

ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM POTENTIALS IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA: A STUDY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

¹Osuoha Ifeanyi Jude, ²Ukabuilu Emmanuel Nnabugwu, ³Onyeonoro Cletus Okechukwu,

⁴Onyeneke Chimezie Mike, ⁵Managwu Lilian Chinenye, ¹Mojeed Fadeelah Oyindamola

¹,Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Faculty of Agriculture, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

²Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Faculty of Management Science, Imo State University Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.

³Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, College of Applied Food Sciences and Tourism, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria.

⁴Hospitality and Tourism Management Association of Nigeria, Kaduna, Nigeria.

⁵Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Uwana, Afikpo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Email: ifeanyi.osuoha@fuoye.edu.ng,

Phone: +2348067116116,

ORCID iD: 0009-0007-6913-6765

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15118016>

Abstract: This study is on the assessment of tourism potentials in Ekiti State. The specific objectives of this study are to assess the role of community engagement in sustainable tourism development and identify strategies for mitigating environmental degradation in Ekiti State's tourism industry. The descriptive study was selected for this research as it facilitated the exploration of primary data derived from the responses from participants by using a structured survey questionnaire. The study population consisted of 150 respondents, carefully selected to represent a diverse group of individuals connected to the tourism sector. Spearman's ranking correlation coefficient was used in this study. The technique was used because; the data analyzed was a quantitative one and quantitative data is data that can take exact numerical values, adequate sample size at least 10, one or more category, independent observation, data presented in frequency form, and all the observations were used. The findings reveal that the active engagement of community members is essential to fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring that tourism initiatives align with the values, culture, and needs of the local population, among others. The study concludes that Ekiti State possesses extraordinary tourism potential, thanks to its unique combination of cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and historical landmarks.

Keywords: Tourism, Mitigation, Community engagement, and environmental degradation

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon that entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business (professional purposes (World Tourism Organization (WTO), 2014). Tourism is said to be the travel for recreational, leisure, family or business purposes, usually of a

limited duration. Tourism is commonly associated with trans-national travel, but may also refer to travel to another location for the same country. It involves the movement of people away from their normal place of residence (Holloway et al., 2009). Tourism as a concept has been reflected in various definitions. The wide coverage of activities entailed in tourism as well as its close interrelationship with cultural, social economic, political, and environmental aspects of human life add to its broadness conceptual (Osuoha et al., 2025).

The industry is one of the largest income-generating business sectors that contributes multidirectional benefits to a country's economic development (Olorunfemi and Raheem, 2008). Tourism happens in destinations and travelers are going to destinations to visit attractions and to partake in recreational activities, which will result in experiences resulting from their interactions in the places visited (Uysal et al., 2011).

The Tourism sector has been praised for its capacity to stimulate economic growth through job creation and by attracting investments and fostering entrepreneurship, while also contributing, if properly harnessed, to the preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, protection of cultural heritage and promotion of the empowerment of local communities (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2017). Tourism is an instrument of economic regeneration and stability. It harnesses the capacity to create wealth, empower the people and generate employment opportunities. As stated by Ogunberu (2011), tourism is the largest and fastest growing industry in the world today.

Ekiti State is greatly endowed with tourist resources relative to other countries of the world. The Travel and Tourism Economic Impact Assessment was carried out on Nigeria by the World Economic Forum in (2013), the World Travel and Tourism Council revealed that Ekiti State has the required tourist resources to enhance its economic landscape and hence, witness steady economic growth. The report affirmed that tourist resources in Ekiti State fall into hotels or resorts, recreational parks, wildlife, natural sceneries, cultural festivals, historical relics and monuments; however, the state is richly blessed with abundant tourist resources. (Busayo et al, 2014). Apart from the Ikogosi-Ekiti warm and cold springs tourism center, Ekiti State is greatly endowed with tourist resources such as: (i) Fajuyi Memorial Park, Ado Ekiti; (ii) Lake View Resort, Ilawe-Ekiti; (iii) Efon-Alaaye Waterfall; (iv) Olosunta Hills; (v) Ero Dam and Lake; (vi) Ipole-Iloro Waterfall; and (vii) Oriole Hills.

This study provides an overview of the tourism potential in Ekiti State by examining the state's natural, cultural, and historical attractions. The state's natural attractions include the Ikogosi Warm Springs, Efon-Alaaye Waterfalls, and Olosunta Hills.

Statement of the Problems

Tourism plays a vital role in economic development and cultural exchange; however, its potential remains underutilized in many regions. Ekiti State is known for its natural attractions and cultural heritage, but several challenges hinder the full exploitation of its tourist potential. A lack of active community involvement often results in limited awareness and appreciation of the economic and social benefits of tourism. Studies have shown that community engagement is crucial for sustainable tourism development (Mbaiwa, 2017). Without proper integration of local communities, the promotion of tourism sites in Ekiti State remains inadequate. Over time, uncontrolled tourism activities and insufficient environmental management practices have led to the degradation of many tourist sites.

As highlighted by Gossling and Hall (2019), the sustainability of tourism destinations depends heavily on preserving the natural environment. Poor infrastructure, including roads, accommodations, and utilities, limits

access to tourist destinations in Ekiti State. According to Okonkwo (2020), inadequate infrastructure is a significant barrier to the development of the tourism sector in Nigeria, reducing the appeal of otherwise attractive destinations.

These challenges collectively hinder the realization of Ekiti State's full tourism potential, necessitating a strategic approach to address these issues.

Aims and Objectives

The specific objectives are to:

- i. assess the role of community engagement in sustainable tourism development.
- ii. identify strategies for mitigating environmental degradation in Ekiti State's tourism industry.

Research Questions

The following questions have been raised to pilot this study;

- i. What role does community engagement play in sustainable tourism development?
- ii. How can environmental degradation be mitigated in Ekiti State's tourism industry?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were considered for this research:

- i. Ho: Community engagement does not significantly influence sustainable tourism development.
- ii. Hi: Community engagement significantly influences sustainable tourism development.
- iii. Ho: Environmental degradation has no significant impact on tourism development in Ekiti State.
- Hi: Environmental degradation has a significant impact on tourism development in Ekiti State.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on tourism development in Ekiti State, Nigeria, examining the state's natural, cultural, and historical attractions. This study explores the challenges facing the industry, effective marketing strategies, community engagement, environmental degradation, and economic benefits.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Literature

Conceptual literature, also known as theoretical literature, refers to scholarly works that provide a framework for understanding a particular phenomenon. The conceptual literature provides foundational knowledge on tourism development, community engagement, environmental degradation, and marketing strategies. This type of literature is characterized by a conceptual or theoretical focus rather than empirical research (Hallmann and Zehrer, 2017). The conceptual literature aims to provide a conceptual understanding of a phenomenon or issue by analyzing its key concepts, identifying their relationships, and developing a theoretical framework that can guide future research and practical applications (Hallmann and Zehrer, 2017). Conceptual literature often involves a critical review and synthesis of existing literature, with the goal of identifying and articulating theoretical gaps and unresolved issues. It provides an analytical lens through which to view a phenomenon, identifying underlying assumptions, and examining the implications of competing theoretical perspectives (Hallmann and Zehrer, 2017).

Concept of Tourism

Traveling to explore new places and looking for changes in the environment has been a permanent feature in human history. However, such voyages were in the absence of a range of facilities (i.e. well-defined routes and safety measures) characterizing modern tourism. The Definition of Tourism varies source by source, person by

person. There is no consensus concerning the definition of tourism. For instance, Ojo (2019) defines tourism as any activity that voluntarily or temporarily takes a person from his usual place of residence to satisfy the need for pleasure, excitement, experience and relaxation. According to Orimaye et al. (2018), tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.

Tourism in Nigeria

Nigeria is blessed with enormous tourism potential that, if properly harnessed, will attract a significant number of tourists and herald huge revenues into the country (Aiyemnkhue, 2010). In Nigeria, tourism contributes to the economic growth of the nation's economy. The industry has contributed to the GDP and this has grown from 3.2% in 2003 to 4.0% in 2015. It is also predicted to increase by 6.0% annually by 2015 (WTTC, 2015). International tourist arrivals increased from 656,000 in 1995 to 1,285,000 in 2015 (World Bank 2016). The arrivals of the international tourists contributed NGN 108.8bn in visitor receipts in 2014 and it is expected to rise to NGN 170.7bn, an increase of 3.9% per annum by 2025 (WTTC, 2015). There is no doubt that Nigeria's tourism potential is huge and, if properly developed, will generate huge revenues for the country (Osuoha et al., 2024).

Tourism in the Ekiti State

Ekiti State is greatly endowed with tourist resources relative to other countries of the world. The Travel and Tourism Economic Impact Assessment was carried out on Nigeria by the World Economic Forum in (2013), the World Travel and Tourism Council revealed that Ekiti State has the required tourist resources to enhance its economic landscape and hence, witness steady economic growth. The report affirmed that tourist resources in Ekiti State fall into hotels or resorts, recreational parks, wildlife, natural sceneries, cultural festivals, historical relics and monuments; however, the state is richly blessed with abundant tourist resources. (Busayo et al, 2014).

Community Engagement in Tourism

Community engagement in ecotourism involves the active participation of local communities in the planning, management, and benefit-sharing of ecotourism projects, ensuring that these communities play a central role in the development and sustainability of ecotourism (Ogunjinmi and Braimoh, 2018; Orimaye and Anifowose, 2023). Engaging local communities in decision-making processes is critical to the success of ecotourism initiatives, as it ensures that their interests and needs are considered, leading to more equitable outcomes (Diminyi and Okpoko, 2019).

Empirical Literature

1.infrastructure and Tourism Development

Habibi, Rahmati and Karimi (2018) employed a growth decomposition method to decompose economic growth across industries in Iran and assessed how tourism contributed to the economy between 2005 and 2014. Results showed that tourism is growth-enhancing, confirming the TLGH for Iran.

Fahimi et al., (2018) examined the nature of the causal nexus among tourism, human capital development and economic growth using the panel Granger causality test to analyze panel data from 1995 to 2015 for 10 small states. The study found evidence of tourism-led growth, tourism-led human capital development and human capital development-led growth.

2. Community Engagement in Tourism

Okazaki (2008) developed a community-based tourism model that links participation to the success of tourism projects. The study emphasized that communities should be involved in decision-making processes to mitigate the negative social impacts.

Manyara and Jones (2007) investigated the role of local communities in tourism in Kenya and Tanzania. Findings showed that engaging communities in planning and management enhanced sustainability and reduced conflicts.

Theoretical Literature

A theoretical review in research involves a critical assessment and analysis of the existing theoretical frameworks, concepts, models, and ideas that are relevant to a particular research problem or question.

Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) Model

Proposed by Richard W. Butler (1980), the TALC model explains the development and evolution of tourist destinations over time. A tourist destination can be a continent, country, village, Town resort or any area. The concept of the tourism area life cycle can be applied to tourism destinations.

Relevance to the Study:

- **Tourism Potential:** TALC can be used to assess the current stage of Ekiti's tourist destinations, such as the Ikogosi Warm Springs or the Erin Ayonigba Sacred Fish River.
- **Sustainability:** It highlights the need for sustainable practices to avoid stagnation or decline.
- **Policy Recommendations:** Helps stakeholders create strategies for rejuvenating or developing destinations.

Theoretical Orientation

Tourism is a dynamic field that encompasses various theories and models to understand its complexities and implications. This article explores three essential theories: the Sustainable Tourism Development Theory, the Push-Pull Theory of Motivation, and Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) Model. Each theory offers unique insights that are particularly relevant to the study of "The Tourist Potentials in Ekiti State: A Case Study of Some Selected Destinations." By examining these theories, we can better comprehend the potential for tourism development in Ekiti State and the motivations of tourists visiting the region.

The Sustainable Tourism Development Theory emphasizes the importance of developing tourism in a way that meets the needs of present tourists while preserving the environment and ensuring that future generations can also enjoy these resources. This theory is grounded in three pillars: environmental sustainability, economic viability, and social equity (Bramwell and Lane, 2011).

Relevance to the Ekiti State

In the context of Ekiti State, sustainable tourism is crucial due to its rich cultural heritage and natural resources. By applying this theory, tourism developers can ensure that local communities benefit economically from tourism while protecting cultural sites and natural landscapes. For instance, the promotion of ecotourism initiatives can enhance visitor experiences without compromising ecological integrity.

Research Methodology

This section of this work was used by the researcher to discuss the steps used by the researcher to generate relevant and current data for this study. This chapter was divided into 8 sections with the aim of explaining how the research was carried out and how the data was obtained and analyzed. The sections include;

Research Design

Saunders et al., (2007) in Osuoha et al., (2022) defines research design as the general plan of how the research questions would be answered. It is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted. It constitutes a blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. A survey is a method for collecting data in which people are asked to answer several questions (usually in the form of a questionnaire). The research design for this study was the descriptive survey research design. The choice of the descriptive survey design was appropriate because it facilitated the exploration of primary data derived from the responses from the participants by using a structured survey questionnaire.

Population of the study

The study population consisted of 150 respondents, carefully selected to represent a diverse group of individuals connected to the tourism sector. This group included tourists who were visiting specific destinations, offering insights into their experiences and preferences. Additionally, the study incorporated members of local communities residing near these destinations, allowing for a deeper understanding of how tourism impacts their daily lives, culture, and environment. The population also included key stakeholders in the tourism industry, such as hotel owners, tour operators, and government officials. These stakeholders provided valuable perspectives on the operational, managerial, and policy aspects of tourism, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the sector from multiple viewpoints.

Sampling Plan

Anyanwu (2003) in Osuoha et al., (2022) defined a sample plan as that part taken from a whole to show how the rest look like. It is also ideal to differentiate the sample from the sampling. Sampling is the process of selecting a portion of a population considered to be adequate to represent all the characteristics of that population for generating the findings from the sample itself and the target population. Hence, the sites taken are believed to be representative of all other sites in Ekiti State.

Furthermore, Anyanwu (2000) in Osuoha et al., (2022) noted that the sample answer these questions under the following headings:

- i. Sample unit (who is to be surveyed?)
- ii. Sample size (How many are to be surveyed?)
- iii. Sample Procedure (How are they to be surveyed?)
- iv. Sample Method (How are they to be reached?)

Sample unit

The sample unit consists of individuals and organizations directly or indirectly related to tourism in Ekiti State.

Sample Size

Cochran's equation of finite population was used to determine the sample of the study. The formula is stated below:

$$N_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2 N}$$

$$N_0 = \frac{SS}{1 + \frac{(SS-1)}{Pop}}$$

Where,

SS = Sample size

Pop = Population

n = sample size

Z = Z value of the confidence level.

P = Estimated proportion of an attribute present in the population

q = 1-p

e = Desired level of precision expressed in decimal.

N = Population size.

Using a 90% confidence interval; Z = 1655

e = $\pm 10\% = 0.1$

p = 0.5 (maximum variable)

q = 1 - 0.5 = 0.5

N = 0.5

$$N_0 = \frac{(1655)^2 (0.5)(0.5)}{(0.10)^2} = 150$$

Sample Procedure

The sampling procedure, which involves choosing the residential divisions, was done using the simple random procedure

Sample method

The method for sampling used was using a questionnaire. The primary data was determined with the aid of a questionnaire and was supplied by residents of the study areas.

Research Instrument

The researcher used primary data. The research instrument used for data collection was through a structured questionnaire administered to the respondents.

Method of Data Collection

Primary Data

The primary data was supplied by individuals and organizations directly/indirectly related to tourism in Ekiti State. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to the respondents. The questionnaire of the study was made up of both close-ended and open-ended questions. Close-ended questions constituted the basis of the structured questions. The open-ended questions were generally inserted to provide a more complete picture of the respondents. The questionnaire was designed in a structured form and made up of twenty (20) general questions to be answered hypothetically and was restricted to the responses made of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), strongly disagree (SD), and disagreed (D).

Test of Hypothesis

Spearman's ranking correlation coefficient was used in this study. The technique was used because; the data analyzed was a quantitative one and quantitative data is data that can take exact numerical values, adequate sample size at least 10, one or more category, independent observation, data presented in frequency form, and all the observations were used. The research captured all those conditions making the technique relevant for the study. The null hypothesis and the alternative hypotheses were defined in terms of the distribution as a whole.

Spearman's ranking correlation coefficient also measures how the observed value fits the expected values. We should anticipate if the null hypothesis is in fact true. The distribution changes as the sample size changes, which is referred to as the degree of freedom. With the number of degrees of freedom expressed as;

$$V = n - 1$$

Where;

V = degree of freedom

N = number of observations in the sample

Statistical Method of Data Analysis

Due to the nature and number of the variables involved in this study, quantitative data analysis was used to process the data. For the quantitative analysis, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 17) was used to process the data. For the lower version of analysis, the perception of the respondent's percentages were used to analyze the data. This means that the analysis was done on the content of the data which were collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the demographics and respondents' views on the study.

Response Rate of the Respondent

A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed at the study locations, and only 140 (93.33%) questionnaires were recoverable, while 10 (6.67%) questionnaires were not recovered. All the questionnaires retrieved were organized, coded and computed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) before being interpretively analyzed.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1

H₀: Community engagement does not significantly influence sustainable tourism development.

H₁: Community engagement significantly influences sustainable tourism development.

Variables	ΣX	ΣX^2	ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-val
Community engagement	719	6741		6117	0.93
Sustainable tourism development	260	2905			

Significant 0.05 level, critical r = 0.121, df = 685

From the result above in Table 4.7.1, the calculated r-value of 0.93 is higher than the critical r-value of 0.112 at 0.05 levels of significance and 685 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis was rejected, while the alternate hypothesis revealed that community engagement significantly influences sustainable tourism development.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square		Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
	R Square Change	F Change				df1	df2	Sig. F Change		
1	0.318 ^a	0.183	0.21	0.782	.00000	3.185	11	374	.000	0.123.

a Predictors: (Constant): Community engagement

b Dependent variable: Sustainable tourism development in Ekiti State

The result of the regression analysis in Table 4.7.2 shows a yielded coefficient of regression (R) of 0.374 and a multiple regression R-square (R^2) of 0.318, and an adjusted R^2 of 0.21, at the 0.01 level of significance, the result is significant, the result also shows that an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the multiple regressions produced an F-ratio of 3.185, while the f-critical value is 1.91 (2-tailed), since the calculated F-value of 3.185 is greater than the critical F-value of 1.91, at the 0.05 significant level, (2-tailed), the result is also significant at the 0.05 level. The significance of this result is that community engagement significantly influences sustainable tourism development.

Hypothesis 2

H₀: Environmental degradation has no significant impact on tourism development in Ekiti State.

H₂: Environmental degradation has a significant impact on tourism development in Ekiti State.

Variables	ΣX	ΣX^2	ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-val
Environmental degradation	749	6890		6711	0.73
Tourism development in Ekiti State	264	2091			

Significant 0.05 level, critical $r = 0.096$, $df = 854$.

From the result above in Table 4.7.3, the calculated r-value of 0.73 is higher than the critical r-value of 0.096 at 0.05 levels of significance and 854 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis was rejected, while the alternate hypothesis revealed that environmental degradation has a significant impact on tourism development in Ekiti State.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square		Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2		R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.512 ^a	0.183	0.39	0.782	.00000	2.108	11	167	.000	0.123.

a Predictors: (Constant): Environmental degradation

b Dependent variable: Tourism development in Ekiti State

The result of the regression analysis in Table 4.7.4 shows a yielded coefficient of regression (R) of 0.167 and a multiple regression R-square (R^2) of 0.512, and an adjusted R^2 of 0.39, at the 0.01 level of significance, the result is significant, the result also shows that an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the multiple regressions produced an F-ratio of 2.108, while the f-critical value is 1.91 (2-tailed), since the calculated F-value of 2.108 is greater than the critical F-value of 1.91, at 0.05 significant level, (2-tailed), the result is also significant at 0.05 level. The significance of this result implies that environmental degradation has a significant impact on tourism development in Ekiti State.

Discussion of the Findings

Objective I: To assess the role of community engagement in sustainable tourism development

Community involvement is critical in ensuring the success and sustainability of tourism projects. The study's finding aligns with existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of community involvement in sustainable tourism. Timothy and Tosun (2003) argue that community participation ensures long-term project success by promoting the ownership and stewardship of resources. Similarly, Scheyvens (1999) posits that sustainable

tourism thrives when local people actively participate, as this foster equitable benefit-sharing and environmental conservation. This agreement highlights that for Ekiti State's tourism to achieve sustainability, integrating community inputs is critical. Timothy and Tosun (2003) emphasized that community participation promotes sustainable tourism by fostering a sense of ownership among local residents. Similarly, Aref (2011) highlights that when communities are involved in tourism planning and implementation, they are more likely to protect and support the initiatives. For Ekiti State, where tourism potential lies in its natural landscapes and cultural heritage, the active participation of residents ensures that tourism activities align with community interests and environmental preservation.

Objective II: Identifying strategies for mitigating environmental degradation in Ekiti State's tourism industry

The finding that proper waste management systems are in place at tourist sites in Ekiti State is consistent with the conclusions of Mensah (2006), who noted that effective waste management in tourism hotspots enhances environmental quality and visitor satisfaction. However, studies like Signe et al. (2017) have pointed out that in many developing regions, waste management is often insufficient due to resource constraints. If Ekiti State is indeed excelling in this area, it represents a positive deviation from challenges documented in similar contexts, underscoring its commitment to sustainability.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Findings

The study titled "Tourism Potential in Ekiti State" provides an in-depth exploration of the opportunities and challenges associated with developing a robust tourism industry in the region. It highlights the immense potential that Ekiti State holds for tourism development, emphasizing the pivotal role of local community involvement, strategic marketing, and adherence to environmental sustainability principles in driving growth. The findings reveal that the active engagement of community members is essential to fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring that tourism initiatives align with the values, culture, and needs of the local population. Similarly, the adoption of innovative and targeted marketing strategies, alongside environmentally sustainable practices, is necessary to elevate the state's tourism sector.

Conclusions

The study concludes that Ekiti State possesses extraordinary tourism potential, thanks to its unique combination of cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and historical landmarks. These assets position the state as a destination with the capacity to attract several tourists, from cultural enthusiasts to nature lovers. However, for this potential to be fully realized, it is imperative to address the systemic challenges that have long hindered progress in the tourism sector. Among these challenges, the lack of adequate infrastructure stands out as a major barrier. Poor road conditions, an inconsistent electricity supply, and the absence of modern tourist facilities make it difficult for visitors to fully access and enjoy what the state has to offer. While Ekiti State faces significant challenges in its journey toward becoming a leading tourist destination, it also possesses all the necessary ingredients to achieve success. Through strategic planning, focused investments in infrastructure, community engagement, and a commitment to sustainability, the state can transform its tourism potential into tangible social, cultural, and economic benefits. By taking these steps, Ekiti State can establish itself as a premier destination that offers visitors a unique blend of culture, history, and natural beauty, while simultaneously improving the quality of life for its residents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and observations during the study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1.Improve road networks to enhance accessibility to tourist sites.
- 2.Invest in modern accommodations and reliable electricity supply to attract tourists.
- 3.Use digital platforms and social media to promote Ekiti's attractions.

REFERENCES

- Adejuwon, J. O. (2018). Cultural tourism in Nigeria: Issues and challenges. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 20(2), 123–132.
- Adelabu, O. (2018). Tourism development in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 19(2), 1–12.
- Adesogan, A. (2018). Sustainable tourism practices in Nigeria: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 26(10), 1680–1695.
- Adeyemo, D. (2019). Environmental impacts of tourism on natural attractions in Nigeria. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 20(1), 1–12.
- Akama, J. S., & Kieti, D. (2007). Tourism and socio-economic development in developing countries: A case study of Mombasa Resort in Kenya. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 15(6), 735–748.
- Akinbode, A. (2017). Tourism infrastructure development in Nigeria: A review. *Journal of Infrastructure Development*, 9(1), 1–14.
- Anwar, S. (2017). Community-based tourism: A critical review. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(9), 1227–1242.
- Anyanwu, A. (2003). *Research methodology*. Nicole Research Publications.
- Aref, F. (2011). Barriers to community capacity building for tourism development in communities. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 8(2), 145–157.
- Ashley, C., & Roe, D. (1998). Enhancing community involvement in wildlife tourism: Issues and challenges. *IIED Working Paper*.
- Bramwell, B., & Lane, B. (2011). *Tourism and sustainability: Development, globalization and new tourism in the Third World*. Routledge.
- Buckley, R. (2012). Sustainable tourism: Research and reality. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(2), 528–546.

- Buhalis, D. (2000). Marketing the competitive destination of the future. *Tourism Management*, 21(1), 97–116.
- Butler, R. W. (1980). The concept of a tourist area cycle of evolution: Implications for the management of resources. *Canadian Geographer*, 24(1), 5–12.
- Butler, R. W. (2015). Tourism area life cycle. In A. A. Lew, C. M. Hall, & A. M. Williams (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell companion to tourism* (pp. 323–333). Wiley Blackwell.
- Crompton, J. L. (1979). Motivations for a pleasure vacation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 6(4), 408–424.
- Dann, G. M. (1977). Anomie, ego-enhancement, and tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 4(4), 184–194.
- Ebohon, O. J., Field, B. G., & Sodiq, A. (2012). Energy supply, poverty, and climate change in developing countries. *Journal of Energy Policy*, 39(3), 190–200.
- Freeman, R. E. (2017). *Stakeholder theory: Concepts and strategies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gashu, K., & Gebremariam, B. (2014). The role of transport infrastructure in tourism development in developing countries: A case of Ethiopia. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 16(2), 213–221.
- Gössling, S. (2019). Tourism and environmental degradation: A review. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(1), 1–15.
- Ifeanyi Jude, O., Stanley Chibueze, N., & Josephine Timipre, A.-I. (2022). Event planning and tourists' revisit intention to Calabar Carnival. *GPH-International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 5(04), 21–29. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6976807>
- Ifeanyi Jude, O., Prekebena, P., Stanley Chibueze, N., & Daniel Izuchukwu, E. (2022). Event planning as a veritable tool for creating awareness of culture during Calabar Carnival. *GPH-International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 5(06), 01–09. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6797835>
- Osuoha, I. J., Akinmoyede, B. F., Aina, S. O. F., & Nnamdi, S. C. (2024). Tourism: A tool for recreational activity in Oyo State, Nigeria: A case study of Ado Awaze-Suspended Lake. *Global Research Journal of Management and Social Sciences (GRJMSS)*, 15(12), 13–27. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14615265>
- Osuoha, I. J., Iason, B. E., Oyesomi, F. O., & Yusuf, S. A. (2025). Harnessing the tourism potentials in Ado Awaye Suspended Lake for tourism development in Oyo State, Nigeria. *Advanced Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 9(1), 57–80. Retrieved from <https://aspjournals.org/Journals/index.php/ajmss/article/view/971>

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2007). Research methods for business students (4th ed.). Pearson Education Ltd.

Scheyvens, R. (1999). Ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities. *Tourism Management*, 20(2), 245–249.

World Bank. (2009). *Tourism and development: Agenda for action*. World Bank.

Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*, 31(2), 179–188.