



The Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents Influence Their Perceptions of Tourism's Contributions To Sustainable Development Goals In Osun State Communities.

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Abstract

This study investigates how socioeconomic characteristics influence perceptions of tourism's contributions to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Osun State communities. Recognising the pivotal role of tourism in sustainable development, this research focuses on the demographic factors shaping local perceptions. A quantitative approach was employed, utilising a structured questionnaire administered to a stratified sample of respondents. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics to reveal trends and correlations among socio-economic characteristics and perceptions of tourism. The findings indicate that younger individuals (18-35 years) constitute 65% of the sample, suggesting a tendency to prioritise job creation and economic opportunities linked to tourism, while older respondents (35%) may emphasise cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. Gender distribution shows 55% female respondents, potentially influencing perspectives on community involvement and social equity in tourism development. Income levels reveal that 46.67% are middle-income earners, likely fostering favourable perceptions of tourism's economic benefits, whereas low-income individuals (30%) may focus on accessibility and equitable benefit-sharing. Educational attainment is high, with 46.67% holding tertiary degrees, indicating greater awareness of global issues like SDGs and advocacy for responsible tourism practices. The study concludes that socio-economic characteristics significantly shape perceptions of tourism's contributions to SDGs in Osun State, highlighting the need for inclusive tourism strategies that consider diverse community perspectives.

Keywords: socio-economic, Influence, perceptions, tourism, contributions, sustainable development goals



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Introduction

Tourism is a vital sector that significantly contributes to the socio-economic development of communities, particularly in regions rich in cultural heritage. (ŠkrabićPerić et al., 2021). In Osun State, Nigeria, the interplay between the socio-economic characteristics of residents and their perceptions of tourism's contributions to sustainable development goals is particularly noteworthy. This study focuses on three prominent tourist attractions: the Osun Osogbo Festival, Olumirin Waterfall, and Nike Art Gallery. Each site attracts visitors and plays a crucial role in fostering community identity, generating income, and promoting sustainable practices. (Sapkota et al., 2024)

The Osun Osogbo Festival, one of Nigeria's most prominent art festivals, serves as a cultural and spiritual gathering for the Osogbo people, celebrating their connection to the Osun River goddess. This festival draws thousands of tourists annually, contributing to local economic growth and enhancing social cohesion within the community. Residents' perceptions regarding this festival's impact on sustainable development can be influenced by their socioeconomic status, educational background, and cultural beliefs. (Li et al., 2020)

Similarly, Olumirin Waterfall is a natural wonder site that offers recreational opportunities and promotes eco-tourism. The waterfall's potential for attracting tourists can increase local employment and business opportunities, impacting residents' views on tourism's role in sustainable development. Understanding how socio-economic factors shape these perceptions is essential for developing effective tourism policies that benefit visitors and the host community.

Lastly, the Nike Art Gallery, renowned for its extensive collection of Nigerian art, is a hub for cultural exchange and education. The gallery's influence extends beyond mere tourism; it plays a significant role in preserving cultural heritage and providing economic opportunities for local artisans. Residents' perceptions of the gallery's contributions to sustainable development may vary based on their socio-economic characteristics, such as income and educational attainment. (Cláudio, 2021) This study explores how respondents'



socio-economic characteristics influence their perceptions of tourism's contributions to sustainable development goals in selected host communities in Osun State.

Background study

The tourism industry is hailed as the largest industry globally, giving imminent support to the economy of all nations, whether developed, developing or underdeveloped, especially in terms of foreign exchange (Murtaza, 2014). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry had grown to account for 10.4% (US\$9.2 trillion) percent of global GDP, and 10.6% of global employment (334 million), with the latter showing that the industry accounts for 1 of every 10 jobs, and 1 of 4 new jobs in 2019 (World Travel and Tourism Council {WTTC}, 2021). While there was a significant fall in these contributions during the pandemic (with a 5.5% contribution to GDP and 272 million jobs in 2020) (WTTC), 2021), the potential of the industry to recuperate post-pandemic is high. The contributions of tourism to development in terms of poverty reduction, promotion of socio-economic expansion and employment creation, particularly for women, youth, migrant workers, rural communities and indigenous peoples in both developed and developing countries, have been acknowledged by scholars, economists and professionals (Ayodele&Ajayi, 2020).

In Africa, tourism has been a significant influencer of socio-economic development (Aremu & Lawal, 2018). For instance, tourism's direct contribution to Africa's GDP was \$30 billion between 1995 and 1998, and the sector generated 21 million jobs in 2016 and is expected to increase to 29 million jobs in 2026 (Eneji et al., 2016). In Nigeria, the contributions of tourism cannot be overemphasised. Statistics revealed that the direct contribution of tourism to GDP was NGN1,861.4 billion (1.7% of GDP) in 2017, and the sector generated 1,818,500 jobs, and this is expected to rise by 3.6 cent per annum to 2,598,000 jobs in 2027 (Majebi&Abutu, 2015). Of all states in southwest Nigeria, Osun State is particularly blessed with world-wide renowned attractions such as the Osun Osogbo Festival, Olumirin Waterfall and Nike Art Gallery, attracting thousands of local and international tourists annually. Even though of lower popularity, others are the Ooni's Palace, Opa Oranmiyan and the Obafemi Awolowo University Biological Garden.

The discourse on tourism has shifted over the years from the contributions of mass tourism to the significance of sustainable tourism and, more importantly, since 2015, the connections to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Scheyvens (2018) observed



that since the emergence of the word sustainable development or sustainability in the early 1970s, it has quickly become relevant for conservationists and development advocates. The term is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987). The Brundtland report said, “Economic development cannot stop, but it must change course to fit within the planet’s ecological limits”. Hence, there is a need to ensure that economic developments fit into ecological and societal limits. This births the three arms or dimensions of sustainable development: economic, environmental and social sustainability. Various efforts have been made to actualise this. One such was the global alliance signed by 189 countries of the United Nations in 2000, resulting in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with 15 15-year running period. Among the goals set were eradicating extreme poverty and world hunger, achieving universal primary education, environmental sustainability and developing global partnerships for development.

The expiration of the duration of actualisation of the MDGs (even though with uneven success) birthed the development of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in 2015, with also 15 years running or actualisation period to address pressing global challenges (United Nations, 2015). The SDGs were predicated on the quest by the global body to balance the three measures of sustainable development (Ekeke&Uboegbulam, 2021) and embodied in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which constitute comprehensive and integrated issues of global aspirations which the world is committed to achieving by the Year 2030 (United Nations, 2015). The reality of climate change and the recent COVID-19 pandemic have further shown that for all to survive, responsible actions must be taken by all industries, sectors, individuals and societies to protect natural environments and foster societal good while participating in beneficial economic actions.

Tourism presents enormous SDG potential (Scheyvens, 2018; Hall, 2019). Three key areas have been identified by the United Nations (2015) in which tourism can contribute to Sustainable Development namely goal 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), goal 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns) and goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) primarily through sustainable employment generation and protection of natural environments, there have been enormous efforts to present tourism as



one which can contribute to all the 17 SDGs (Dube, 2020). For example, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) suggested that 'tourism has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly, to all of the goals' (UNWTO 2015). Based on this, this study, in addition to goals 8, 12 and 14, will include goal 1, "End poverty in all its forms everywhere", and goal 3 "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages".

The Osun Osogbo Festival is a significant cultural event in Osun State, attracting thousands of visitors each year to celebrate the Osun River goddess and the heritage of the Osogbo people. (Nana and Daniel 2023). Recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the festival enriches local culture. It boosts international tourism, generating economic benefits through increased visitor spending on local goods and services. However, residents' perceptions regarding these benefits can vary based on socio-economic factors such as income, education, and cultural background.

Similarly, Olumirin Waterfall offers natural beauty and eco-tourism opportunities (Alarape et al., 2023), promoting environmental sustainability while providing local employment. Research indicates that residents with higher socio-economic status often have more positive views on tourism's role in enhancing community development. The Nike Art Gallery, a Nigerian art and culture hub, highlights various artworks while fostering cultural exchange and education. It supports local artisans and allows visitors to engage directly with artists. Perceptions of the gallery's impact on sustainable development also differ among residents based on their socio-economic characteristics. (Ogundare et al., 2024) This study focuses on these critical attractions and how these socio-economic factors influence perceptions of tourism's contributions to sustainable development goals in selected Osun State communities.

Statement of Problem

The year 2017 was proclaimed a year of Sustainable Development by the World Tourism Organization to rally the tourism industry and role players to consider tourism a tool to achieve SDGs (Dube, 2020). However, seven years after the adoption of SDGs in 2015 and five years after the year of Sustainable Tourism, there has been very little work done to demonstrate how the tourism sector is and can embrace the SDGs to ensure a more sustainable tourism future, a notion documented by Dube (2020). The author also noted that the first dedicated academic conference on SDGs was conducted only in



2019; hence, there is very little scholarly material generated thus far to inform tourism role players on the role of tourism in achieving the SDGs. This presents problems for Africa where, according to Siakwah et al. (2019), "sustainable tourism governance frameworks have not comprehensively inculcated trust, justice, social capital, power and participation".

On the other hand, tourism is not a smokeless industry, as it can also bring about negative impacts, whether intended or non-intended. These include friction and hostility between tourists and locals, pollution and environmental degradation (Dube&Nhamo, 2019; Gössling&Peeters, 2015; Jones et al., 2017; Zhang & Gao, 2016). Dube (2020), however, noted that SDGs allow the tourism industry to self-introspect in a world that is suffering from challenges, some of which are a result of tourism activities, such as global warming, environmental degradation, poverty, inequality, gender discrimination and all the challenges that are associated with mass tourism, especially in some western countries. Mass tourism, for example, has been blamed for damage to and loss of authenticity for cultural heritage. In another study, Moon (2018) highlights that tourism led to several problems despite the economic gains, such as putting a strain on energy and water resources and a host of both air- and land pollution challenges. There are only 8 years left to meet the goals set to be attained by 2030, and little or no empirical studies exist on this in the southwest region of Nigeria, particularly in Osun State.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the contribution of the selected tourist destinations to the host community in the achievement of the SDGs.

Aim of the Study

To determine the influences of the socio-economic characteristics of respondents on their perception of the tourism contributions to sustainable development goals in selected host communities in Osun State.

Research Question

1. What are the residents' perceptions of tourism activities in the selected host communities in Osun State?



2. What are the specific contributions of tourism to the achievement of the sustainable development goals 1, 3, 8, 12 and 14 in selected host communities in Osun State?
3. What are the factors that contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals in selected host communities in Osun State?
4. What are the challenges facing the growth and development of tourism and the ways of mitigating such problems in the selected host communities of Osun State?
5. What are the influences of the socio-economic characteristics of respondents on their perception of the tourism contributions to sustainable development goals in selected host communities in Osun State?
6. What are the contributions of the management of the selected host communities in Osun State to the development of the host communities?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis will be tested in line with the identified research questions and objectives.

H01: Socio-economic characteristics (age, gender, income, marital status, education, and length of residency) of respondents do not significantly influence their perception of the tourism contributions to sustainable development goals in selected host communities in Osun State.

Justification of the study

This study is justified by the need to investigate the significance of tourism development in achieving the SDGs, focusing on Osun State, Nigeria. Notably, there are but 8 years left to meet the goals set to be attained by 2030, and not much has been done on this in the southwest region of Nigeria. Forcefully, there is a dearth of research on this area in Nigeria. While several studies have been carried out on the relationship between tourism and sustainable development, they have been more prominently on one of the three arms of sustainable development, namely economic, rather than being operationalised on the SDGs. A study that provides quantitative and qualitative



information on tourism's direct contributions to attaining SDGs is essential. Moreover, in Osun State, most past studies have focused solely on appraising prominent tourism destinations; this study will focus on three destinations, hence offering a context for comparison.

This research study will contribute significantly to the existing tourism research literature on evaluating tourism impacts from a broader, more holistic, sustainable tourism development perspective. It is important to stress that information will centrally be obtained from residents who are confronted with experiencing the impacts of tourism, whether positive or negative. As such, they are in a better position to provide first-hand information based on experience. More so, information will be obtained from the management of the tourism destinations on the contributions they have made directly to attain SDGs. The importance of this is seen in the fact that this is a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach that superficially collects information that bothers the people from government and other decision-makers.

Significance of study

This study will expand the academic literature and discourses on tourism and sustainable development goals in Nigeria. Such information will provide a reference point for future research. Moreover, this study will be an eye-opener to policymakers, governments at all levels and investors on how tourism development enhances sustainable development goals. This can be employed in making invaluable decisions that benefit Osun State and, by extension, other states in the country.

Scope of study

This study focuses on five (5) of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This will include the three key areas that have been identified by the United Nations (2015) in which tourism can contribute to SD, namely goal 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns) and 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). Given the importance of tourism and the potential to contribute to other goals, goal 1, "End poverty in all its forms everywhere", and Goal 3 "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages", will also be featured. The study will be executed in the host communities of three prominent tourism



destinations, namely Osun Osogbo Grove, Olumiri Waterfall and Nike Art Gallery in Osun State, and information will be obtained from host/neighbouring community residents and management staff of the destinations.

Limitations of the study

This study will be limited to using textbooks, journals, conference proceedings, and internet resources to develop the literature and enhance the discussion. It will also be within the framework of the researcher's personal appraisal and views, as well as empirical evidence obtained from respondents. Other limiting factors may include time, in which the study will be carried out for a limited period, and respondent bias, where empirical evidence would be indicated by respondents.

Operational definition of terms

Tourism: activities of and for persons leaving their places of usual residence for personal or business/professional purposes. The most popular and readily accepted definition is that of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), which defines tourism as 'activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes'.

Host community: community in which the tourism destination is located and bears the direct impact of tourism.

Sustainable development: development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Stoddart (2011) described it as the effective and fair distribution of resources within and between generations and the accommodation of social and economic ventures within limited environmental realities. It also connotes the capacity of humans to meet their needs without exhausting the production supply (Thomas, 2015).



Methodology

Study Area

The research was focused on three significant tourist attractions in Osun State, Nigeria: the Osun Osogbo Festival, Olumirin Waterfall, and the Nike Art Gallery. These sites were selected for their cultural, natural, and artistic significance, collectively contributing to the local economy and community identity.

Study Design

A descriptive survey design was employed to gather data on the socio-economic characteristics of respondents and their perceptions of tourism's contributions to sustainable development goals. This design allows for collecting relevant information in a natural setting without manipulation, facilitating an understanding of how socioeconomic factors influence perceptions.

Sample Size

Using Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination table, a total of 300 respondents was targeted, with 100 respondents from each tourism site. The sample was stratified to ensure representation across various demographic characteristics such as age, gender, income level, and education. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants directly involved with or affected by the tourism activities at these sites.

Data Collection

Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire to capture socio-economic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, education, occupation, income) and perceptions of tourism's contributions to sustainable development. The questionnaire will consist of three sections:

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) to summarise demographic information and perceptions. Inferential statistics, including regression analysis, will explore relationships between socio-economic characteristics and perceptions of tourism's contributions.



Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Informed consent was sought from all participants before data collection, ensuring they understood the purpose of the research and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality of responses will be maintained throughout the research process.

Results

Table 4.1 The demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic characteristics		OOF		OW
NAG	Total			
Age				
- 18-25 years	30	25	20	75
- 26-35 years	40	45	35	120
- 36-45 years	20	20	25	65
- Above 45 years	10	10	20	40
Gender				
- Male	50	45	40	135
- Female	60	165	50	55
Income Level				
- Low Income	40	30	20	90
- Middle Income	40	50	50	140
- High Income	20	20	30	70
Education Level				
- No Formal Education.	10	5	5	20
- Primary Education	20	15	10	45
- Secondary Education	30	35	30	95
- Tertiary Education	40	45	55	140

Key

Osun Osogbo Festival OOF
 Olumirin Waterfall OW
 Nike Art Gallery NAG

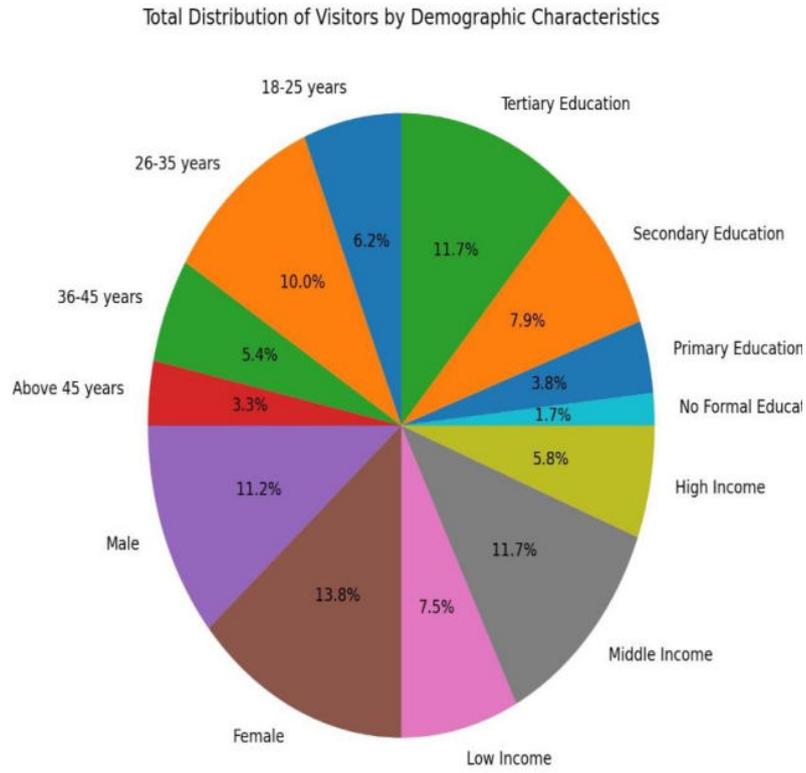


Figure 4.1 Total distribution of visitor by total demographic characteristics



Demographic Characteristics of Festival Visitors

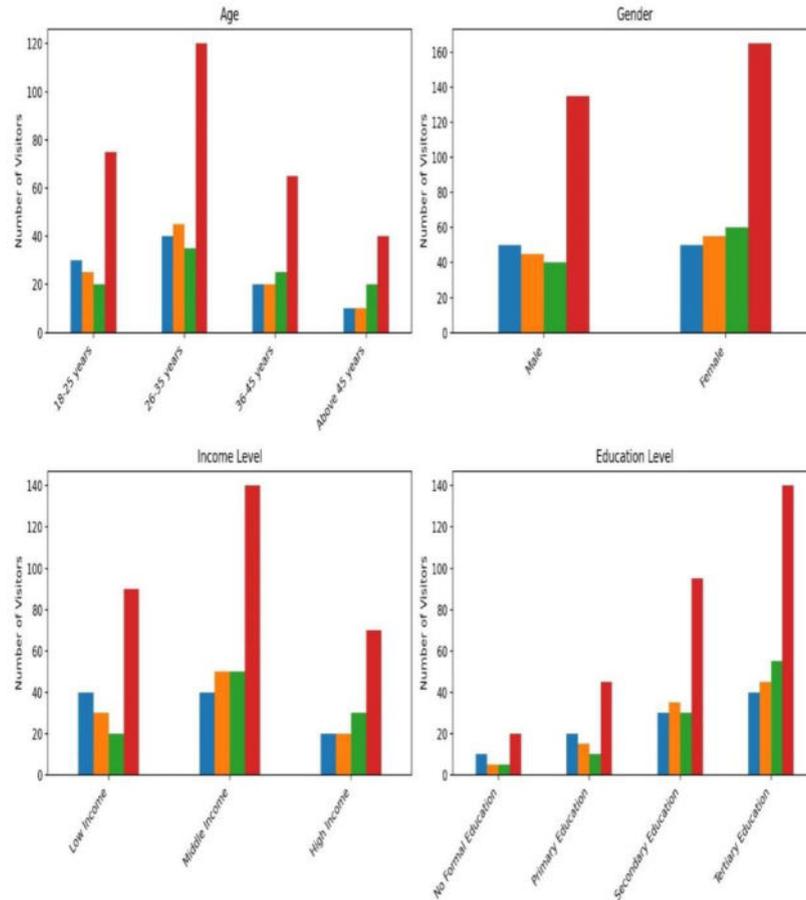


Figure 4.2 Demographic characteristic of festival visitor, Age, Gender, income and education level

Result Discussion

The age distribution shows that younger individuals (18-35 years) make up a significant portion of the sample, 65%, and 36 above have 35%. This demographic may have different perceptions regarding tourism's contributions to SDGs compared to older age groups (López et al.,



2021). Younger individuals might prioritise job creation and economic opportunities associated with tourism, while older demographics may focus on cultural preservation and environmental sustainability.

The gender distribution was 45% for males and 55% for females. The slight female majority could influence perceptions related to community involvement and social equity in tourism development. The result aligns with the work done by Shafieisabet&Haratifard(2020) and Gannon et al., 2021. Women often play crucial roles in local economies and may have unique insights into how tourism impacts their communities differently than men.

The income level of respondents shows that high-income earners are 23.33% and low-income earners are 30%. The middle-income earner dominates with 46.67%. A higher percentage of middle-income individuals suggests that this group may have more disposable income for tourism-related activities. This is justified by the work done by Nguyen et al., 2021 and Fang et al., 2021, which could lead to a more favourable perception of tourism's economic benefits. Conversely, low-income individuals might view tourism through the lens of accessibility and equitable benefit-sharing.

The level of education attainment of the respondents shows that there is no formal and primary education at 21.67%, and secondary education at 31.67%, tertiary education shows the highest level of education at 46.67%. With nearly half of the sample holding tertiary education, it can be inferred that educated individuals might have a greater awareness of global issues, such as sustainable development goals and may advocate for responsible tourism practices that align with them.

Conclusion

The socio-economic characteristics of the surveyed population significantly influence their perceptions regarding tourism's contributions to sustainable development goals in Osun State communities. Younger age groups emphasise economic opportunities, while gender dynamics may highlight social equity issues within tourism development. The income distribution suggests varying levels of engagement with tourism based on financial capacity, while educational attainment likely correlates with awareness and advocacy for sustainable practices.



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