

CHALLENGES OF POTENTIAL TOURISM RESOURCES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SOMORIKA COMMUNITY IN AKOKO EDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDO STATE

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Abstract

Somorika is one of the communities in Akoko Edo Local Government Area of Edo State that is blessed with numerous natural resources. Somorika people, just like any other area, are noted for social-cultural activities that are garnished with religious activities and they interplay to produce essential aspects of people's way of life. Despite all these attractions, lack of adequate tourist infrastructures, tourism master plan, deficiencies in marketing, branding, and promotion, affect the inflow of tourists. This is what prompted the research topic "Challenges of Potential Tourism Resources for Tourism Development in Somorika Community of Akoko Edo Local Government Edo State". The general objective of this study is to assess the challenges of potential tourism resources for tourism development in Somorika community of Akoko Edo L.G.A. For the study, the qualitative technique of research was employed. Data were collected via extensive literature, structured questionnaire, in-depth interview, oral tradition and field observation. The primary research was conducted in three-quarters of the study area. The first place was Oyinokara quarter, where sixteen persons were interviewed. The second place was Igoni quarter, where sixteen persons were interviewed. The third was Oyenovo quarter where sixteen persons were interviewed. The findings of the research as reflected in the field observations, structured questionnaires as well as those of 48 respondents to the open-ended interview schedule reveals poor access, healthcare facilities, hotels and restaurants, potable pipe-borne water, government interest, poor management of sites, poverty and communication facilities were factors that impede the development of potential tourism resources in Somorika community. The study, therefore, recommended that government should provide all the necessary tourism infrastructures such as good road network, telecommunication, accommodation facilities, hospital, and healthcare facilities among others to the community for tourism development.

Keywords: Challenges, Potential, Tourism Resources, Tourism Development

Introduction

Tourism is considered as an activity essential to the life of nations because of its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational and economic sectors of national societies and their international relation (WTO, 1995). Tourism has become an essential factor for all-round

development. It earns money and enriches foreign exchange. It creates job opportunities and thus alleviates poverty (Selvan, Gangai, Mangaiyarthilagam and Ganesh, 2013). Tourism boosts up economic activities through its multiplier effects and exploits local cultural and natural specialities in a positive way (Zimber and Grassmann, 1996). As a developing country, Nigeria should not depend solely on oil as sources of income but needs to explore other sources and capabilities to create a comprehensive and sustainable development, as well as alternatives sources of income. The country has diversity of tourist attractions that have been noted in literature (Okoli, 2009, Okpoko and Okpoko, 2006, Ukabuilu, 2007, and Anyanwu, Adebayo and Nwachukwu, 2010), which include parks, wildlife, natural sceneries, lakes, beaches, rivers, archaeological sites, museums cultural centre, among others. Travel & tourism direct contribution to Nigeria's GDP was #757.3 billion (1.6%) of GDP in 2013 and is forecast to rise by 2.5% in 2014, and to rise by 5.8 pa from 2014 to #1, 366.0 billion (1.6% of total GDP) in 2024 and the industry directly supported 866, 000 jobs (1.3% of total employment), which is expected to fall 0.8% in 2014 and rise by 3.3% per annum to 1,194,000 jobs (1.4% of total employment) in 2024 (WTTC, Nigeria, 2014).

Despite all these attractions, lack of adequate tourist infrastructures, tourism master plan, deficiencies in marketing, branding, and promotion, affect the inflow of tourists. Somorika is one of the communities in Akoko Edo Local Government Area of Edo State that is blessed with numerous natural resources. Somorika people, just like any other area, are noted for social-cultural activities that are garnished with religious activities and they interplay to produce essential aspects of people's way of life. They have a treasure of highly rich and diversified cultural heritage. Somorika community has different cultures and festivals which they cherished. They have annual cultural festivals and the ones they do periodically. Some of the annual festivals include Omoshele, Weria, Ohome, Orimi, Weria- Ivie, Ireshi festivals among others. The Omoshele festival comes yearly after 'Obisuona' i. e 25 days of Ori festival which falls on Akpe day in August. The festival is to show that the girl child is of age. Ohome festival is the one that features the mass wedding of brides. It comes after Omoshele festival. Other festivals include Oba, Odemakhere, Omanaza festivals among others. Given the diverse nature of the culture of the people of Somorika, there is no doubt that the nature of these cultural groups manifested in various dances, festivals and other cultural norms, and practices that have helped to

reinforce the values that keep the communities together and also enables them to maintain their identities. They are part of the communal life of the people and need no special occasion for display. They exist not only for entertainment but also more importantly, as part of the religious life of the various communities. There are cultural dances displays during some of these festivals. Among them are Upupe, Ilo, Ikegbe, Ishoko, Osha, Obah, Odemakhere, Ishize, Illo, Ubodo, Iko, Ofare, Oriakpe. Other socio-cultural activities in the study area include age group activities - Edane, Isiri, Eku-Efe, Iposha, Eku - Aleburu, Eku - Opa and Ibiase, among others. Each of these age grades has specific functions to perform in the village, even though one or two groups may be asked to perform the same duties or roles as the occasion required.

However, lack of awareness by the people, poor economic and infrastructural development, shortage of adequate tourist facilities and services in the destination has been a challenge to potential tourism resources in the area. Thus, this study assessed and identified challenges of the potential tourism resources in Somorika community and determined how to proffer solution to them.

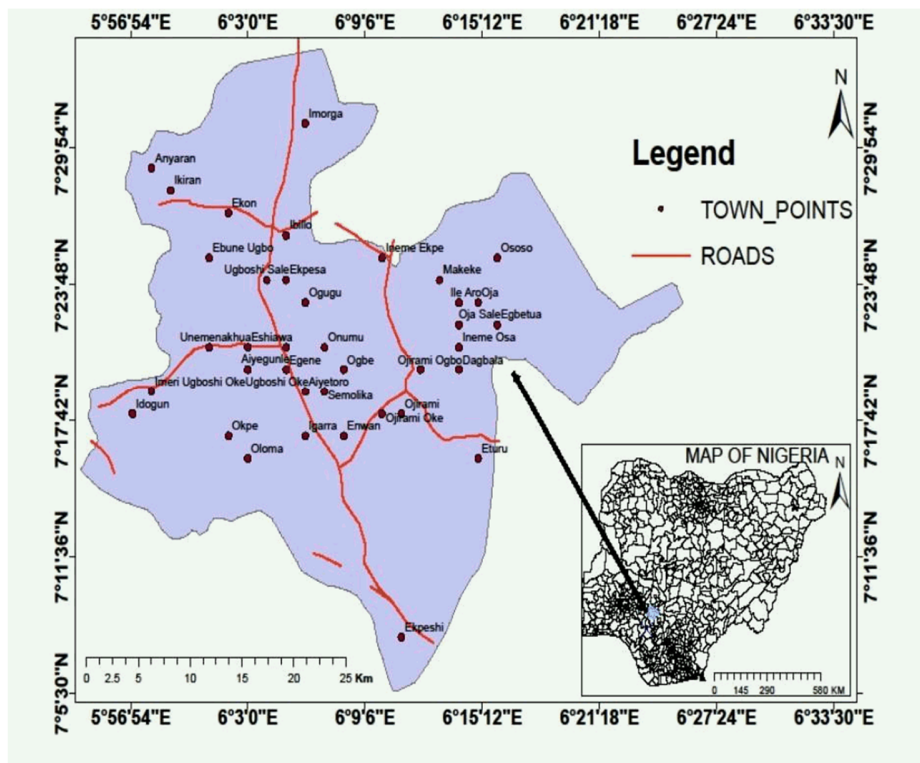


Figure 1: Somorika Community

Literature Review

Nabil (2003) said that the problems facing tourism and the development of a sustainable tourism sector in the OIC countries are diverse as each country has its tourism features, level of development and national development priorities and policies. He summarised the challenges as follows:

- Lack of inherent tourism potential (natural, historical, and cultural). In some countries, the development of tourism is impeded by their lack of inherent tourism potential, natural, historical or cultural tourism resources. However, this is a crucial factor and tourism heritage assets alone cannot make a thriving tourism industry.
- Lack of knowledge and awareness. In some countries, there is still a fundamental lack of essential cognisance of the economic importance of tourism as an industry and its positive impact as a potential source of foreign exchange and employment.
- Lack of technical know-how and weak promotional activity. Even when that fundamental awareness is there, in many cases, there is generally a lack of tourism knowledge and professionals. Tourism as a modern industry is recent in the world. It is also a new and unfamiliar activity in many OIC countries. Another related problem is the absent or weak publicity promotion and mass media exposure due, in many cases, to the limited technological service available.
- Lack of tourism-related infrastructures: many OIC countries lack the sufficient infrastructures necessary for the development of a thriving tourism sector. Primary amongst these are hotels and lodging devices, transportation and communication, safety and security and tourism information services. This makes it challenging to provide the standards of facilities and services which tourists require.
- Lack of tourism investments. While investment in service is a well- established economic activity in the developed countries, it is still lagging in developing ones. Investment in service-oriented projects, particularly tourism, in developing countries is often regarded as a high-risk task. Accordingly, though they may have natural tourism potential, it is tough for many poor and least developed OIC countries to gain access to reasonable financing for their

touristic projects even when they manage to tackle the problems of project identification and planning.

- Lack of consistent tourism strategies and policies. In many OIC countries, there are still difficulties in general, to policy conflicts between the government departments and the private tourism agencies. This is coupled in many cases with ineffective administration, regulation and institutional framework of touristic activity.
- Lack of tourism diversification. For many years, international tourism has been characterized by its concentration in coastal or water areas, and in summer for rest, relaxation and leisure. However, modern touristic activity has shown a growing tendency towards diversification and change. This makes it difficult for many OIC countries, including those with a relatively developed tourism sector, to keep pace with the rapidly changing and complex requirements of tourists.
- Lack of tourism safety. The safety of tourists is among the primary factors for any thriving tourism industry and should, thus, be one of the fundamental objectives of tourism planning and provision. Safety-related tourism problems, whether real or perceived, exert a negative impact on the reputation of host communities. In this regard, negative perceptions appear to play a detrimental role in the prospects of tourism in many nations.

Nabil (2003), maintained that many OIC countries lack the sufficient infrastructure necessary for the development of a thriving tourism sector. Among them include hotels and lodging services, transportation and communication, safety and security and tourism information services. This makes it challenging to provide the standard of facilities and services which tourists require. The survey shows that in some countries, there still is a fundamental lack of economic importance of tourism as an industry and its positive impact as a potential source of foreign exchange and employment.

Muna (2018) studied on an evaluation of potential tourism resources for developing different forms of tourism: a Case study of Iraq Al-Amir and its surrounding areas - Jordan. The study discovered that a significant weakness of Iraq al-Amir and the surrounding areas is the lack of tourism infrastructure. The current

standard of primary tourism services in the area, according to the author, is insufficient in both quantity and quality, which include:

- Insufficient and inadequate restaurants (F&B) in the area despite the availability of five restaurants and rest houses near the al-Dayr area and Iraq al-Amir. All of them, however, are operated by investors from the local community and the Iraq Al-Amir Women Cooperative Society, but they need to be classified as tourist installations to be developed more and they need to offer better services.
- Unavailability of shopping near these sites. The nearest shopping area is 30 minutes away or more by car.
- Lack of sufficient parking space. There is insufficient space to line up cars and buses in the area.
- Lack of public toilets, one of the main problems faced by tourists in the region.
- There is an apparent shortage of signage necessary to assist tourists' understandings about the natural and cultural sites.
- Lack of a tourism information centre in the area, at least at the main site of Iraq al-Amir, despite the establishment of a Tourist Center within Iraq Al-Amir village in 2008 to encourage visitors and tourists to visit Qasr al-Abd and caves, and to enjoy the area's spectacular evergreen landscape and running streams. Nevertheless, it does not offer tourism information to visitors, this is due to a lack of communication skills, or English or multi-language speakers. Tourist resources such as brochures and maps are also missing.

Another major weakness is the inaccessibility to the site and its surroundings in terms of the road network and its quality that extends from Wadi Seer to Iraq al-Amir via al-Dayr and al-Bassah. This is the main problem for both residents and tourists. The road is narrow and unsafe and cannot accommodate two cars abreast on the same lane.

Another weakness from officials and tourism experts interviewed is that the local community is not ready for tourism development. A profound weakness for tourism development in Iraq al-Amir and the surrounding area is associated with poor marketing and promotion due to a lack of readiness in terms of tourism infrastructure. Not all travel agencies list the site in their programs. As cited by one of the respondents, general the manager for Petra Travel & Tourism Company, this is due to the poor condition of the road.

There are other weak points relating to land ownership, and identification of the boundaries and buffer zone where all the land

surrounding the site is owned by the local community, which is mainly used for agricultural purposes. Even though lengthy negotiations were conducted with the local community to acquire the lands. The majority of the respondents from DoA confirmed that the ownership of the lands by the DoA is a problem for establishing a buffer zone. Also, the purchase of land by DoA to create a buffer zone is not an easy task since it requires a large budget allocation.

Aleequ and Shabina (2015) said that inadequate infrastructure for large scale of tourism is one of the constraints of tourism development in Manipur. The author said that the state has neither railways nor navigable waterways and the transport system is synonymous with road communication and airway connection. The main arteries of communication for the state are 325kms long National Highway No.39 and 225kms long National Highway No.53 which connects the Imphal city with Dimapur (Nagaland) and Silchar (Assam) via Jiribam respectively. They said that there had been many hindrances to travel along these routes for lack of political stability and the rugged topography of the region. Kidnapping and ransoms have become a norm in these routes during the night. The survey shows that due to its inadequate communication facility and insurgency problems, tourists are being discouraged from travelling.

Furthermore, the study discovered that infrastructure at tourist sites in terms of accommodation, transport, communication, banking facilities including credit card use, drinking water, sanitation facilities is either lacking or not developed or sometimes being deplorable. Above all these, tourists do not receive any helpful or welcoming attitude from the local public. They are not familiar with the Hindi language because of which tourists face problem while communicating with the local people. Above all findings, the main constraints that are being discouraged the tourist's arrival and development of tourism industry in the state can be identified as:

- Lack of infrastructure
- Communication bottlenecks
- Geographical isolation
- Political instability and insurgency
- Lack of fund
- Indifferent attitude of central and state government
- Lack of a proper tourism development policy of the governments and
- Lack of people's co-operation and consciousness.

They further added that the significant threats of tourism development include:

- Instability and perception of lack of security in the region with the potential to affect tourism movement and
- The continuous fear of unstable environment can make the tourism investment climate unattractive.

Another study was conducted by Absbha (2015) in Dejen Wereda. Dejen Wereda with numerous tourism resources which have rich potentialities for tourism development, but the major challenge according to Absbha is that many of its tourism resources are not studied due to which their knowledge about its resources is minimal. Lack of scientific research conducted in the area, lack of infrastructural facilities, an absence of good awareness among the local people and a failure to make Wereda's rich tourism resources public to visitors affected the development of tourism in the area.

According to Emi (2006), tourism is a big business that requires much financial capital and input of experts for managing its various sub-sectors efficiently. Lack or inadequate capital required to preserve and effectively manage the tourist sites constitutes a significant challenge for the sector (George, nd). In cases where new tourist potentialities are discovered, it involves considerable resources to put them into maximum use, thus the need for more private sector participation in the industry. Idezuma (2006) in Emi (2006) stated that there is a need for caution because there exist several unresolved questions of ownership as regards cultural objects and sites endowed with tourist potentialities which in some cases have resulted in legal tussles between various parties. Emi opined that 'the general attitude of the government, the private sector and a few wealthy individuals who have invested in tourism in certain parts of the country has been that of the entrepreneur takes all the profit'. The implication is that the host community is further impoverished and consequently, the aggrieved local people as a result of a feeling of alienation, tend to sabotage investors effort and developing tourist sites, (Emi, 2006).

Kayode and Ayodele (2012), discovered in their work that despite the substantial tourism resources and hospitable people of Ekiti state, insufficient information, accommodation, and infrastructure at the various towns where these tourist attractions are located are considered as significant constraints to tourism strength of Ekiti state.

A study carried out by Muna (2018) reveals that their case study area has inadequate necessary infrastructure. A significant drawback to the feasibility of future tourism activities is the lack of easy access. The main access road is narrow and very winding, but it would be possible for visitors to use three existing alternative roads to access the area if they were upgraded and signposted. The lack of infrastructure is a direct result of ineffective coordination and cooperation among stakeholders, from both the public and private sectors, together with complicated regulations and laws, which has limited the extent to which the local community tourism can benefit from development and investment opportunities which a strong tourism industry could potentially provide.

Aynalem *et. al.* (2015) on their study revealed that the significant challenges concerning potential tourism sites of Bale Zone are: poor tourism infrastructural development, less community awareness, poor co-ordination effort of stakeholders at the different level, incapability of financial and Human Resources. This is supported by Olugbamila, Omole, Omosulu, Soyinka, Odeyale, Olufayo, and Akinrinmade (2012) that Owo museum is associated with the problems of inadequate water supply, unorganized parking space, physical deterioration of the museum, poor management, lack of accommodation and absence of relaxation centres for tourists and inadequate office accommodation for staff among others. According to Olugbamila *et al.* (2012), although the Federal Government of Nigeria is managing the Owo museum, findings show that the museum is still battling with some problems, these include lack of awareness, lack of support by both the local and state governments and inadequate preparation on the side of the organisers. However, there is no work on the challenges of potential tourism resources in Somorika. That is the gap this work will discover.

Materials and Methods

Method of Research

For the study, the qualitative technique of research was employed. Data were collected via extensive literature, structured questionnaire, in-depth interview, oral tradition and field observation.

In-Dept Interview: this is the method where the researcher collects data from the respondents by asking questions orally and expecting responses. This method helps to bring out the detailed views of people on the potential tourism resources in the study area and

allows for interaction and questioning between the researcher and the respondents. The groups of people interviewed included the aged, youths, educated and less educated, elders in the town union leadership, youth leaders, commercial motorcycle union leaders, and women group leaders. Four interviewees represented each group.

Field Observation: A field survey was carried out to identify the challenges of the resources in the area.

Secondary sources involve the collection of data from documents or publications such as textbooks, magazines, internet, newspapers, etc. which contains information about the research issue. They provide rich sources of literature that enabled the researcher to study identified gaps in knowledge and provide leads on the value or scientific contributions to be added by new research (Madumere, 2010). Information obtained from both primary and secondary sources were used in the analysis and interpretation of our findings, which was eventually embodied

Execution of the Research

The primary research was conducted in three-quarters of the study area. The first place was Oyinokara quarter, where sixteen persons were interviewed. The second place was Igoni quarter, where sixteen persons were interviewed. The third was Oyenovo quarter where sixteen persons were interviewed.

Data Presentation, Analyses, and Interpretation

This analyses the findings of the research as reflected in the field observations, structured questionnaires as well as those of 48 respondents to the open-ended interview schedule. The research reveals that potential tourism resources in Somorika community in Akoko Edo Local Government Area of Edo state have challenges. These challenges have affected the development of potential tourism resources in the study area. The study revealed the factors that impede the development of Somorika community as presented in Table 1

Poor Accessibility of the sites: the study revealed that poor accessibility is a challenge faced in using the resources for tourism development. The roads that lead to potential tourism resources in the study area are bad. This has prevented private investors from coming to the area for tourism development.

In Oyenokara quarter, where most tourist attractions are located, the accessibility to those sites is terrible. However, most of them are

located on top of the rocks which are not accessible, especially during the raining season. These have posed a threat to the development of the area.

In Oyenovo quarter, the narrow roads and non-vehicular movement to the sacred sites and the water bodies is a problem to tourism development in the area. According to Adewole (2018: Per.com), the road that leads to Ufe'Otaru is narrow and cannot be reached with vehicle except on foot. Similarly, Somorika old site is on top of the rock and the terrain is terrible. This has become a challenge for the potentialities that abound in the area.

Table 1 Factors that Impede the Development of Potential Tourism Resources in Somorika Community

S/n	Challenges	Quarter A	Quarter B	Quarter C
1	Poor accessibility of the sites			
2	Health care facilities			
3	Hotels and restaurants			
4	Portable pipe-borne water			
5	Government interest			
6	Poor management of sites			
7	Poverty			
8	Communication facilities			

Source: Field survey, 2018

In Igoni quarter study site, the study showed that Wagbaokuku pond, Odeburu sacred site, Usomo shrine among others have suffered as a result of bad road. The resident in Igoni quarter lamented that the problem with most of the sites in their area is an access road. They maintained that the terrain of the resources is terrible and that has affected the development of the area.

Healthcare facilities: Apart from one health care centre located at Igoni quarter, there is no functional dispensary or hospital in the community. Interview result and direct observation revealed that in Somorika community, it is only one health centre that the community takes their sick to. According to an informant, the problem with the health centre is the lack of medical personnel and this has resulted in the loss of life in the community. However, the community now relies on traditional herbs for treatment. Direct observation shows that the community is not receiving adequate medical attention as a result of the lack of a hospital in the community. Lack of medical facilities in

the area will affect tourism development in the area because any tourist that discovers that such a facility is not available in the destination will not come.

Hotels and Restaurants: The study revealed that a lack of hotels and restaurants in the community where the tourists/visitors can lodge and eat quality food is a challenge faced in using the resources for tourism development. According to Akaila (2018: Per. Com.), lack of hotels and restaurants in the community has affected them negatively because most tourists that visit the community always go back that day. However, if the tourists want to sleep over, the community will make their school building available or direct them to their neighbouring community (Igarra) for accommodation. This has posed a significant challenge for tourism development in the community because most tourists that intend to stay for days have been discouraged.

Portable Pipe Borne Water: Apart from two boreholes in Oyenovo and Igoni quarters in Somorika there are no other means of getting water except by stream or pond. The study revealed that the community suffers much during the dry season because almost all the streams dry up. Direct observation shows that there is no pipe-borne water in the community. Lack of good water will affect the development of the tourism potentialities identified in the area.

Poor Management of the sites: it was discovered from the study that the potential tourism resources in the three quarters are having management problems. This is supported by Shegun (2017: Per.com) that one of the challenges of the sites is lack of management. He said that the villagers have polluted some of the sites. Some are using them as a refuge dump area. The study also reveals that the negligence of the site management by the Akoko Edo local government area is a challenge for tourism development. According to him, it is the responsibility of the L.G.A under the tourism board to manage or oversee the tourism attractions in their jurisdiction. The people complained bitterly about the way the residents pollute the environment where the sites are located.

Government Interest: the study revealed that lack of government interest is a challenge in using the selected sites for tourism development. Findings show that the community has written several proposals to the state government to come and develop the resources in the area but it has not yielded any result. According to informants, when former governor, Adams Oshomole, visited the area he promised them basic infrastructures but up to now, their presence has

not been felt. This has to be a problem for the community in terms of tourism development.

Poverty: Direct observation showed that the community is poor. The high rate of youth's unemployment has affected them negatively where most of them are engaged in the illicit drug trade and cult activities. Results also revealed that the type of soil in the community has made them engage in subsistence farming. Somorika is surrounded by rock and the few lands to plant crops is stony and this affects their yield. According to Shegal, Ojo, and Akaila:

The poverty in our community makes the youths to extort money from tourists that visit our area, especially when they act as tourist guides. Even the visitors that visit the community for healing and consultations suffer same as youths act as middlemen between the chief priest and the visitors and receive their commission at the end of the day from both parties". All these issues pose problems to tourism development in Somorika.

Communication Facilities: the study revealed that poor communication facilities also affect tourism development in the area. There are no single telecommunication facilities in the three quarters. According to informants, the community finds it difficult to communicate with people outside the area. They receive signal by a wave and on top of the rocks. This has affected the community negatively because most tourists that visit the sites always cut off from receiving calls until when they leave the community. This communication hindrance also affects the development of potential tourism resources. Direct observation shows that there is no single telecommunication mask in the community.

Discussions on Findings

Poor access, healthcare facilities, hotels and restaurants, potable pipe-borne water, government interest, poor management of sites, poverty and communication facilities were factors that impede the development of potential tourism resources in Somorika community. The result shows that poor accessibility affects tourists in reaching their destination easily. This is in support of Julianna (2000) that lack of good accessibility is a major hindrance to the development of nature-based tourism in the Central Coast Region of Western Australia. This contradicts the findings of French, Craig-Smith, & Collier, (1995) and Gunn (1988), that accessibility relates to the ease with which destinations can be reached physically, as well as the ease with which the destination itself can be enjoyed as a tourism

product. However, the government should provide quality road and standard transportation infrastructures to the destination to enable tourists to move freely. This is in line with Jennifer and Thea (2013) that the quality of transportation infrastructure available is expected to provide the ease of accessing the destination from tourist's origin country, and as well, the movement of tourists within the destination. The study also revealed that Somorika community has only one health care center with poor facilities and without a medical doctor, which has made the community to rely on local herbs. Lack of potable water in the community has affected them negatively. The study also revealed that hotels and restaurants are not in the community. This has affected the tourists that visit the community. Government interest in the development of attractions is another problem of tourism development. This has dramatically affected the attraction of the private sector to the community. It is when the government creates an enabling environment that investors will come. Poor management of the sites is another factor revealed by the study. People loiter and use the site anyhow because nobody is taking care of the sites. This has resulted in pollution of the sites. Result also shows that poverty in Somorika community is a major challenge to tourism development. Lack of communication infrastructure in the community is an important factor limiting the development of tourism in the area. It is through communication with the outside world that people will know you and appreciate what you have.

Summary

This research aimed to assess challenges of the potential tourism resources in Somorika community in Akoko Edo Local Government Area of Edo state. The study adopted a qualitative research approach. The primary research was conducted in three quarters in the study area which included Oyenokara, Oyenovo and Igoni quarters. The study revealed that there are factors that impede the development of potential tourism resources in the Somorika community. They include Poor access, healthcare facilities, hotels and restaurants, potable pipe-borne water, government interest, poor management of sites, poverty and communication facilities.

Suggestions

Having fully addressed the findings of the study, it is very important to make suggestions aimed at encouraging the

development of the identified potential tourism resources in Somorika community.

1. The government should provide all the necessary tourism infrastructures such as good road network, telecommunication, accommodation facilities, hospital, and healthcare facilities among others to the community.
2. The government should develop an interest in how to harness the abundance natural, cultural and historical attractions in the area.
3. The community, in collaboration with the local government, should constitute a board that will be in charge of managing and taking care of the sites.
4. The government should provide adequate security in the area so that the life and property of both tourists and the community will be secured.

Conclusions

The study concluded that Poor access, healthcare facilities, hotels and restaurants, potable pipe-borne water, government interest, poor management of sites, poverty and communication facilities are the challenges impeded the development of potential tourism resources in the Somorika community

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