



Assessment of Ecotourism Potentials of Ado-Away Suspended Lake in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract. The study assessed ecotourism potentials of Ado-Away Suspended Lake in Oyo state, Nigeria with special interest to investigate the socio-economic impact of the lake on host community and determine the challenges facing the development of Ado-Away suspended lake. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the resident and staff of Ado-Away suspended Lake. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistic. The demographic characteristics of the respondents showed that 59.8% of the respondents were male with 40.2% of the respondents were between 31-40 years. Majority of the respondents' secondary education with 37.9% and 58.6% of the respondents are married. It can equally be noted from the finding that majority of the respondents are Muslim (52.9%). Majority of the respondents (97.7%) are aware of the lake. Nine ecotourism attractions are identified in Ado-Away suspended Lake. The socio-economic impacts of Ado-Away suspended Lake showed that the Lake provides jobs and business opportunity are ranked as the most socio-economic impacts of the suspended Lake on the host community and the major challenges confronting the development of Ado-Away suspended Lake is lack of government interest and lack awareness. The study concludes that there are enormous socio-economic impacts accruing from the ecotourism resources of Ado-Away suspended Lake.

Keywords: Ado-Away, Suspended Lake, Ecotourism, Potentials

1. Introduction

The Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as “purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of the environment;

taking care not to alter the integrity ecosystem; producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people (Kaypak, 2010). The concept of ecotourism bears a strong connection to both natural and social responsibility. Barau and Stringer, (2015) claimed that the demand for ecotourism is increasing worldwide, ecotourism is a small and specialized component of the world tourism market with major and increasing impact on both people and nature. Inappropriate tourism development and practices can degrade habitats and landscapes, deplete natural resources, and generate waste and pollution. Ecotourism thus minimizes the negativity that tourism brings (Deville *et al.*, 2016).

Recently, many advocates of tourism have promoted seemingly new tourism concepts, such as nature-based tourism, ecotourism, and sustainable tourism, among others. These new forms of tourism are promoted as an environmentally safe way for rural communities to generate income from natural resources.

They are advocated particularly in developing countries because many developing countries possess a comparative advantage over developed countries in their ability to provide relatively pristine natural settings (Cater 1993). Affluence, education, and environmentalism all contribute to increasing visitation to wild lands and generate income for local communities through the expenditures of tourists such as lodging, transportation, food, guides, and souvenirs (Laarman and Sedjo2009). Demand for these new forms of tourism, it is argued, arises from increased concern or interest in unique and fragile ecosystems and a growing desire to travel to new and exotic places, and an increasing number of people

who have the financial means to do so (Seidl2006).

Ado-Awaye Suspended Lake is one of the two hanging lakes in Africa and in the world. It has vast potential for the development of a sustainable tourism sector in Nigeria and, implicitly, Africa largely due to its competitive advantage.

Ecotourism is one of the fastest expanding tourism markets receiving much attention in developing countries and economically impoverished regions around the world. Ecotourism accounts for a large share of some countries' gross domestic product, and so contributes to livelihoods of many people (Akerlof and Kennedy, 2013). There is little or no study on ecotourism potential of Ado-Awaye Suspended Lake. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the current status and ecotourism potential of Ado-Awaye suspended Lake.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Location

Ado-Awaye suspended lake lies about 20 km West of Iseyin, Iseyin Local Government Area of Oyo State. The lake is located in the Iyake Mountains that sprawl around the sleepy town with a land cover area of 190.62 hectares. It falls within Latitudes 07°048'00''N and 07°054'00''N and Longitudes 003°018'00''E and 003°030'00''E. The area is mainly characterized by rocks with a dynamic structure and impeccable display such as the Ishage rock, which can be a resource for tourism attraction. There is no major river within the catchment.

2.2 Study Population

The study population involves residents of the host community and staffs of Ado-Awaye suspended Lake.

2.3 Sample Size

The sample size was put at one hundred and twenty respondents, of which eighty seven (87) questionnaires were retrieved.

2.4 Sampling Technique

Simple random techniques was used to select the residents of the host community and staffs of Ado-awaye suspended Lake

2.5 Method of Data Collection

Questionnaire was personally administered by the researcher. The questionnaire contained a series of structure question which was related to the research work and directed to respondents with the aim of gaining first-hand information.

2.6 Data Analysis

Data obtained from the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics that is frequency tables, charts and bars.

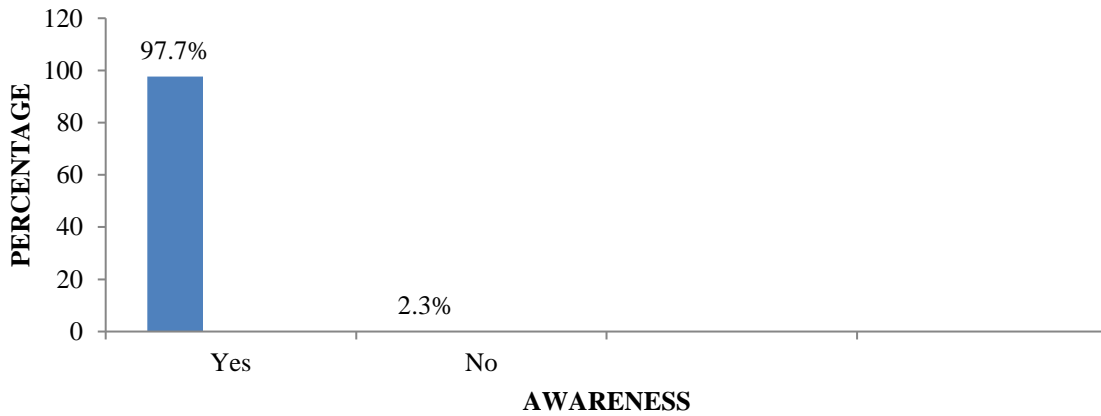
3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents, it was observed that 59.8% of the respondents were male while 40.2% were female. 40.2% of the respondents were between 31-40 years, followed by age group ≤ 30 years with 29.9% while age group 51 years and above is the least with 10.3%. The table further revealed that majority of the respondents' secondary education with 37.9%, followed by tertiary education with 28.7% while no formal education is the least with 12.6%. Also majority (58.6%) of the respondents are married, followed by single with 26.4% while divorce/widow/widower respondents recorded 14.9%. It can equally be noted from the table that majority of the respondents are Muslim (52.9%), followed by Christianity with 37.9% while traditional religion scores 9.2%. The table also revealed that 31.0% of the respondents are civil servant, 20.7% are students while 48.3% are artisanal/craftsman's. It was also shown that majority (72.4%) of the respondents had stayed in Ado-awaye ≥ 11 years while 27.6% had stayed for ≤ 10 years. Majority of the respondents (97.7%) are aware of the lake while 2.3% are unaware (Fig 1). The key ecotourism attractions available in the study area are revealed in table 2, in which nine ecotourism attraction are identified.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC OF THE RESPONDENTS

Demographic	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	52	59.8
	Female	35	40.2
Age Group (Years)	≤30	26	29.9
	31-40	35	40.2
	41-50	17	19.5
	51 and above	9	10.3
Level Of Education	No formal education	11	12.6
	Primary education	18	20.7
	Secondary education	33	37.9
	Tertiary education	25	28.7
Marital Status	Married	51	58.6
	Single	23	26.4
	Divorce/Widow/Widower	13	14.9
Religion	Muslim	46	52.9
	Christianity	33	37.9
	Traditional	8	9.2
Occupation	Civil Servant	27	31.0
	Student	18	20.7
	Artisanal/craftsman's	42	48.3
Length of Residence (Years)	≤10	24	27.6
	≥11	63	72.4
	Total	87	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2022



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Fig 1: Awareness of Ado-Away Suspended Lake

TABLE 2: Key Ecotourism Attraction of Ado-Away Suspended Lake

S/N	Ecotourism Attraction
1	Ishage
2	Iyake Lake
3	Agbomofunyake
4	Elephant Tree
5	Esekaniku
6	Iya Alaro Lake
7	Ese Awon Agba
8	Ese Kan Aye Ese Kan Orun
9	Iya Oniru Lake

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The socio-economic impacts of Ado-awaye suspended Lake are presented in table 3, in which provision of jobs and business opportunity are ranked as the most socio-economic impacts of the suspended Lake on the host community with a mean of 4.54 and 4.52, followed by revenue generation (4.30), patronage of local product (4.28), improved family income (3.73), commercialization of local product (3.65), source of foreign exchange (3.30) while investment opportunity recorded the least mean of 3.08.

TABLE 3: Socio-economic Impacts of Ado-Awaye Suspended Lake

Variable	Mean	S.D	Rank
Revenue generation	4.30	0.89	3 rd
Business opportunity	4.52	0.83	2 nd
Investment opportunity	3.08	1.23	8 th
Source of foreign exchange	3.30	1.13	7 th
Commercialization of local product	3.65	1.09	6 th
Provision of jobs	4.54	0.78	1 st
Patronage of local product	4.28	0.96	4 th
Improved family income	3.73	0.98	5 th

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4 revealed the challenges confronting the development of Ado-awaye suspended Lake, it was indicated that lack of government interest recorded the highest challenges with a mean of 4.70, followed by lack awareness and lack of fund with a mean of 4.36 and 4.16 while lack of accessible road and lack of local people involvement are the least challenges with a mean of 3.15 and 2.98 each.

Table 4: Challenges Confronting the Development of Ado-Awaye Suspended Lake

Variables	Not a Challenge	Minor Challenge	Neutral	Moderate Challenge	Serious Challenge	Mean	Rank
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)		
Lack/inadequate accommodation facilities	14(16.1)	21(24.1)	34(39.1)	12(12.4)	6(6.9)	3.19	5 th
Lack of government interest	0	0	9(10.3)	8(9.2)	70(80.5)	4.70	1 st
Lack of trained labour power	9(10.3)	16(18.4)	27(31.0)	18(20.7)	17(19.5)	3.21	4 th
Lack of accessible road	19(21.8)	24(27.6)	37(42.5)	5(5.7)	2(2.2)	3.15	6 th
Lack of local people involvement	21(24.1)	26(29.9)	40(46.0)	0	0	2.98	7 th
Lack of Fund	0	0	28(32.2)	17(19.5)	42(48.3)	4.16	3 rd
Poor awareness	0	0	19(21.8)	18(20.7)	50(57.5)	4.36	2 nd

Source (Field survey, 2022).

4. Discussion

Ecotourism is the new paradigm of tourism carried out with either cultural, educational, scientific, or adventure purpose (Weaver, 2002). It is the responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education to staff and guest. Nature based attraction, and cultural features differ according to the geographical setting. This implies that, all places do not have equal potentials in regard of ecotourism (Wearing and Neil, 2009). The sites must contain unique, appealing features for ecotourist. Specific attraction, site and infrastructure, market demand, available capacity and socioeconomic linkages to biodiversity are determining factors for ecotourism potential (Carroll and Groom, 2006).

This finding revealed the presence of nine (9) ecotourism attractions in Ado-awaye suspended Lake namely; Ishage, Iyake Lake, Agbomofunyake, Elephant tree, Esekaniku, Iya Alaro Lake, Ese Awon

Agaba, Ese kan aye Ese kan orun and Iya Oniru Lake (table 2). The ecotourism attractions are natural made. Most of the ecotourism attractions have been available for over 1000 years according to the tour guide. This study was in agreement with Olaniye and Bada, (2020) that reported that ecotourism attractions in Ado-awaye suspended Lake could make the destination more important and attractive for tourism development on national and global scales although, a few of them are in poor conditions. The dilapidated condition of these facilities can be attributed to their low maintenance. According to Olaniyi and Atalor (2018), there is a strong relationship between tourism development and the maintenance of tourism infrastructures. That is, tourism infrastructure forms the basis of tourism development coupled with the sustainable resource utilization in ecotourism destination (Olaniyi and Atalor, 2018). Ecotourism attractions in the Ado-Awaye area are the items that made the destination core tourism centre (Formica, 2002).

The study indicated the socio-economic impact of Ado-Awaye suspended Lake are provision of jobs, provision of business opportunities were topmost in the observed socio-economic impacts ranking 1st and 2nd on the scale of ranking. Meanwhile, items such as; source of foreign exchange and investment opportunity were recorded as the least beneficial to the people and the area ranking 7th and 8th on the scale of ranking (table 3). This implies that although there were a lot of socio-economic impacts accruing from ecotourism attractions in Ado-Awaye suspended Lake, there were also much to be put in place if the ecotourism attractions are to bring forth a more sustainable development within the area. The finding of this study support Frangialli (2001) that maintained that tourism is immensely important for economic development through its impacts on employment, exports, stimulation of infrastructure provision, generation of revenue, and promotion of international cultural appreciation, peace and harmony. The World Travel and Tourism Organization (1999), reported that tourism is able to contribute to development which is economically, ecologically, and socially sustainable, because it: Has less impact on natural resources and the environment than most other industries; Is based on enjoyment and appreciation of local culture, built heritage, and natural environment, as such that the industry has a direct and powerful motivation to protect these assets; Can play a positive part in increasing consumer commitment to sustainable development principles through its unparalleled consumer distribution channels; and Provides an economic incentive to conserve natural environments and habitats which might otherwise be allocated to more environmentally damaging land uses, thereby, helping to maintain bio-diversity.

The major challenges confronting the development of Ado-Awaye suspended Lake were identified to be lack of government interest and lack awareness. Others are lack of fund, Lack of trained labour power, Lack/inadequate accommodation facilities, lack of accessible road and lack of local people involvement (table 4). This assertion is in line with the findings of Nadube and Akahome (2017) who revealed the following challenges that have been faced in the southern region of Nigeria - poor facility aesthetics of the destination, poor consumer purchasing power, political instability and violence, high rate of crime against humanity, unsafe airspace, inefficient telecommunication and internet services, poor facility aesthetics of the destination, national insecurity, multiplicity of fines and taxes, and high operational costs (Nadube and Akahome, 2017). Also, Bankole, (2002), highlighted some of the

problems confronting the tourism sector in Nigeria to include lack of detailed data, insecurity through crime and terrorism, inadequate funding and marketing, and low disposable income. Ndanusa *et al.* (2014) identified some gaps that need to be reduced or closed if Nigeria must reap bountifully from the tourism sector. These authors however listed Security, Infrastructural amenities, Promotion and awareness, Funding and financing as the problems militating against the growth of tourism in the country. This is consistent with the empirical findings of Jeroen (2017) who opined that awareness should be created to improve an ecotourism destination image.

5. Conclusion

It can be concludes from this study that Ado-Awaye suspended Lake are blessed with nine (9) ecotourism potentials. The study also observed that there were enormous socio-economic impact accruing from the ecotourism resources of Ado-awaye suspended Lake ranging from the provision of job opportunities, creation of more business opportunities, revenue generation, patronage of local products, improved family income etc which have impacted positively on the economy of the host communities. Meanwhile, the study also observed that the ecotourism industry in the area suffered a lot of challenges ranging from lack of of government interest, lack of awareness, lack of fund as the highest rated challenges in the area.

6. Recommendations

Government of Oyo State should treat tourism sector as one which has great economic and infrastructural assets for the State through ensuring more investment in the sector.

Government should collaborate with other stakeholders in the ecotourism sector especially the private investors and host communities by providing enabling environment for investment and encouraging the people to participate in the developmental stages of the industry by providing basic amenities in the local communities across the State.

Provision of facilities such as accessible roads, electricity, hotels, police stations and source of potable water to the local communities to encourage more ecotourism activities and tourists' visits.

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