

## **SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF TOURISM ASSETS AND THE CHALLENGES OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN IBARAPA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OYO STATE, NIGERIA.**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper investigated the spatial distribution of tourism assets, importance and the challenges of tourism development in Ibarapa-North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. Data were collected through field observation, questionnaire administration and oral interview from 300 respondents randomly selected from the three major settlements that housed the tourism assets. Data were analyzed through GIS technique, cross tabulation, pictures and simple percentages. The analysis revealed the presence of randomly distributed assets in the study area which are classified as natural, religious and cultural. These assets contributions to socio-economic development of the area were hindered by insufficient information, dearth of infrastructural facilities, poor government intervention on tourism development, insecurity among other factors. Improve tourism development policy and implementation, adequate funding, upgrading of infrastructural facilities, improve security and provision of adequate information about the tourism assets in the area were recommended to improve their contributions to socio-economic development.*

**Keywords:** Tourism, Assets, Socio-economic, Development, Challenges, Ibarapa-north

### **Introduction**

Over the years, the influence of tourism as one of the sectors that can spur growth towards the attainment of the economic diversification challenges facing the third world countries has being on the increase. The basic principle of tourism is interaction especially among the tourists and the destination settlements. The interaction yields good results in the form of social, economical and cultural impacts. The social impacts come in the form of unity in diversity and as an opportunity for acculturation. Similarly, tourism has a great impact especially on the destination economy by providing various business and infrastructural development. In other words, the tourism sector has the capacities to generate employment opportunity, develop infrastructures, serve as a source of foreign exchange earnings as well as the capacity for income distribution through economic multipliers (Geethika & Gnanapala, 2015).

Taking into consideration the statistics from the World Trade and Tourism Council, it was observed that tourism contributed 3.5 percent increase in GDP of the developing countries in 2010 and 4.5 percent in 2011 coupled with the generation of over 3million employment

opportunities (Ekanayake & Longe, 2012). Similarly, the number of international tourists grew by 4.4 percent in 2014 while the international tourism arrivals was projected to grow by about 3.3 percent each year to reach 1.8 billion by 2030 (Shahzad, Shahbaz, Ferrer & Kumar, 2017)

In Nigeria, tourism has been discovered to be a very important poverty alleviation attainment of the millennium development goals (MDGS) and sustainable development (Tunde, 2012). Naluba (2020) said that tourism contributes substantially to reducing poverty and empowering women, youths and migrant workers with employment opportunities. It also assists to revive declining urban areas, open up and develop rural communities and promote the conservation of countries environmental endowments and cultural heritage. According to Mejabi & Abutu (2015) the tourism sector generated NGN 1,8614b (1.7%) of the Gross Domestic Product GDP and 1, 818, 500 jobs with the latter forecasted to rise to 2,598,000 by 2027, a compound annual growth rate of 36%. In 2018, the sector is reported to have contributed about NGN 3.63 billion to the gross domestic product. The foundation of tourism development of any nation is determined by her rich tourism assets which are mainly natural and man-made phenomena. Nigeria has long being described as a land blessed with favourable climatic conditions, diverse captivating relief and drainage features, abundant vegetal belts that house millions of flora and fauna biodiversity (Ogundele, 2022). In addition, the nation historical relics, rich cultural diversity as well as accommodating ethnicity have the potential to further contribute to her rich tourism assets as well as the socio- economic development of the nation if effectively harnessed.

The tourism sector offers a formidable foundation for Nigeria economic diversification especially with the present dwindled fortune in the oil sector (the nation main economic backbone). In other words, given the large available land area, human resources, environmental and cultural diversity, the potential for tourism development is high. However, this is being hindered by a number of surmountable challenges; inadequate supporting infrastructures such as good road, electricity, hotels pipe-borne water insecurity poor government policy formulation and implementation, insecurity, inadequate information about tourism potentials of the country among other challenges facing the tourism sector. Ibarapa North Local Government Area which is the focus of this study with headquarters at Ayete has two other major towns' i.e Tapa and Igangan and several villages and settlements. The local government area geographical landscape and historical richness have tourism assets with potential for socio economic development of the area, the state and the nation in general. The tourism assets in the area include Asawo Mangrove, Igangan forest reserve, there are presence of lofty hills such as Igosun hill, Awonwo hill, Imofin hill, Isamuni hill, Geregu cave, Baba Sango hill, Gbohunghobun hill, these coupled with other places of interest such as Asawo palace, Elemo palace, Aako shrine, Igbo Oniki, AbinuOmo river, Ofiki river and Alamuyo spring make the local government area a potentential tourists haven.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The basic tenet of this study was to investigate the spatial distribution of tourism assets in the study area. To effectively do this, the following objectives were formed;

- i. To attempt a classification of the tourism assets and their impact on the socio-economic development of the area.
- ii. To investigate the challenges confronting tourism development in the area

- iii. To suggest solutions on how the challenges can be surmounted to ensure their maximum contributions to the socio- economic development of the study area.

## Literature Review

The increasing call for alternative economic diversification measures has made the need to examine the nexus between tourism and socio-economic development a necessary empirical exercise. Tourism is widely acknowledged as an effective tool for socio-economic development because of the possible backward and forward linkages it has with the rest of the sectors of the economy which allows it to facilitate employment opportunities, income local economic development, and enhance the quantity of life (Hall, 2007). He however, argued that the extent to which these benefits accrue to a nation crucially depends on local condition

Empirical studies have shown that tourism has a positive effect on the economic growth in different countries. For instance, Fayissa, Nsian & Tadasse (2007) investigated the nexus between tourism and economic growth in 42 African countries and discover that tourism has significantly contributed to the economic growth of Sub-Saharan African countries. In similar vein Tabash, (2017) investigated the relationship between tourism and economic growth in Palestine. The study discovered that there was a long run relationship between economic growth and tourism. The study claimed that tourism has positive and significant effect on economic development. According to Ayeni & Ebohon (2012) tourism has become prominent in the economies of many countries where it constitute a form of an alternative to commodity export and a major source of foreign exchange which helps to reconciles internal and external balances. Tourism also provides a platform for the diversification of the economic base of a nation with activities that create employment opportunities or various categories of people both in the rural and urban centres. It opens up the rural areas (where many tourism sites are located) to external influence and demand for goods and services that may stimulates increased and improved production, trading activities and socialisation. This also stimulates the development of entrepreneurship, skill acquisition and promotion of cultural heritage, values and exchange between the tourists and the host community. The socio-economic impacts are mainly concerned with the community. This is reflected in the community social life i.e it contributes to a mutual understanding and respect between people's and societies. It motivates local people to preserve their culture and heritage and promote social stability through the realization of positive outcomes for the local economy. It can also encourage the preservation of ancient cultures and ways of life (Ogili, Olewe & Eneh, 2023). Gnanapala & Sandaruwani (2016) further asserted that the social benefits include; the maintenance of traditional cultures, increased intercultural communication and understanding, improved social welfare, quality of life, improved shopping and increased recreational opportunity.

Nigeria as a nation is endowed with both natural and material resources that can be harnessed to promote economic development of the country by providing revenue and foreign exchange. The immense socio-economic impacts and benefits of tourism have in recent time been recognised by several states governments and the federal government of Nigeria. Contingent upon this, part of the effort towards diversifying the economy of the nation has been to harness and develop tourism, the untapped non-oil sector (Akpan & Obang, 2004).

Ndajiya, Sheu & Yunusa (2014) opined that the importance of the tourism sector cannot be overemphasized since it is the only sector in Nigeria that experience both forward and

backward linkages. Additionally Osinubi&Osinubi (2020) asserted that tourists arrival and tourism activity index promotes economic growth in Nigeria.

The Oyo State Government has identified tourism development for socio-economic advancement of the state as one of the present administration of Gov. SeyiMakinde cardinal point. The government identified over 160 tourist centres in the state and its determination to collaborate with the traditional establishments of the tourist Centres to achieve socio-economic development of the state. The 2021 World Tourism Day (WTI) was celebrated at Ado-Awaye (that houses the Iyake Suspended Lake, second of its kind in the world) on September 27, 2021 while the previous year was held at Idere. Apart from this the government has divided the state into 3 tourism region i.e Ibadan axis, Ibarapa axis and OkeOgun axis for pilot developmental projects. However, with this vast potential of tourism sector for sustainable development of the country the sector has not been able to contribute maximally due to an array of challenges; the unattractive nature of most tourism sites and the inadequate infrastructural facilities are factors affecting tourism promotion in Nigeria. Most of the tourist centres are not well developed in term of aesthetic values to create traffic of tourist at the centres. Eneji, Odey& Bullus (2016) observed that sheer dearth of basic socio-economic infrastructures across Nigeria is debilitating to a sustainable tourism development. There are virtually no roads to the most promising tourist destinations in Nigeria's hinterlands. And where the roads exist, they have since become impassable with pot-holes and erosion. Omotosho (2020) observed that the access road leading to the Ado-Awaye mountains which houses the tourist centres in Oyo state was in the state of disrepair and neglect so also are the concrete steps leading to the mountain top. Popoola and Adeleke (2020) made similar observation about the road that connect Ikere Dam to Iseyin township. They concluded that these vital facilities are in poor state and therefore reduce the number of visitors to the site.

The same lack of fundamental socio-economic infrastructure is evident in the areas of electricity, pipe-borne water, hotel facilities, and security among others. Onyejebu, (2014) observed that most tourist attraction centers lack basic amenities; they are faced with challenges such as inadequate power supply, poor funding, theft and insecurity. Despite several policy statements on tourism development in Nigeria, implementation has always been the problem. The major factor of implementation of the policy is funding. However, it was observed by Atteh&Rufai-Ahmad, (2023) that there was insufficient funding for the tourism sector thus the absence of beautiful ambience and meaningful attractions which can encourage visit of local and international tourists. Furthermore, there are difficulties in updating existing graphical tourist guides and maps in the country. Lack of digital information for tourism facilities and destinations, lack of comprehensive information based on the internet and inadequate analysis of the nation tourism potential have led to dearth of sufficient information about tourism resources and potential in the country at large.

## **Methodology**

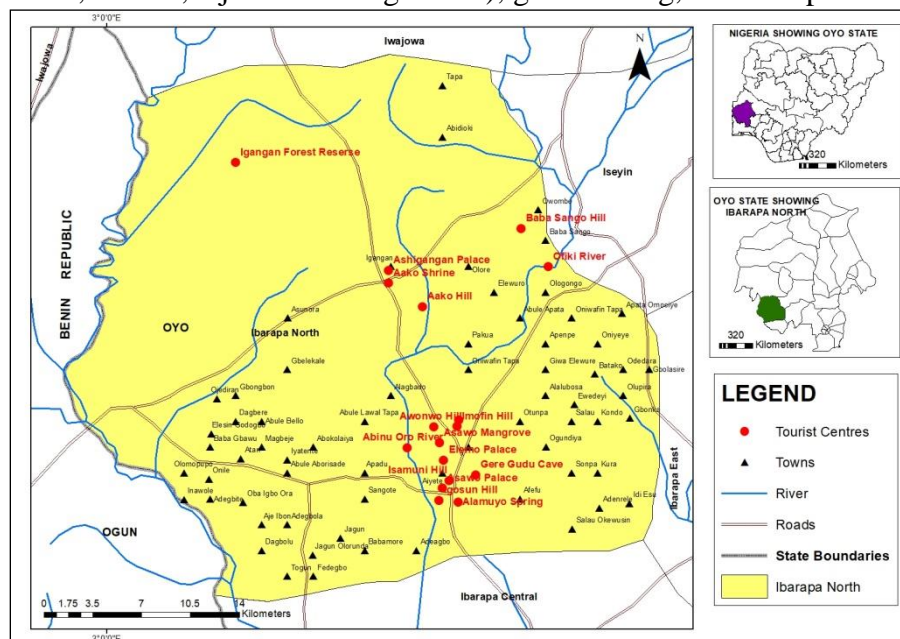
### **Geography of the Study Area**

Ibarapa North Local Government Area is one of the three Local Government Areas in Ibarapa Region of Oyo State. Its headquarters is at Ayete about 100km from Ibadan the state capital. Other prominent towns in the local government area are Tapa and Igangan. Apart from these towns, there are about thirty nine farmsteads and villages (Oyekola, Adewuyi&Ajibade,

2023). (Fig.1) The total population of the local government area as at 2006 population census was 100,293 and by 2.3 percent annual population growth it was projected to be 143,300 by 2022 ( National Bureau of Statistics (2023).The local government area covers about 1,137km<sup>2</sup> of land (about 4.2% of the entire land mass of Oyo state).The local government area is located between Longitude 3° 00' and 3° 22' East and Latitude 7° 34' and 7° 50' North.The study area shares boundaries with Iwajowa and Iseyin Local Government Areas in the North, with Ibarapa East Local Government Area in the East, with Ogun State in the West and Ibarapa Central in the South.

The local government is endowed with rocky hills (denudated granite). From both sides of the highway that passes through the major towns are the eroded rocky hills of Igosun, Isamuni, Awonwo (Ayete), Imofin (Tapa), Aako, Baba Sango (Igangan). The highlands extended for about 37.762km and enriched the tourism potential of the study area. The wetland is about 100km in length and includes rivers and streams that flow along the valleys of the major hills. These rivers include Ofiki, Ehu, Ogbaagba, Alamuyo, Igosun, Oro, Olowu among others. The mean annual rainfall is about 130.5cm and mostly between April and November with two major peaks. The mean annual temperature is 28<sup>0</sup>c with an annual range of 6<sup>0</sup>c.

Though the original vegetation has been turned into a derived savanna due to human interference Asawo grove and Igangan forest reserve remained prominent climax vegetation communities with minimal anthropogenic interference. (Ogundele, Oladapo&Suberu, 2016) These floral communities serve as places of interest to tourists. The local government area is blessed with plain fertile well drained land , therefore substantial proportion of the inhabitants are farmers, hence, the name ‘food basket’ of Oyo state given to the local government area. Other occupations include trading (which is enhanced by markets such as Ajise, Obada,Alaagba, Alabi, Konko, OjoIsale among others), goldsmithing, charcoal production and civil service etc.



**Figure 1: Map of Ibarapa North Local Government Area Showing the Distribution of Settlements and the Tourism Assets.**

## Population and Sampling Framework

Survey research method was adopted for this study. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. The primary data collection method was triangulation i.e questionnaire administration, oral interview and field observation. The target population was the adults in the three prominent towns that housed the tourism assets. A total of three hundred respondents were randomly selected for the study (one hundred respondents in each town). The questionnaire form was divided into two sections. Section A was on the bio-data of the respondents while section B was on the items of the study which include the tourist assets in the area, tourist level of visitation to the sites, perceived contributions of the assets to the socio-economic activities in the area, challenges confronting the upgrading of the assets for tourism development as well as how the challenges can be surmounted so as to harness their potential for development. Oral interviews were conducted for prominent traditional chiefs as well as the custodians of the tourism assets. The secondary data used were mainly printed materials, internet downloads and official periodic obtained from the local government secretariat. Analysis of data was done through GIS techniques, photography, cross tabulation and single percentage.

## Results and Discussion

### Results

#### Bio data of Respondents

**Table 1: Demographic Features of the Respondents**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	180	60
Female	120	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
20-30	30	10
31-40	70	23.33
41-50	80	26.67
51-60	70	23.33
> 60	50	16.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational Qualifications</b>		
Non- Formal	40	13.33
Primary	90	30
Secondary	80	26.67
Tertiary	75	25
Others	15	05
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Length of Residency (years)</b>		
1-10	30	10
11-20	80	26.67
21-30	70	23.33
31-40	60	20

> 40	60	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farming	80	26.67
Trading	70	23.33
Civil Service	100	33.33
Artisans	50	16.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Tables 1 showed that majority of the respondents were males (60%). The age structure of the respondents showed that 30 (10) % were in the age bracket of 20 and 30, another 70 (23.33%) were in the age bracketb31 and 40, while 80 (26.67%), 70 (23.33%) and 50 (16.67%) were in the age brackets of 41 and 50, 51 and 60 and above 60 respectively. As regards the respondents' educational qualifications, majority of the respondents were also educated with 260 (86.67%) have passed through one level of formal education or the other. Only 40 (13.33%) of the respondents did not receive any form of formal education. The table also revealed that 30 (10%) of the respondents have been staying in the study area or between a year and 10years, 80 (26.67%) had stayed in the area for 11 and 20 years while 70 (23.33%), 60 (20%) and 60 (20%) stayed for 21 and 30 years, 31 and 40 year and above 40years respectively. Furthermore, it was revealed that most of the respondents were civil servants (33.33%), followed by farming 80(26.67%), Trading 70 (23.33%) while the least recorded occupation are the artisans 50 (16.67%).The implication of this demographic data was that most of the respondents are old enough, had required education, have been staying in the study area for long time an as well had occupations to understand the basic tenets of this study.

#### **Spatial Distribution of Tourism Assets in Ibarapa North Local Government Area**

**Table 2: Tourism Assets in the Study Area**

S/N	Assets	Location	Classifications
1.	Asawo Grove	Ayete	Natural
2.	Isamuni Hill	Ayete	Natural
3.	Igosun Hill	Ayete	Natural
4.	Alamuyo Spring	Ayete	Natural
5.	Awonwo Hill	Ayete	Natural
6.	Gbohunbohun Hill	Ayete	Natural
7.	Geregudu Cave	Ayete	Natural
8.	Asawo Palace	Ayete	Cultural
9.	Abinu Oro River	Tapa	Natural
10.	Igbo Oniki/Igboleke	Tapa	Natural
11.	Imofin Hill	Tapa	Natural
12.	Elemo Palace	Tapa	Cultural
13.	Asigangan Palace	Igangan	Cultural
14.	Aako Shrine	Igangan	Religious
15.	Aako Hill	Igangan	Natural
16.	Baba Sango Hill	Igangan	Natural
17.	Igangan Forest	Igangan	Natural



	Reserve		
18.	Ofiki River	Flows through the LGA	Natural

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 2 and figure 1 depicted the spatial spread of the tourism assets in the study area. Ayete the local government area headquarters and environ have eight prominent tourist assets. Out of the eight centres only one (Asawo palace) was classified as cultural, the other seven (Asawo Mangrove, Isamuni Hill (Plate 4), Igosun Hill (Plate 1), Alamuyo Spring (Plate 2), Awonwo Hill (Plate 6), Gbohunbohun Hill (Plate 7) and Geregudu Cave) were classified as natural phenomena. Igangan and environ have five tourist assets. Out of the five centres three (Aako Hill (Plate 8), Baba Sango Hill and Igangan Forest Reserve) were natural phenomena, while Aako shrine (Plate 9) was classified as Religious and Asigangan Palace (Plate 10&11) are classified as Cultural. Tapa and environ have the least number of tourism assets.



**Plate 1: Igosun Hill –Ayete**



**Plate 2: Alamuyo Spring–Ayete  
(During the Dry Season)**



**Rain season (pic taken from Tapa  
Igangan high way axis)**





**Plate 4: Isamuni Hill-Ayete**



**Plate 5: Imofin Hill-Tapa**



**Plate 6: Awonwo Hill- Ayete**



**Plate 7: Gbohunbohun Hill- Ayete**



**Plate 8: Aakoo Hill- Igangan**



**Plate 9: Aakoo Shrine- Igangan**



**Plate 10: Relics of the Burnt Asigangan Palace- Igangan**

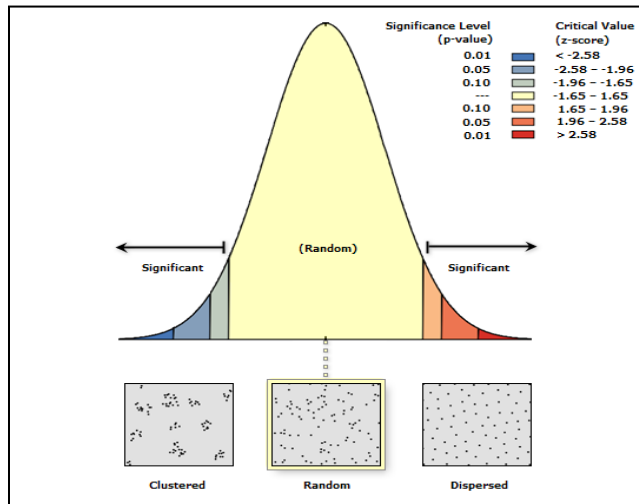


**Plate 11: The New Asigangan Palace- Igangan**

Out of the available four tourism assets, three (Abinu Oro River, Igbo Oniki/ Igboleke and Imofin Hill (Plate 5) were classified as natural phenomena while Elempe Palace was classified as cultural. River Ofiki (Plate 3) a major river in the South western drainage basin of the country flows through the entire study area and crossed the Tapa-Igangan highway from the Northeastern direction.

The spatial distribution of the tourist assets in the study area was investigated using the GIS technique and Nearest Neighbour Statistics (Figure 2). The analysis revealed that the distribution of the tourist assets was random in nature. The implication of this was that the tourism assets were randomly distributed and not clustered to a particular place in the study area. Besides, they owned their occurrences to chances determined by anthropogenesis factors and the opinion of the stakeholders to describe them as tourist attractions.

**Figure 2: Spatial Distribution of the Tourist Centres (Degree of Randomness)**



#### Average Nearest Neighbor Summary

<b>Observed Mean Distance:</b>	2198.4892 Meters
<b>Expected Mean Distance:</b>	2546.2695 Meters
<b>Nearest Neighbor Ratio:</b>	0.863416
<b>z-score:</b>	-1.077348
<b>p-value:</b>	0.281325

#### Level of Visitation to the Tourism Assets

**Table 3: Patronage of the Assets**

Level of Patronage	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High	10	3.33
High	50	16.67
Low	140	46.67
Very Low	100	33.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From table 3, the level at which tourists visit the assets was generally not encouraging. For instance a total of 140 (46.67%) of the respondents agreed that the level of patronage of the assets was low, 100 (33.33%) said it was very low. Only 20% of the respondents agreed that patronage of the assets was encouraging; 10 (3.33%) agreed it was very high and 50 (16.67%) agreed that it was high.

#### **Socio-economic Impact of Tourism in the Study Area**

**Table 4: Perceived Socio-Economic Benefits of Tourism Centres in Ibarapa North Local Government Area**

S/N		Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Employment generation	100	10.30
2.	Increase in socio-economic activities	280	28.87
3.	Increase in income of the locals	180	18.56
4.	Revenue generation for the LGA	80	8.25
5.	Foreign exchange for the nation	50	5.16
6.	Improvement in infrastructural development	100	10.30
7.	Fostering cooperation and natural	180	18.56
	Total	970	100

**Source:** *Field Survey 2024*

#### **\*Multiple Responses**

Table 4 showed the perceived benefits the people of the local government area derived from the tourism, 10.30% agreed that the presence of the tourism assets led to increase in employment generation. 28.87% were of the opinion that tourism ensured increase in socio-economic activities in the study area and this led to improvement in income of the locals (18.56%). Also, 8.25% of the respondents agreed that the presence of the assets generated revenue for the local government authority through the influx of people and vehicles into the area. The multiplier effect of all these benefits is the increase in socio-economic activities of the people. 5.16 % agreed that tourism in the study area was a source of foreign exchange generation. 10.30 % agreed that presence of tourist assets in the area accounted for improvement in infrastructural facilities and 18. 56 % were of the opinion that tourism in the area fostered cooperation and friendship.

#### **Challenges to Tourism Development in the Study Area**

**Table 5: Problems Militating Against Tourism Development**

S/N	Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Inadequate information on tourism potential of the area	200	14.13
2.	Inadequate infrastructures	250	17.67
3.	Inadequate government intervention	260	18.38
4.	Accessibility	275	19.43
5.	Centres were located in rural areas	150	10.60
6.	Insecurity	280	19.79
	Total	1415	100

**Source:** *Field Survey, 2024*

#### **\*Multiple Responses**

The major problems of tourism development in the area were felt in insecurity occasioned by constant kidnapping (19.79 %), poor accessibility to the tourist centres (19.43 %),

inadequate government intervention (18.38 %), inadequate infrastructures (17.67 %), inadequate information about the tourist centres in the area (14.13 %) as well as the fact that the centres were located in rural area (10. 60 %).

### **Discussion**

The findings revealed that there are a number of tourist centres in the study area which are classified as natural, cultural and religious. The tourism assets were distributed throughout the three sampled settlements and their environs. The Nearest Neighbor Statistics showed that the assets were randomly distributed within the study area and had their existences to both naturogenic and anthropogenesis factors.

The tourism assets are underdeveloped, underutilized and neglected. They lacked infrastructure facilities that can attract large number of visitors. Hence, the low patronage of the centres as the findings revealed. This was similar to the finding of Ogundele, Oladapo & Suberu (2016). The tourist centres are mostly under the supervision of the traditional institutions in the study area. Information about history and myths surrounding each of them are obtained from the traditional ruler (Oba or Bale) of the settlement that housed it. Once homage had been paid to the palace. One of the chiefs with the vast knowledge of the centres would be assigned to serve as the tourist guide that would lead the visitors to the assets or to the priests (when the asset is religious such as the Aako shrine). Most visits to the centres are short mainly by excursionists, the implication of this is that due to inadequate infrastructural facilities especially hotel accommodation, restaurants and super stores, people only make short visit and return to their base or neighbouring cities with improve facilities.

Findings also revealed that the centres have the potential to further increase the socio-economic development of the study area and beyond. For instance, it was agreed that despite the low level of patronage, increase in the rate of buying and selling was always recorded especially of local craft materials such as locally made fabrics, talking drums among others. The same was recorded among retailers selling agricultural products such as food materials (which are produced in large quantity in the study area). In addition, visitors to the centres also increased sales in restaurants and hotels. Also transporters and petty traders attested to the fact that they recorded increase in patronage. These activities had positive impact on the income generation of the inhabitants of the area this is similar to the findings of Kukoyi, Tijani & Adedara, (2013) and Adebayo, Jegede & Eniafe (2014). It was also discovered that influx of vehicles (public transporters) also increases the revenue of the local government because the transporters paid hackney permit levy and other levy to the local government agents. Ogundele, Oladapo & Suberu (2016) were of the opinion that tourism created income for persons working in hotels, cafes, restaurants, transport enterprises, retails shops and wherever tourists spend their money. The implication of this is that tourism has linkages with other sectors of the economy and ensures employment generation.

The interaction between the tourists and the subjects of the host communities improve socio-cultural bonds and therefore ensured mutual friendship because most of the visitors are from different cultural background. Apart from this, narrations from the chiefs that served as the tourist guides enriched the visitors with norms and culture of each settlement. The interaction between the tourists and the people of the host communities ensure mutual cooperation which encourage friendship.

Despite the huge awareness of the presence of these tourism assets in the study area it was discovered that the perception of the people on the relevance and the potential of the centres for socio- economic development was low. Hence, they do not appreciate and value what

their environment houses for the development of the area. It was noted that the tourism assets were not properly promoted in news media and other agents of information dissemination. Even the little information on the assets presented at the local government secretariat was documented in the Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS) 2009-2011 bulletin produced in 2012.

Furthermore, the state of infrastructural facilities in the area seriously hindered the patronage of the tourism assets; lack of good access road to most of the centres was recorded, except for Gbohunghobun hill and Ofiki River which are located very close to the major road. Apart from the major roads that connected the seven prominent settlements in Ibarapa region most of the other feeder roads within the local government areas are in poor state. There was absence of roads to most of these tourism assets and the few existing ones are made nearly impassable by pot-holes and erosion. Similarly, standard hotels and restaurants are very few. Though, global service for mobile communication services were present in the major towns the services provided were poor.

Government at the local level especially the local government neglected the industry without clear policy on the sector. This is further compounded by the fact that the policies on tourism by the state and the federal government were poorly implemented. This policy somersault was reflected in the fact that there was no local government authority official to record the number of visitors, their origin and purpose of visits. Through this substantial revenue that could accrue from ticket sale, tax and so on was lost. It was also discovered that the tourists were at the mercy of weather during the rain or similar harsh weather. Field observation also revealed that most of the assets are located in rural environment with the peculiarity of low level of infrastructures. For instance, there was no visible local government authority presence in nearly all the tourist centres, no administrative office, no government employed tourist guide, security personnel or medical facilities. Tunde (2012) opined that tourists always preferred to visit places where there are high standard of infrastructural facilities or rural areas that are close to urban centres with standard facilities. In such a situation the urban centres derived most of the socio-economic benefits of the tourism development.

In the recent past the local government area was synonymous with insecurity as a result of kidnapping and banditry which led to loss of lives and properties (including the burning of the palace of the paramount king of Igangan (Plate 10) as well as destruction of farmlands. In addition, huge amount of money was paid as ransom to the kidnappers. These incidences to a greater extent created a negative perception of the study area as insecure. Therefore, tourists avoided the tourism assets in the area. Oyekola, Adewuyi & Ajibade (2023) reported that insecurity in study area seriously hindered human mobility, farming activities and execution of developmental projects while Ogili, Olowe & Eneh (2023) also reported that insecurity is one of the banes of tourism development in the country.

## Conclusion

The study area is blessed with a lot of natural and cultural phenomena that are potential tourist assets. These assets have been neglected over the years at the detriment of the socio-economic development of the area. Inadequate infrastructures, insecurity, government defective policy on tourism, inadequate awareness about the tourism potential of the area among other problems greatly hindered the contributions of tourism to the development of the area. There is no doubt that if appropriate steps were taken by the stakeholders to ameliorate the problems,



tourism development in the study area is capable of improving employment opportunity, generate revenue for the government, increase income of the locals, preserve cultural heritage of the area and lead to infrastructural development of the area among others benefit for socio economic development of the area and the nation as a whole.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were suggested for stakeholders' attentions. This study therefore suggests that government should embrace public-private partnership in order to develop tourism sector. The government needs to diversity revenue base in order to encourage socio-economic development of every locality. To this end it is recommended that.

- There is the need for the upgrading of the security architecture of the study area. Such step should include the involvement of the locals in provision of adequate security (community policing). This will go a long way in improving the security of the area as well as correct the negative perception about the security of the host communities.
- The government should involve individuals, host communities and corporate organization such as NGOs to take active part in tourism development to stimulate infrastructural facilities upgrading and job creation.
- Increase budgeting provision should be made by tourism operators and government at both the local and state levels for the physical development of the tourism assets to an internationally accepted level.
- Government should create policies on community- based tourist products with locals having as much stake as government and or private investor, thereby ensuring sustainability and job creation in host communities.
- There is the need for the annual World Tourism Day to be rotating among the various tourism assets host communities in Oyo state this to a greater extent will not only expose the tourism potential of the study area but the state and the nation in general.
- There is the need for the state and the local governments to get involve in serious massive national and international tourism marketing promotion through the mass communication channels so as to showcase the tourism potential of the state and the study area.

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