

## Factors Affecting Tourists' Experience At Idanre Hills Ondo State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

Millions of people travel specifically to engage in nature experience at various tourist destinations such as Idanre hills, Nigeria. This study was carried out to provide information on tourists' purpose of visits as well as determine the factors affecting tourists' experience at Idanre hills in Ondo State, Nigeria. Data were collected from one hundred and fifty (150) randomly selected tourists using semi-structured questionnaires. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. The results show that 67.7% of the respondents were students, while 72% were female. The factors that were identified as tourists' negative experience at Idanre hills include: lack of easy access to refreshment (18.5%), lack of quick access to first aid treatment (15.4%), over-crowding of people especially during the festive periods (13.9%) and dirty environment (13.9%). Other negative experiences of the respondents include changes in season (10.7%), lack of comfortable accommodation at the top of the hill (9.2%), lack of directional signs on the hill (9.2%) and poor communication network (9.2%). The four factors that constituted tourists' positive experience at Idanre Hill, are: presence of artefacts and a rich cultural history (38.5%), helpful tour guides (27.6%), good road (18.5%) and cheap toll fee (15.4%). About 53.9% of the respondents visited Idanre hills for recreation activities, while 33.8% visited for research purposes and 12.3% for religious purposes. An understanding of these different factors affecting tourist experience is expected to assist the tourist site managers to improve the quality of products and services being offered at Idanre hills. Better management of the site will eliminate some of the negative experiences and thus lead to more positive experiences, thereby increasing tourists' visitation to the site.

Keywords: Tourists activities, factors, experience, recreation, Idanre Hills.

### INTRODUCTION

According to Woodside *et al.* (2004) tourist destination re-visit and word of mouth advertisement are now intimately associated with the delivery of memorable experiences. This view was also supported by Azedevo (2009) and Sthapit (2013) who noted that experiences are now viewed to be the latest economic progression and that the provision of experiences as opposed to provision of goods or services represents the most advanced form of an organisation's competitiveness. The concept of Memorable Tourism Experience has thus become the focal point for modern tourism research and management (Tung and Ritchie 2011). This, as observed by Ritchie and Crouch (2003), is because their delivery has been positively observed to correlate with destination competitiveness and sustainability. Ecotourism involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions (such as is found at Idanre Hills). It is intended to offer tourists insight into the impact of human populations on the environment, and to foster a greater appreciation of natural habitats (Adedeji and Fadamiro, 2014). Ecotourism is an important instrument for the preservation of the natural landscape as well as alleviation of poverty, which is prevalent in underdeveloped regions of the world. In addition, ecotourism produces a structure utility for the economic development and political progress of the local population, providing a resource for training of visitors and for preservation (Sebahat

*et al.*, 2010). According to Adedeji and Fadamiro (2014) two components are central to ecotourism: the landscape and the people. Thus, ecotourism must have a strong people element, thereby establishing a harmonious symbiotic relationship between sightseeing visits and environmental protection (Kusler, 1991; Hongshu and Min, 2009). Selling high quality and memorable experiences is vital to the tourists, who are the focus of these experiences. Every year, millions of people travel all over the world specifically to engage in nature experiences, such as those provided by, National parks as well as other cultural and historical areas (Deng *et al.*, 2002).

Chhetri *et al.* (2004) and McCool (2006) defined a tourist experience as a social-psychological phenomenon, influenced by expectations tourists carry with them, their standards, a variety of sensory information they receive in a natural area, and the attributes of the area that they encounter during their visit. According to the Encyclopaedia of Tourism (cited in Weaver, 2001) experience is an inner state of individual brought about by something which is personally encountered, undergone or lived through. Tourist experiences are unique in that they occur in the course of a journey, and especially during sightseeing tours (Nowacki, 2009). Tourists tend to seek for experiences that are both pleasant and stimulating which according to Csikszentmihalyi (1996), occur during optimal experience or flow. A memorable tourism experience refers to a tourism experience that is positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred (Kim, *et al.* 2012). One of the reasons why tourists buy souvenirs from

destination places is to remember the enjoyment and the experiences they had during the trip (Uysal *et al.*, 2012). However, when memorable experiences are being described, researchers tend to concentrate more on the positive or pleasant events or feelings, though negative experiences can also be remembered and may equally be far more reaching in affecting the tourist experience (Hurombo *et al.*, 2014). Many scholars (Klaaren *et al.*, 1994; Sthapit, 2013) opine that individuals will reconstruct their tourism experiences by forgetting disappointments. Reynolds and Braithwie (2001) noted that Ecotourists' satisfaction is influenced by physical attributes including tangible and intangible factors of the tourism site such as facilities, design and weather.

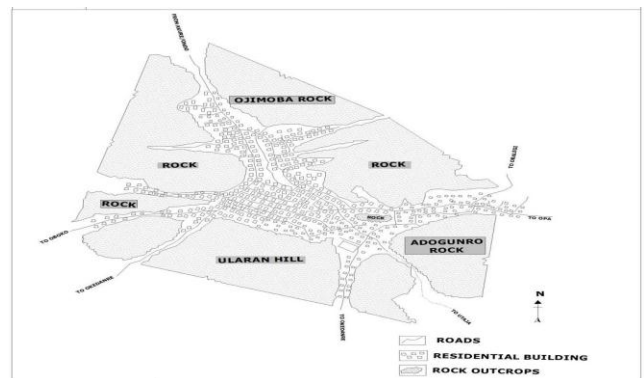
According to Smith and Newsome (2002), negative impacts that occur because of poorly planned tourism or lack of management of tourist site can adversely affect the experience of a tourist. The tourist experience offered is one of the key selling features of any tourism product, a product that does not provide a good tourism experience is considered, at best, tedious (Bresler, 2007). Tonge and Moore (2007) concluded that when tourists perceive that the quality of the environment no longer meets their expectations because of the environmental impacts of tourism, they either adjust their standards of quality to match the existing state of the environment, or go elsewhere (that is, they are displaced). To cope with the dual task of protecting the environment while providing tourists with good quality and satisfying nature experience, it is imperative for stakeholders in the industry to identify which factors have negative and positive effects on the experience of tourists (Bresler, 2007). Cole (2001) stated that a positive tourism experience is one where tourists perceive total satisfaction; providing this level of satisfaction is therefore an important component of nature-based tourism if return visits are to be secured and the tourism product sustained. One of the key strategies for customer focused firms is to measure and monitor service quality and customer satisfaction (Amissah, 2013). By assessing the factor affecting tourists' experiences, this study

hopes to provide the vital information necessary for tourism planning, development and long-term sustainability of the ecotourism destination at Idanre Hills, Ondo State, Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

### The study Area

Idanre hills (Called *Oke Idanre* in Yoruba language) consist of high plains with spectacular valleys interspersed with inselbergs of about 300m above sea level (UNESCO, 2007). Its physical attributes include Owa's palace, shrines, old court, Agboogun footprint, thunder water (*Omi Aopara*) and burial mounds and grounds. It has varieties of flora and fauna species. The hills contain very important bio-physical and land form features whose interaction with the physical features has created an enduring cultural landscape within the setting (Ojo, 2014). The terrain of Idanre town is gently undulating with a lot of mountaneous areas, especially the *Alade* community. Annual mean rainfall is between 1400 –



2000 mm. The wet season spreads over eight months, from April to November while the dry season spreads over the remaining four months, from December to March. The temperature is fairly moderate and ranges between 21°C and 30°C depending on the time of the year. The Idanre hill area covers about 50 km radius and takes a total of three days to be thoroughly transversed (Idanre Historical site, 2012).

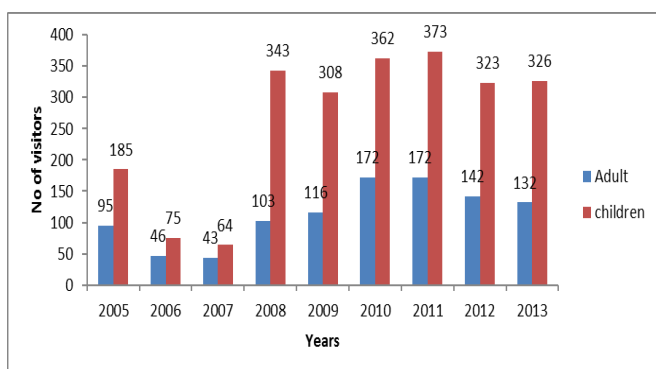


Figure 1: Record of visitors' visit to Idanre Hills (2005-2013) (Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ondo State).

Figure 2: Map of Idanre showing Rock outcrops, road and residences (Source: Idanre Heritage site Management, 2013)

### Data Collection

Both secondary and primary data were used for this study. The secondary data were collected from Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism as well as the management of Idanre Heritage site. The secondary data collected include records of past visits (2005-2013) (Figure 1) and a map of the study area (Figure 2). A major assumption of this study is that tourist satisfaction is influenced by the tourists' travel experience. Primary data were collected through the administration of 150 semi-structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were self-administered to the tourists to the hills. One hundred and fifty visitors were selected by using random and convenience sampling, which was based on the tourists' availability to participate in the study. However, only 130 of retrieved

questionnaires were valid for analyses, which represented 86.7% response rate. The questionnaires consisted of visitors' demographic characteristics such as age, gender, occupation and marital status. The factors contributing to positive and negative experience of tourists were selected and categorized based on the findings of the preliminary survey of the study area. The factors contributing to a positive experience included: presence of artifacts and rich cultural history, availability of helpful tour guides, cheap toll fee, and good road (accessibility). The factors contributing to negative experience were: lack of good and comfortable

accommodation, seasonal changes, overcrowding of people during festive seasons, lack of direction signs, lack of easy access to refreshment on top of the hill, poor communication network on top of the hill, dirty environment and lack of quick access to first aid in case of accidents. The study was carried out between January and October, 2013. After retrieval, the valid questionnaires were coded to obtain quantitative values for statistical analysis. The analysis was then done using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, tables, etc.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic characteristics

The demographic characteristics of tourists are presented in Table 1. There were more females (55.4%) than male tourists (44.6%) visiting Idanre hills, which agrees with the finding of Nowacki (2009) who reported 58.59% female visitors to four tourist sites in West Poland. The age range of majority of respondents (58.5%) was 20-29 years, which is an indication that most of the visitors to the site are young people. This age range is consistent with the finding of this study that 66.7% of respondents were students. Also, the results suggest that the respondents were active and able to participate in the rigours

of hill climbing. While some of these students visited the hill for educational excursions, others came during vacations for relaxation. A high percentage (64.6%) of the respondents were single which may suggest that single tourists seek more leisure time than the married one, who accounted for about 35.4% of visitors to Idanre hills. The high percentage of single respondents strengthens the earlier results of high percentage of tourists to the hills being students. When the respondents age range, marital status and occupation are holistically considered; the results tend to suggest that the respondents comprised mainly of young academics, adventurous and fun seekers.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of tourists

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	72	55.4
Male	58	44.6
<b>Age range</b>		
10-19yrs	26	20.0
20-29yrs	76	58.5
30-39yrs	22	16.9
40 and above	6	4.6
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	46	35.4
Single	84	64.6
<b>Occupation</b>		
Student	88	67.7
Civil servant Self employed	32	24.6
	10	7.7

Source: Field work, 2014

The results showed that 53.9% of the respondents visited Idanre hills for recreation, while 33.8% of the respondents went there for research work and 12.3% of the tourist visited the hill for religious purposes (Table 2). This finding varies slightly with findings of Arowosafe and Emmanuel (2014) who reported in their investigation of indicators for tourist satisfaction at Mole National Park, Ghana that majority of tourists (86%) went there for relaxation purposes. They also indicated that 7% of the tourists went there for research and another 7% were there for change of environment without indicating religious purpose as found in this study.

Table 2: Purpose of tourists' visit to Idanre Hills

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Recreation	70	53.9
Research	44	33.8
Religious	16	12.3

Source: Field work, 2014

### Factors affecting tourists' positive experience

Table 3 shows the ranking of perceived factors affecting tourists' experience at the study site. The four major factors, which were used in the study, are: the presence of artifacts and rich cultural history, availability of helpful tour guides, cheap toll fee, and good road leading to the site. The results presented in Table 3 shows that majority (38.5%) of the respondents believed the presence of artifacts and rich cultural history was the most important factor which could

contributes to their positive experience at the study area. Furthermore, 27.6% of the tourists indicated that availability of helpful tour guides is an important positive experience factor, while 18.5% and 15.4% indicated cheap toll fee and the good road leading to the tourist site, respectively as factors contributing to their positive experiences. The result obtained varies from the result obtained by Mellina and Aballe (2013), who found that tourists to Davao del sur indicated that the major factors contributing to their satisfaction with the destination were the physical visual ambience and the strategic location of the tourist destination.

Table 3: Tourist' perception of factors contributing to their positive experience at Idanre Hills

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Presence of artefacts and rich cultural history	50	38.5	1 <sup>st</sup>
Helpful tour guides	36	27.7	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Cheap toll fee	24	18.5	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Good road	20	15.4	4 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field work, 2014

### Factors contributing to tourists' negative experience

Table 4 revealed that 18.5% of the respondents indicated that lack of easy access to refreshments at the top of the hills is a major factor contributing to their negative experience at Idanre hills (Table 4). The result also showed that lack of quick access to first aid treatment in case of accidents and overcrowding of people during festive periods were indicated by 15.4% and 13.9% of the tourists to Idanre hills, respectively as contributing to their negative experiences at the hill. Other factors as noted by the tourists', included dirty environment (13.9%), seasonal changes (10.7%), lack of

good and comfortable accommodation at the top of the hills (9.2%), and poor communication network (9.2%) (Table 4).

Hurombo *et al* (2014) reported that access to refreshment during a trip is a high determinant of tourists' satisfaction. Xia *et al*. (2009) revealed that accommodation is a strategic player for competitiveness of destinations as well as tourist satisfaction as a result of their experience at destinations. Alegre and Garau (2009) showed that cleanliness and hygiene of a destination is a main determinant of tourist satisfaction while dirtiness is a clear factor of dissatisfaction.

Table 4: Tourist' perception of factors contributing to their negative experience at Idanre Hills

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Lack of easy access to refreshments	24	18.5	1 <sup>st</sup>
Lack of quick access to first aid	20	15.4	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Overcrowding at festive period	18	13.9	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Dirty environment	18	13.9	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Seasonal changes	14	10.7	5 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of good and comfortable accommodation	12	9.2	6 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of directional signs	12	9.2	6 <sup>th</sup>
Poor communication network	12	9.2	6 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field work, 2014

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The specific purpose of this study was to provide information on the factors that contribute to tourists' positive and negative experiences at Idanre hills. The most important factor that influences the positive experience of majority of tourists to Idanre hills was the presence of artifacts and a rich cultural history. The factor that contributed the most to negative experiences of tourists was the difficulty in getting refreshments at the top of the Hills. Thus in view of the above conclusions, it is recommended that the management of the

Idanre Hills pay more attention to eliminating the negative factors and improving the positive ones in order to enhance tourists experience at the site. Thus, the results of this study could serve as a baseline for improving tourists' experience in the tourism industry and specifically at historical and cultural sites.

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