbe which is a "two pair of horse tail" used by the Owa of Idanre (King) during the Iden Festival as well as the original Oduduwa beaded crown are part of the relics of the traditional attire of any King that are crowned any time in the town¹². The Uwo Akota housing some of the relics of the ancient attires of the past Kings of Idanre is a

place to behold for tourists on top of the hill. The Idanre hills are also attracted to tourists because of its grotesque position which made it naturally fortified against any invading enemies in the past. Idanre hills are surrounded by mountains which are very steepy on all areas thereby offering the needed protection against foreign intruders and possible invaders when inter-tribal



Fig. 2 : Location of Idanre Hills and other features source : ondo State Tourism Board

wars were common¹³.

Idanre hills still house the relics of the oldest primary school. The school was built in 19th century and had been acquired and preserved by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM). On the hills also is the oldest court in Idanre. The past Kings sit in judgment over any criminal matters that were brought before them in those days. Just like any other monuments, the court had been preserved as an evidence of the presence of judiciary for the present generation to appreciate that equity and justices prevailed and were indeed the order of the day between the 18th and early 19th Century in this part of the world.

The ancient Owa's Palace has been in place for over 1000 years ago. The palace is significant to this study because it is fashioned and fortified like any typical Yoruba traditional Palace. The location of the palace within the hill was determined by a number of factors among which security was given priority. It shows the ingenuity of the ancient people because it was extremely difficult for invaders to get to the palace which was extremely fortified and surrounded by natural rocks. The location made it easy for the people to be at a vantage position to destroy enemies that may want to attack the palace not minding the level of sophistication of the weapons of such enemies. Therefore, the palace is an important place of interest not only to researchers but also for people who visit the place during picnics, fieldwork, as well as excursions.

Another condition that stands out Idanre hills as a tourist centre in Nigeria is the fact that the facilities discussed above are not spatially located on the top of the hills. This advantage made tourists to spend hours visiting both the man-made (cultural) and natural (physical) features that adorn the nooks and crannies of the settlement.

METHODOLOGY

An important part of patronage assessment of tourist centre is to identify the "pull factor" to the centre. Thus, data needed include the nature of the tourist centre, ancillary activities of the centre and the effect of distance on the patronage of tourists. To generate data and analysis that will

make it possible to achieve the stated purpose, a structured questionnaire was designed to cover socio-economic variables of respondents, attitude of tourists to the centre, origin-destination (O-D) information, distance covered by the tourists and challenges experienced by the tourists at the centre. The data required for this study were therefore gathered from primary and secondary sources. For primary data, five hundred copies of the structured questionnaire were randomly administered to tourists that were willing to fill and return immediately. The workers in the centre as well as those in Ondo State Tourism Board were also interviewed to complement the information needed on the tourist centre.

The secondary data were sourced from the receipt stubs used for the tourists and relevant publications from Ondo State Tourism Board, Akure.

Data Analysis

Questions were specifically aimed at assessing the patronage of tourists to Idanre hills. The questions were organized into two sections. The first section requires response on socio-economic variables of tourist and tables of percentages were generated from the responses while the second section is on the perception of respondents on their assessment on the patronage pattern of tourist to centre. The four (4) point Likert Scale was used with the option of strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) and with a weighted scale of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Each statement item highlighting a particular perception was used to calculate the Mean Weight Value (MWV) or mean of a group data and recorded.

The Group Arithmetic Mean (GAM) was applied to all the calculated mean of a group of items under each sub heading and recorded. The GAM result was then used as a baseline for determining the cut-off mark to accept or reject a problem item as being accepted or rejected by the majority.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed that overwhelming majority of the respondents was between the ages of 21 and 60 years (68.33%). The implications of this age groups as patrons of the tourist centre is that

they constitute economically viable set of people who can afford to spend money on tourism. These tourists within this age group are also physically sound to withstand the stress of climbing the Idanre hills. The educational level of the respondents also shows that 73% of the tourists either have degrees or are undergraduates in the tertiary institutions in the country. This means that these categories of tourists understand and appreciate the need for tourism. On marital status, it was discovered that more than half of the tourists are single (55.17%) while 39.5 % are married and 5.33% are either divorced or separated. This study shows that single people are

Table 1 : Socio-Economic variables of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	percentage
Age (years)		
Less than 20	159	26.50
21-40	230	38.33
41-60	180	30.00
More than 61	31	5.17
Total	600	100.00
Higher education		
Secondary	162	27.00
NCE/HND/ Undergraduates	295	49.17
Degrees	143	23.83
Total	600	100.00
Marital status		
Single	331	55.17
Married	237	39.50
Separated/ divorced	32	5.33
Total	600	100.00

more involved in tourism. This may not be unconnected with the fact that they are free and have little commitment to marital life that may impede their interest in participating in tourism activities (**Table 1**).

Table 2 shows people's perception about Idanre Hills. Many people believed that Idanre Hills possessed the natural and cultural features that can make it rank as one of the high ranking resort centre in the world. The people did not believe that its height and difficulties in climbing the hill is not a deterrent to its attractiveness to patrons. The people however are of the opinion that the five resting points on the hills are adequate for those who may not have enough energy to do the climbing at a stretch. **Table 3** shows the summary of how patrons to Idanre hills perceive the factors that influence or still influence their patronage to Idanre hills. Of all the variables considered, advertisement through the print media and visual media seem to be most popular judging by its highest mean score of 205.8. The next one is using the hills for educational purposes with a mean of 200.4. This shows that the hill is a veritable ground for field work for programmes in the field of Geography, environmental sciences, history architecture and the likes. The ranks of these variables shows the importance attached to the preferences by tourists as regards the influence on patronage.

Table 4 shows the factors that can still influence patronage to Idanre hills. Of the five items considered, tourists believed that construction of lift to the hill top and provision of befitting hotel on the hills are not important factors. A reason for this response was that climbing the hill was part of the excitement to tourists. Some however feel that provision of lift could compliment that of climbing, so that tourist could be exposed to alternatives. All other variables were accepted based on their Mean Weight Value (MWV) which was greater than Gross Arithmetic Mean (GAM) of 160 set for accepting or rejecting any item under consideration in **Table 4**.

Table 5 shows generating origins of tourists to the Site. It was discovered that majority of the tourists were from the catchments area of the surrounding States of the country. 25% of the tourists to the centre originated from Ondo State

Table 2 : Perception of respondent about Idanre hills

S/N	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Reamrk
i	Idanre Hills possess good number of cultural features to attract tourists	246	247	60	47	189.2	Accept
ii	Idanre hills possess rich natural features to attract tourists	206	279	75	40	185.1	Accept
iii	A major obstacle to tourists to that centre may be attributed to the climbing of the hill	60	50	140	350	102	Reject
iv	The resting points while climbing the hills are adequate	301	181	70	45	193.2	Accept
v	I feel disappointed with the features I saw on the hills as a tourist	20	22	357	201	106.1	Reject
vi	A lot still needs to be done on the hills to attract more tourist	90	63	246	201	124.2	Reject
GAM		149.97					

Table 3: Factors that influence or can still influence your patronage to Idanre hills

S/N	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Rank	Remark
1.	Through advertisement (print & visual).	312	251	20	17	205.8	1	Accepted
2.	For fieldwork /Educational purposes	279	266	35	20	200.4	2	Accepted
3.	For picnics/Monitoring/Sports/Hunting	276	259	30	35	197.6	3	Accepted
4.	Distance to where I reside is not much	202	294	64	40	185.8	4	Rejected
GAM		197.4						

while 69% are from other States in the South Western part of Nigeria with Lagos contributing about 23%. About 6% of the tourists are from other parts of the country. This pattern has a lot of implications on the patronage to the centre. The catchments area for the centre is therefore

the south western part of Nigeria. The null hypothesis to determine the importance of distance to the site was carried out using the information in **Table 6**. The chi-square (X^2) for one sample test method was performed on the data (**Table 6**). The result of the calculated X^2 was

Table 4: Factors that can still influence patronage to Idanre hills

S/N	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	rank	Remark
1.	Advertisement in both print & visual media	268	174	80	78	183.2	1	Accepted
2.	Construction of lift to the hill top	80	105	165	250	121.5	5	Rejected
3.	Provision of befitting hotel on the hill	110	80	250	160	141.0	4	Rejected
4.	Sale of souvenir to tourists	241	196	63	100	177.8	2	Accepted
5.	Provision of cultural entertainments	201	246	80	73	177.5	3	Accepted
	GAM	160.2						

Table 5: Generating origin of the tourists.

S/N	State of Residence	No of Tourists	Percentage
1.	Ondo	150	25
2.	Ekiti	90	15
3.	Osun	72	12
4.	Lagos	138	23
5.	Oyo	60	10
6.	Ogun	54	9
7.	Other States	36	6
	Total	600	100

121.06 while the critical value (table value) was 9.49. Since the calculated value is greater than the tabulated value we reject H_0 and accept the alternative which means that distance is a determinant of the volume of tourist to Idanre hills. **Table 6** also shows that the number of patrons increases with increasing distance from the Hills up to 200 Kms which represented the optimum distance after which the number of patrons decreases with increasing distance ending in zero at distances above 201. This has implications on the type of advertisement which could be

effective in appealing to potential patrons to the tourist centre.

The patronage to the centre has been hampered by absence of publicity through advertisement. **Table 4**, item 1, revealed the significance of advertisement as a veritable means of publicizing the tourist centre beyond its present coverage area (south western part of Nigeria). The State tourism board should therefore be involved in vigorous pursuit of the use of both visual and print media (TV, Radio, Leaflets, Face book etc) to reach out to potential tourist so that they could be aware of this important centre.

CONCLUSION

The summary of this study is that patronage to Idanre Hills is still localized and restricted to the South Western Part of the country where 94% of the patrons are confined. Only about 6% of the tourists are outside this catchments zone. This shows that patrons to the centre decreases with increasing distance from the tourists point. The veritable way of increasing patronage to the centre therefore is to engage on aggressive advertisement to sell this product to other States of the Federation through the use of Television, Radio,

Table 6: Distance and patronage

Distance in Km	1-50	51-100	101-150	151-200	201 and above
No of Patrons	68	118	186	28	-

Posters, leaflets, face book and the like. Since distance is a factor of determining patrons to the centre, the paper is of the opinion that The State Tourism Board can enhance the short fall in patronage by adopting different mode of advertisement using distance as major yardstick to reach out to patrons. If this is done, the patronage from other States of the Federation is likely to be on the increase.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the discussion, it becomes imperative to recommend the following:

- 1 Advertisement through both visual and audio media should be intensified outside the present catchments area to induce awareness of tourists to the centre.
- 2 Research institute, colleges, polytechnics and university in the South Western Part of the country should be encouraged to visit the hills as part of the closing activities whenever they have conferences or workshops.
- 3 Construction of lifts to the hills should be encouraged. This can be used to generate additional income for the Tourist Board as well as encourage those that do not have the energy to climb the hills.
- 4 Provision of standard restaurant should be encouraged at the top of the hills so that tourists could have access to good foods and drinks.
- 5 The tourist board should encourage cultural groups to entertain visitors/ tourists at the hill top.

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