

EXPECTATION AND SATISFACTION OF TOURISTS' IN OLD OYO NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA.

AKINOLA Olufunlola Odunayo^{1*}

OFORDU Chinyere Salome²

APPAH Ogechukwu Rose³

AMADI Joyce Okama⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Federal College of Forestry, Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria, P. M. B. 5087, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

*Corresponding Email: oriobatemy@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The tourism sector is perhaps of the main economic sectors in Nigeria. Thus, figuring out the expectation and satisfaction of tourists would give techniques to growing better administration in the tourism industry. This study examined the expectation and satisfaction of tourists' in Old Oyo National Park, South-West Nigeria. Primary data were collected from tourists through the use of structured questionnaires. Simple random sampling was use in the selection of 92 tourists used for the study. The mean scores analysis were used to evaluate the data collected. The result indicated that majority tourists were males (74.3%), not married (63.3%), graduates of tertiary institutions (80.7%), travelled to the park with friends and relatives (34.5%) from more than 100km destination (84.4%) and had an annual income of more than 1 million Naira (50.4%). The sustained security in the park was the highest expectation of the tourists with a mean expectation value of 4.25 while availability of useful information on plants and animals in the park was the highest satisfaction of the tourists with a mean expectation value of 3.45. It was recommended that the park management team should evaluate visitors' opinion periodically in order to enhance the future development of the park through tourists' visits and feedbacks should be gotten from the visiting tourists from time to time.

Keywords: Tourists, Old Oyo National Park, expectation and satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been part of human experience in the past (Moscardo, 2020). Little et al., (2020) described it as a form of nomadism that characterizes Homo sapiens which is both normal and under the right conditions, pleasurable. With the emergence of aircrafts, tourism has grown in significance and has emerged as a global phenomenon,

giving opportunities to move far and wide to increasing range of environment and attracting new markets (Curtin, 2009). In essence tourism is associated with travelling away from one's home for 24 hours, using one's leisure to travel or take holidays and travelling for business.

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world (Kyrylov, 2020). It has helped in global economic development, especially the developing world, since the proposition was that tourism has enormous potential for driving the developing nations toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (Birendra, 2021), many developing countries have identified its contribution in areas of employment generation, foreign exchange earnings and community welfare (Castilho, 2022).

Ecotourism is a form of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine and relatively undisturbed natural areas intended as a low impact and often small scale alternative to standard commercial tourism (lonel, 2019). It is about creating and satisfying a hunger for nature, about exploiting tourism's potential for conservation and development and averting its negative impact on ecology, culture and aesthetics (Aryal et al., 2019).

Wildlife-based tourism can be regarded as a type of ecotourism, and is often perceived to be effective in promoting conservation of important species and habitats in developing countries (Macdonald and Wester, 2021). Recent studies across the world has revealed that the number of tourists seeking interactions with wildlife in their natural environment is increasing (Birendra, 2021) and has led to high revenues generated from wildlife tourism (Stone and Stone, 2020).

National Parks were created as pristine wilderness reserves, and were designed for the use and enjoyment of visitors. These were meant to isolate parks from adverse human impacts, and make the parks accessible to the public (Hussain, 2022). These nature-based tourism or ecotourism has attracted increasing attention in recent years

not only as an alternative to mass tourism, but as a means of economic development and environmental conservation (Rebuya, 2020), in which some of the problems of the old form of tourism (mass tourism), such as crowding and disruption of local communities, commercial exploitation of cultural traditions, social conflicts, entrenchment of ethnic stereotypes, disturbance to wildlife, degradation or outright conversion of habitats, increased economic dependency, the emergence of black markets, and increased illicit trade in everything from exotic pets to drugs and sex could be reduced to barest minimum (Vannelli et al., 2019).

This form of tourism can also help to build the managerial and organizational capacities of local communities in managing their natural resources (Castilho, 2022). By establishing ecotourism operations in their own territories, local peoples may become better prepared to defend resources and even resist outside interests, such as timber or mining companies. Finally, in addition to bringing benefits to local communities and supporting conservation, ecotourism also has the potential to raise public environmental awareness. Many eco-tours include interpretative activities that help visitors learn about conservation and ecology as they are exploring new landscapes and communities (Birendra, 2021).

A number of factors limit the effectiveness of the tourism industry to play a more meaningful role in the national economy (Karst and Nepal, 2022). Some of the key constraints are identified as; inadequate funding, myopic private sector, limited integration of local communities and previously neglected groups into tourism, inadequate tourism education, training and awareness, inadequate protection of the environment, poor service, lack of infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, a ground transportation sector not geared to service tourists, lack of inclusive, effective national, provincial and local structures for the development, management and promotion of the tourism sector (Vannelli et al., 2019). With the exception of few studies focusing on National Parks (Aryal et al., 2019), little attention has been given to tourists' satisfaction

in nature based tourism destination.

When facilities are not adequate to take care of the need of visitors, it makes the visit laborious and the visitors may be dissatisfied. Since tourists' expectations and satisfaction has been linked to tourists' inflow, there will be less revenue generation in areas with low satisfaction hence making park administration and community development problematic (Fernández - Llamazares et. al., 2020), affirms that there is a direct relationship between tourists satisfaction and tourists inflow to attraction areas, as satisfied tourists have higher probability of returning and also to propagate the positive image of the destination area to others. In the light of these developments there is need for in-depth study of the expectation and satisfaction of tourists' in Old Oyo National Park, South-West Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in South-West Nigeria which is one of the international zones of Nigeria, comprising of the Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ogun, Lagos and Ekiti States. It is a Yoruba locale, land-dwelling and talking region, with various vernaculars even inside a similar state. The weather patterns fluctuate between the two particular seasons in Nigeria; the dry season (November - February) and the wet season (March - November).

Old Oyo National Park, one of the seven National Parks in Nigeria is located in Oyo State, South Western part of Nigeria. It lies between latitude 8° 15' – 9° 00' N and longitude 3° 35' – 4° 42' E. and has a total land area of 2,512km². The park is surrounded by twelve (12) Local Government Areas out of which eleven (11) falls within Oyo State. These include Atiba, Atisbo, Irepo, Iseyin, Itesiwaju, Iyamopo/Olorunsogo, Oorelope, Orire, Oyo West, Saki East and the only one in Kwara State is Kaiama. The Park lies in plain lowland between 330m and 508m above the sea level with a gentle slope along the Ogun river valleys. The Park is well drained by rivers Ogun, Owu, Owe and their tributaries in the central and southern parts, while river Tessi drains the north east part of the Park. There are four vegetation types in the Park: deciduous forest and dense savannah mosaic woodland; dense and open savannah, woodland mosaic; dense

savannah woodland, and open savannah woodland north east of the park. Annual rainfall in the Park ranges between 900mm and 1500mm and main annual temperature is between 12°C and 37°C. The rainy season begins in April through September with the highest rainfall record between July and August. The dry season begins in October through early April and the driest and hottest period is between March and April. The Park experiences the harmattan period from November through February (OONP, 2012).

The target respondents were the tourists to the OONP. Primary data were collected from tourists through the use of structured questionnaires. A total of 92 questionnaires were administered to tourists that were present during the period. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Tourists' expectation and satisfaction was analyzed using a five point Likert-type scale. The response of an item for each variable were multiplied by the weight attached to obtain response scores. The mean response values are as follows: tourist expectation (not at all important = 1; extremely important = 5) while tourist satisfaction (not at all satisfactory = 1; extremely satisfactory = 5).

The cut-off point was determined by finding the mean of the nominal value assigned to the options. To make inferential statements, the mean score was compared with the critical mean 3.0, if the calculated mean is equal to or greater than the standard critical value for expectation, it means that the tourists expectation was met, if it is lower, it shows that the tourists expectation was not met. Also for tourists' satisfaction if the calculated mean is equal to or greater than the standard critical value for expectation, it means that the tourists were satisfied, on the contrary if it is lower than the critical value it means that the visitors were not satisfied.

RESULTS

Table 1 examined the demographics of the respondents. It was observed that the majority (74.3%) were males while the females constituted 25.7%, although most of the respondents were not married (63.3%). However, majority of the respondents (66.7%)

were less than 30 years. When the educational status of the respondents was considered, it was observed that 80.7% of the respondents were graduates of tertiary institutions. The results on their mode of transportation revealed that the 4WD was the most used in the study park (56.7%). Majority of the respondents travel to the park with friends and relatives (34.5%), travelled to the park from more than 100km destination (84.4%) and had an annual income of more than 1 million Naira (50.4%).

Table 1: Demographic Structure of Tourists in the Study Park

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender	Male
	Female
Age	<30
	30-39
	>39
Marital Status	Not Married
	Married
Education	Secondary

Table 2 showed expectation of tourists in regard to various attributes, facilities, services and products from the parks differs from one product to another. The table revealed that sustained security in the park (4.25) had the highest mean value of expectation, followed by access to interesting guided walks/talks by rangers/others, availability of useful visitor guides/maps in the park and clear information about visitor safety (4.13) respectively and accessible features for people with disabilities (4.12).

Table 2: Tourists' Expectation from the study park

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Sustained security in the Park	4.25
Access to interesting guided walks/talks by rangers/others	4.13
Availability of useful visitor guides/maps in the Park	4.13
Clear information about visitor safety	4.13
Accessible features for people with disabilities	4.12
Healthy water condition	4.08
Hospitality exhibited by the Park staff	4.08
Access to water	4.05

Availability of sport facilities	4.05
Sightings of native wildlife/birds	4.03
Restaurant	4.01
Access to friendly, responsive Park staff	3.95
Limited number of visitors admitted into the Park at the same time.	3.85
Availability of customer care services	3.83
Well designed & maintained walking tracks/trail	3.81
Ability to enjoy nature in this Park	3.77
Access to accommodation facilities	3.75
Availability of useful information on plants & animals in the Park	3.75
Useful directional road signs in the Park	3.71
Well designed & maintained roads	3.64
Availability of range of activities (e.g., walking, picnicking, bird watching)	3.61
Access to toilet facilities	3.6
Access to interesting information on culture and heritage	3.55
Early access to pre-visit information about the Park	3.05
Grand Mean	3.87

Table 3 showed satisfaction of tourists in regard to various attributes, facilities, services and products from the parks differs from one product to another. The table revealed that availability of useful information on plants and animals in the park (3.45) had the highest mean value of satisfaction, followed by availability of useful visitor guides/maps in the park (3.42), accessible features for people with disabilities (3.38), sustained security in the park (3.3), ability to enjoy nature in the park, access to interesting guided walks/talks by rangers/others and hospitality exhibited by the park staff (3.28) respectively.

Table 3: Tourists' Satisfaction from the Study Park

Factors	Mean
Availability of useful information on plants & animals in the Park	3.45
Availability of useful visitor guides/maps in the Park	3.42
Accessible features for people with disabilities)	3.38
Sustained security in the Park	3.3
Ability to enjoy nature in this Park	3.28
Access to interesting guided walks/talks by rangers/others	3.28
Hospitality exhibited by the Park staff	3.28

Access to water	3.23
Healthy water condition	3.23
Clear information about visitor safety	3.23
Access to interesting information on culture and heritage	3.19
Sightings of native wildlife/birds	3.14
Availability of range of activities (e.g., walking, picnicking, bird watching)	3.14
Availability of customer care services	3.14
Access to accommodation facilities	3.09
Well designed & maintained walking tracks/trail	3.04
Well designed & maintained roads	3.02
Useful directional road signs in the Park	3.01
Early access to pre-visit information about the Park	2.95
Access to friendly, responsive Park staff	2.85
Availability of sport facilities	2.83
Limited number of visitors admitted into the Park at the same time.	2.8
Access to toilet facilities	2.76
Restaurant	2.71
Grand Mean	3.11

CONCLUSION

Tourists to Old Oyo National Park are mostly males, not married and are less than 30 years. They are graduates of tertiary institutions. The 4WD was mostly used as their mode of transportation in the study park and they travel to the park with friends and relatives. Thus, they travelled to the park from more than 100km destination and earn an annual income of less than 500, 000 Naira. In conclusion, expectation was very important to the tourists while their satisfaction was somewhat satisfactory.

Therefore, based on the above-mentioned and with respect to the expectation and satisfaction of tourists' in Old Oyo National Park, it was recommended that the park as an organization should evaluate visitors' opinion in order to enhance future development of the park while a feedback should be gotten in form of questionnaire, survey or interaction with the visitors. Also, there is need to create more products such as walking safari, balloon safari and sundowner, in order to create more activities that will enable the visitors to have a longer stay with worthwhile experience during their

stay.

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