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Assessing Local Community Participaton in Tourism Planning and Development in Erin-Ijesha Waterfall Osun State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The basic element of tourism planning and development is to encourage the local communities' participation as it is central to the sustainability of tourism industry. Many literatures have suggested a number of roles local communities could play in tourism development but failed as to how the locals themselves feel about this. This paper therefore focuses on Erin-Ijesha community participation in tourism development by examining their views on their role in the planning and development of Erin-Ijesha Waterfall resort. Data were gathered by reviewing office records and academic books, administration of 205 questionnaire and field observation. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data collected for the study. Findings revealed that local communities want to be involved when tourism policies are being made to enable policy makers to prepare a policy that meets stakeholders' needs and addresses their concerns. The locals also want to be actively involved on decisions bothered on tourism development to ensure their needs are incorporated. Also, they equally want to a voice in development issues generally to enable them protect their community's norms, values and interests and increase transparency and equity. The findings also revealed that the locals are against the prevailing 'top-down' approach in decision making when it comes to tourism development in their areas.

Keywords: *Erin-Ijesha, local community, Tourism planning, sustainability .*

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that tourism at least, in the recent time has served as a viable economic option for local community development. However, there is little evidence on the literature that depict the nature of interaction between the local communities and tourism development which is one of the core elements for developing a viable tourism industry in a destination. Though, the literature recognizes that the participation of

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locals and their communities in tourism development is considerable, there have been some debates about their role (Mannigel 2008). Communities according to Tosun (2006), form a basic element in modern tourism as they are the focal point for the supply of accommodation, catering, information, transport facilities and services. Their local natural environment, buildings, and institutions, their people, clture and history all form core elements of what the tourists come to see. Whether as cities, towns or villages, every community has tourism at one level or the other and are affected by the growth and development of the industry.

Recent literature on tourism development show that local communities form an integral part of the tourism development agenda (Jamal and Stronza 2009; Bushell and McCool 2007, Tosun 2006). With the complex nature of most tourist destinations, there are also numerous stakeholders with varying interests and views. This provides good environment for resource use conflicts within and around tourist destinations (Jamal and Stronza 2009; Aref et al 2010; Haukeland 2011). The representation of interest of the local communities in the tourism development agenda is a complex issue that needs to be addressed carefully. There is unclear description of local communities' roles and how their views are incorporated in the whole planning and development process. While the literature suggests a number of roles local communities could play in tourism development, little emphasis has so far been given as to how local communities themselves feel about these imposed roles. This create a knowledge gap regarding what communities think of their role(s) in tourism planning and development as opposed to the imposed roles. This is a crucial step in development of better and holistic plan for sustainable tourism destinations.

According to Tosun and Timothy (2001), tourism development planning does not have a unique definition. However, with the recent growth of mass tourism world-wide, tourism planning has become a specialized area and it has developed its own specific techniques, principles and models while drawing on general planning methodology. Generally speaking, tourism planning has been defined as a "process based on research and evaluation, which seeks to optimize the potential contribution

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of tourism to human welfare and environmental quality" (Pongponrat 2011). Tourism development hence involves broadening the ownership base of such advantages so that more people benefit from the tourism industry, skill development, job and wealth creation and ensuring the geographical spread of the industry throughout the province.

This paper explores the preconceived ideas and views by local communities regarding their roles in tourism development planning in the context of local communities' domain. It examines these using a case study of Erin-ijesha village in Oriade local government area of Osun State.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

For better understanding on the current widespread use of the term "community", one needs to understand what makes a community (Agrawal and Gibson 1999). In most conservative litratures, community is viewed as a small spatial unit, homogenous social structure with shared norms and common interest (Agba et al. 2010; Olsder and Vander Donk 2006). However, current literature on tourism development observed that community is central to sustainable tourism development, they seldom devote much attention to analyse the concept of community or how community affects the outcome. Scherl and Edwards (2007) describe local community as group of people with a common identity and who may be involved in an array of related aspects of livelihoods. They further note that local communities often have customary rights related to the area and its natural resources and a strong relationship with the area culturally, socially, economically and spiritually. However, Western et al. (1994) argue that the definition of a "community" varies with context. The researcher, for the purpose of this paper adopts the definition of communities as a set of multiple actors with formal and informal rules and norms that shape their interaction in local level processes a definition which comprise also institutions which have influences on community development activities. (Agrawal and Gibson 1999).

Tourism development can be linked and explained better using two concepts: Sustainable tourism and Sustainable development. The World Tourism Organisation defines sustainable tourism as

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"tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be filled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life supporting system" (Shah et al. 2002). Tourism development therefore can be meaningless if its socio-economic and environmental benefits do not trickle down to the local communities. Likewise, the sustainability of nature-based tourism development in least developed countries (LDCs) in a way lies in the hands of local communities. According to Bushel and Mc Cool (2007), local communities have historically co-existed with the protected areas-the key tourism attractions. Figgis and Bushel (2007) further assert that "tourism development and conservation that denies the right and concerns of local communities is self-defeating, if not illegal". Therefore, the involvement of local communities in tourism development and planning can not be overlooked due to their crucial roles. Apart from the economic contribution that the local communities can accrue from tourism, their involment in tourism development and planning can as well be beneficial to tourism development because they can create an "effective environmental stewqrdship that builds on indeginous, local and scientific knowledge, economic development, social empowerment, the protection of cultural heritage and the creation of interpretive and nature-based experiences for tourist learning and cross-cultural appreciation" Jamal and Stronza 2009).

ROLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

To achieve sustainable tourism development, local communities need to participate in decision making process. The locals can take part in identifying and promoting tourist resouses and attractions that form the basis of community tourist development. To achieve long lasting outcome, communities need to be active participants rather than passive observers. Pongponrat (2011) noted that more direct local involment in decision-making, for example, may enable residents to request a specific portion of tax benefits from tourism to be allocated to community development and the protection of the tourism resource base. This is consistent with Sanoff (2000) who maintains that the main purpose of community participation is to involve people in the design and decision making processes.

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It is further argued that community participation in decision making increases peoples' trust and confidence with the tourism industry. It also provides the local community with a voice in design and decision making in order to improve plans, service delivery, and finally promotes a sense of community by bringing together people who share common goals- Pongponrat (2011).

Theoretically, the role of local communities in tourism development in the context of policy and decision making depends on the type and level of participatory approach within a tourist destination. Mannigel (2008) identifies various levels of participation ranging from simple sharing of information to a full transfer of power and responsibilities. The power of the local communities to influence decision making as well as policy making will therefore depend on the level of participatory approach being in operation in a particular destination. Examples from Nigeria show that the decision and policy making process is typically top-down and is dominated by the government, private sector and or non-governmental organizations (Muhanna (2007). In such unbalanced scenario, the power of local communities to influence decision making and demand their legitimate stake is at stake. Arguably, their participation can hardly go beyond mere consultation and information exchange (Scheri and Edwards 2007).

There has been short of hand evidence especially from the grassroots on how community would like to participate in tourism development in their domains. Using a case study of Erin-Ijesha village in Oriade Local Government area of Osun State in Nigeria, this paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the locals by examining their views on their role in tourism development.

STUDY AREA PROFILE

Erin Ijesha Waterfall, also known as Olumirin Waterfall is not only a site to behold; it is also one of the wonders of the world. Olumirin waterfall is located in Erin-Ijesha town in Oriade local government area of Osun state and situated within latitude 7°30' and 8°45' North and longitude 4°31' and 5°55'East. Erin Garden is a thick forest, which houses Erin Ijesha waterfalls, which lies some kilometres east of the Ilesha- Akure Road. According to the

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custodian of the waterfall, it is said to have been founded by a woman called Akinla, a grand-daughter of Oduduwa, in the year 1140 AD, during the migration of the Ife people to Erin Ijesha (Tourism Magazine, 2009). The water flows among rocks and splashes down with great force to the evergreen vegetation around. The area can also serve as a mountaineering exercise. The breeze at the waterfall is cool and refreshing. The whole scenery is fascinating and idyllic. The waterfall is used for drinking and as medicine by indigenes and other tourists alike (Tourism Magazine, 2009). Erin Ijesha as part of South Western Nigeria falls within the tropical belt with alternating hot dry and warm humid seasons. The atmospheric temperature ranges from 30 – 34 0C while the annual rainfall averages 1500 cm. Erin Ijesha Waterfall is a cascading fall surrounded by towering mountains that gives the sense of wildlife mixed with serenity as you behold the beauty nature has to offer.

Osun State is an inland State with the headquarters at Osogbo It covers a land area of approximately 9,251 km^2, lies between longitude 4° 30'0" E and 7° 30' 0" N It is bounded in the north by Kwara State, in the east partly by Ekiti State and partly by Ondo State, in the south by Ogun State and in the west by Oyo State. The modern Osun was created in 1991 from part of the old Oyo State.Tthe major sub-ethnic groups in Ọsun are Ife, Ijesha, Oyo, Ibolo and Igbomina of the Yoruba people, although there are also people from other parts of Nigeria. Yoruba and English are the official languages. People of Osun State practice Islam, Christianity and paganism called traditional faith.

According to the national population census conducted in 2006 the total population of the state was recorded as three million four hundred and twenty three thousand five hundred and thirty five (3,423,535).

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Figure 1.1: Map of Osun state in a national setting

Source: Adapted from Adebayo, W.O. (2014)

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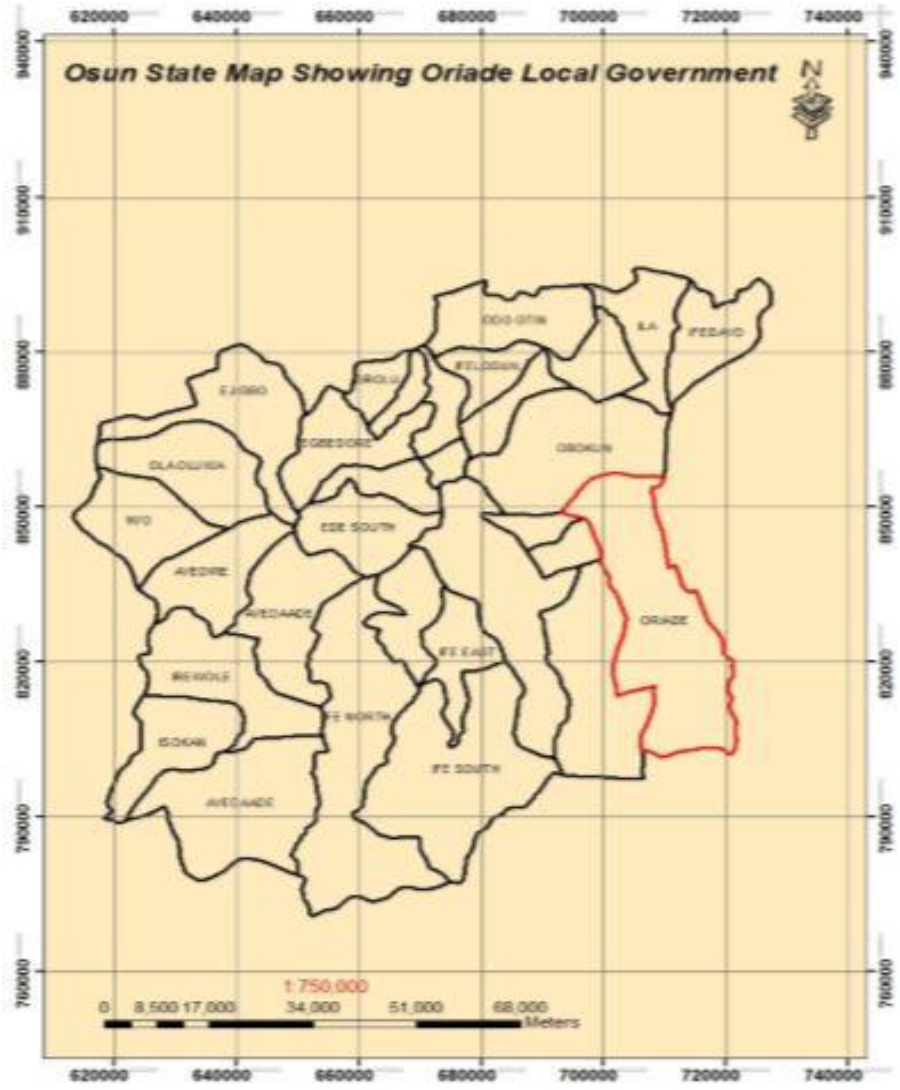


Figure 1.2: Map of Oriade local government at the state level

Source: Adapted from Olaniyi et al (2013)

METHODOLOGY

Structured questionnaire was the main instrument used by the researcher to obtain data for this research. Two hundred and thirty questionnaires were randomly administered with two hundred and five completed and returned. The perceived educational level of the interviewees forced the researchers to interpret the questionnaires to some of them in their

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indigenous dialect. Furthermore, data was also collected from various secondary sources which were also corroborated by personal observations. In order to explore first hand information regarding the village, twelve semi structured interviews were conducted with the village head and his chiefs and some senior staff of the resort centre. This serves as a basis for the questionnaire design as it provided and shed more light on some of the factors militating against the expected development of the tourist centre. Results from the survey exercise were also compared to those of 1990 research by Ayodele and Falade and 2009 research by Ibimilua where low level of tourism development on sthe part of the government and high level of lack of awareness among respondents were recorded.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Profiles of survey respondents N=205

Respondent characteristic	No. of respondents	%
Gender		
Male	115	56.09
Female	90	43.91
Education		
Primary school	90	43.90
Secondary school	52	25.36
College/University	28	13.65
No formal education	35	17.07
Age		
18-27 years	21	10.24
28-37 years	69	33.65
38-47 years	53	25.85
48-57 years	47	22.92
Above 57 years	15	7.31
Period of living		
< than 10 years	16	7.8
>than 10 years	32	15.6
Born in the village	157	76.58
Occupation		
Peasants	123	60.00
Business	41	21.00
Employed	11	5.36
Unemployed	30	14.64

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Table 2: Local peoples' view on their role in tourism development N=205

	SA	A	N	SD	D
Local people should be consulted when tourism policies are being made	*96(46.9)*	*100(48.8)*	*02(0.9)*	*02(0.9)*	*05(2.5)*
Local people should have a voice in the decision-making process of tourism development	*105(51.2)*	*91(44.4)*	*01(0.5)*	*01(0.5)*	*07(3.4)*
Local people should be financially supported to invest in tourism development	*94(45.9)*	*90(43.9)*	*02(0.9)*	*15(7.3)*	*04(2.0)*
Local people should be consulted but the final decision on tourism development should be made by formal bodies	*86(42.0)*	*74(36.1)*	*01(0.5)*	*29(14.1)*	*15(7.3)*
Local people should take the leading role as entrepreneurs	*70(34.1)*	*30(14.6)*	*05(2.5)*	*60(29.3)*	*38(18.5)*
Local people should not participate in tourism development	02(0.9)	04(2.0)	03(1.5)	160(78.0)	36(17.6)

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Table 1 shows the profiles of the respondents and their variables. Male respondents were slightly more than their female counterparts with 56% and 44% respectively. Respondents were highly diverse in term of their ages with age group 28-37 years having the highest respondents of 69(33.65%) while respondents with 57 years and above had only 7.31%. Other profile variables, including Education, Length of residence, and employment status showed more homogeneity. A majority of respondents had very low level of formal education; 44% had completed a primary school education while 17% had no formal education. In contrast, 25.3% had a secondary school education and a very small number (13.6%) had a college or university education.

On the length of resident, 76.5% had lived in the village since birth while 15.6% had been resident for more than 10 years; only 7.8% had lived in the community for less than a decade. Thus, respondents were long time members of the local community. In employment terms the sample was dominated by peasants or small-scale farmers (60%). 20% were in small-scale business activities while5.36% were fully employed. The remainder (14.64%) was unemployed. The general implication of the above analyses is that the community is an agrarian village with a very low level of literates.

Table 2 presents the results of responses for each of the statements used to access the respondents' role. The table revealed that the percentages for the top four statements are above 70, suggesting generally that the respondents tended to support these ideas, but showed strongest support to the idea that local people should be consulted when tourism policies are being made (95.7%). Meanwhile, 7 respondents rejected the idea while 2 representing 3.4% remained neutral.

The second most accepted option was the idea that the local people should have a voice in the decision making process of local tourism development (95.6%). This result was almost the same with the result of the first statement. The two results somehow reinforced suggestions by Scheri and Edwards (2007), Matarrita-Cascante et al (2010), Pongponrat (2011) and Sanoff (2000) and reflect results by Tosun (2006) regarding the role of local communities in tourism development.

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On whether or not local people should take the leading role as entrepreneurs, towards tourism development, the results obtained showed that those who supported the idea (48.7%) and those who did not support the idea (48.7%) were the same. The implication of these coincidental results is that as much as local communities should be actively involved as entrepreneurs, the entire industry should not be left in their hands to develop in a paste they will only dictate. This corroborates the results of the survey by Muhanna (2007), Sanoff (2000) and Mclntyre et al (1993) which suggested equal role between government and local people in tourism business.

Still in table, there was little difference in the results of the sixth statement which suggested that local people should take the leading role as workers at all levels. While 102 responded (49.7%) supported the statement, 98 interviewees representing 47.8% rejected the idea. Personally, the results are good for tourism development and decision makers in the industry in that not all categories of workers may be readily available in local communities where there is high level of illiteracy. That does not mean that all the senior workers should be non-indigenes as arrangement could be made between the government and the communities to train willing and qualified indigenes in various fields of tourism studies. The seventh and last statement met a stiff opposition from the interviewees as they almost generally rejected the statement that the' locals should not participate in tourism development by any means' (95.6%). This was the only negatively worded statement in the series. Tosum (2006) observed a similar feeling in his study regarding expected nature of community participation in tourism development in Turkey, and reflected in the suggestion by Jamieson (2001).

Down the lane, responses across the profile variables revealed that overall respondents, regardless of their gender, occupation and education embraced four out of the seven statements, showed mixed views about two statements and completely rejected the statement that the local people should not participate in tourism development by any means (Table 2).

CONCLUSION

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Based on the empirical data available for this research and after a careful descriptive analysis of the collected data, this paper contributes to the understanding of community participation in tourism planning and development by bringing together perspectives from the grassroots. The findings revealed that the locals acknowledged the need to be involved in tourism decision making process regardless of their illiteracy level, however, they equally recognized and acknowledged the need to involve tourism experts when formulating tourism policies because these formal bodies often consists of people with wide knowledge and expertise. Before making such policies, local people needs to be consulted so that the outcome (the policy) meets stakeholders' needs and addresses their concerns. These people also want to have a voice and become watchdogs in all round developmental issues in their community to enable them protect community interest.

Tosun (2006), concluded that the most common form of participation in many of the developing countries for tourism development is functional – communities only have to endorse decisions regarding tourism planning and development issues made for them rather than by them. Communities must participate in implementation by running small and medium scale tourism enterprises or device benefit sharing mechanisms with investors but not necessarily involved in the decision making process. Policy formulation and decision making is still top-down and passive, not only in Erin-Ijesha or Osun State area but Nigeria in general. This is the key stage when communities need to be actively involved so that their voices can be heard.

The study emphases on medium scale methods in understanding the nature of community participation and their role in tourism planning and development rather than what has been normally on them. Putting all the issues discussed in this paper into consideration, the locals will be active drivers of change and promotion; being the immediate members of the community. In this way, there will be a sense of belonging on the part of the locals and this will in turn give them the feeling that the success or otherwise of the development is their collective responsibility.

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