

Assessment of Residents' Awareness and Participation in Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Selected Tourist Destinations in Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract

The strength of rural based tourism revolves around its potential to change and upgrade the lives of those in the rural communities. Nevertheless, this form of tourism is challenged by such factors as poverty, low level of awareness and participation amongst rural residents, poor funding, as well as non-implementation of tourism policy frame work by government and other stakeholders. This study assesses residents' awareness and participation in rural tourism development in selected tourist destinations in Southwest Nigeria. They are Okomu National Park, Edo State, Idanre Hill Resort, Ondo State and Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort, Ekiti State. Data were obtained through structured questionnaires administered on 500 local residents in the study areas. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA and logistic regression. The results showed that majority of the respondents in all the three study areas are well aware of tourism in their locality. The media of awareness were tourism facilities, radio and television, social media, marketing personnel and the newspapers. Also, majority (59.4%) of respondents participated in tourism activities in their communities while 40.6% did not participate. The study revealed that no significant difference existed among the local residents' with respect to awareness of tourism. However, significant difference existed in the participation ($p < 0.05$) of the host communities in tourism. It was also revealed that socio-economic status of the respondents was significantly related to their level of awareness of tourism activities and participation in the study areas.

Keywords: Awareness, participation, local resident, sustainable tourism development

Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries contributing significantly to the economy of many nations. The industry has proven to be surprisingly strong and resilient in economic activity and a fundamental contributor to economic growth of countries by generating billions of dollars in exports and creating millions of jobs (Wall and Mathieson, 2010). The publication of World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2014) showed that in 2013, travel and tourism's

total contribution to the global economy rose to over US\$ 7 trillion, about 9.5% of global GDP, not only outpacing the wider economy but also growing faster than other significant sectors such as financial and business services, transportation and manufacturing and its total contribution to employment was nearly 266 million jobs, about 8.9% of world employment.

It was asserted that most of the increase in tourism revenue are attributed to the rise of rural based tourism activities especially ecotourism which, according to Ceballos-lascurain (1987), is wildlife based tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisrupted natural areas with the objective of admiring, studying and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals as well as cultural features found at chosen destinations.

Tourism today has become one of the engine for Nigeria's economy with a contribution of 3.2% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and providing 2.7% of total employment in 2013 (WTTC, 2014). Tourism resource endowments in Nigeria ranges from abundant forest reserve, games and community reserves to existing village festivals, rich mosaic hills, cliffs, rivers, lakes, springs, waterfalls, relics, savannah, woodlands, endowed with flora and fauna resources of various magnitudes (Asije, 2012). The challenges of tourism development in Nigeria, according to Asije (2012), include lack of awareness and participation, poor policy frame work on the part of government, poor level of promotion and packaging initiative, corruption and high poverty level amongst rural Nigerian residents and so on.

Nigeria has over the years depended on oil for revenue, a situation which has paralyzed its potential in other sectors of the economy. The current economic down turn which has further devalued her currency has led to high level of poverty, inflation, unemployment, poor industrialization and low Gross Domestic Product rating. Nigeria is now looking at tourism as an alternative source of revenue as seen in other countries of the world (Ukonu, 2006).

Nigeria's rural communities are naturally endowed with tourist attractions of various forms but are wasting away due to underutilization and underdevelopment. Many of the tourist potentials and attractions are not well developed, and those that are developed are not well managed, as many of them face the challenges of poor social infrastructure when compared to attractions in developed counties like Switzerland, France, Italy, Spain or even African countries like Kenya, Egypt, South Africa and Tanzania (Asije, 2012).

A lot of efforts have been made towards developing some tourist attractions across the length and breadth of Nigeria but records show that these sites were ascertained to be poorly funded, have low level of skilled manpower, lack modern infrastructure and technologies and lack acceptance

and participation by communities where they are sited. It is also observed that lack of good policies have led to low level of development of tourism potentials (Asije, 2012).

It is on record that despite several direct and indirect benefits, tourism also has major impacts on the natural and built environment as well as on the wellbeing and culture of host population. Sustainable tourism is not a discrete or special form of tourism, rather, all forms of tourism should strive to be more sustainable. Popular tourist destinations such as Italy's Adriatic sea coast have been devastated by tourist activities. Each Africa's renowned game park, Greece national treasure, the former white marble Parthenon are some of tourist destinations that have been destroyed by human activities and environmental neglect (WTO/UNEP, 2010).

Globally, rural communities' participation in the development of tourism industry is low. Integration of rural residents rather than excluding them in tourism ensures their willingness to develop the tourism features in their communities. In plain words, Ilupeju (2005) stated that people (especially community residents) have to be conscious about the fact that tourism is money. Ilupeju further stressed that local authorities, residents of rural areas and private investors in areas of tourist destinations must know that the tourists coming to their localities bring wealth to them (2005). Therefore, the participation of local residents is vital in the drive for sustainable rural tourism because these people are conversant with their natural resources and interact closely with tourists in the tourism destination.

There is paucity of information on rural resident's awareness and participation in sustainable tourism in Nigeria. As a result, limited studies have been conducted on awareness and participation of in sustainable rural tourism. This study therefore seeks to assess local resident's awareness and participation in rural tourism in the study locations. Specifically, it will determine the socio-economic characteristics of community residents in relation to their tourism awareness and participation. The hypotheses of the study include: a) significant relationships exists in the level of tourism awareness and participation amongst host communities b) significant relationships exists between socio- economic characteristics of local communities and their awareness and participation in tourism activities.

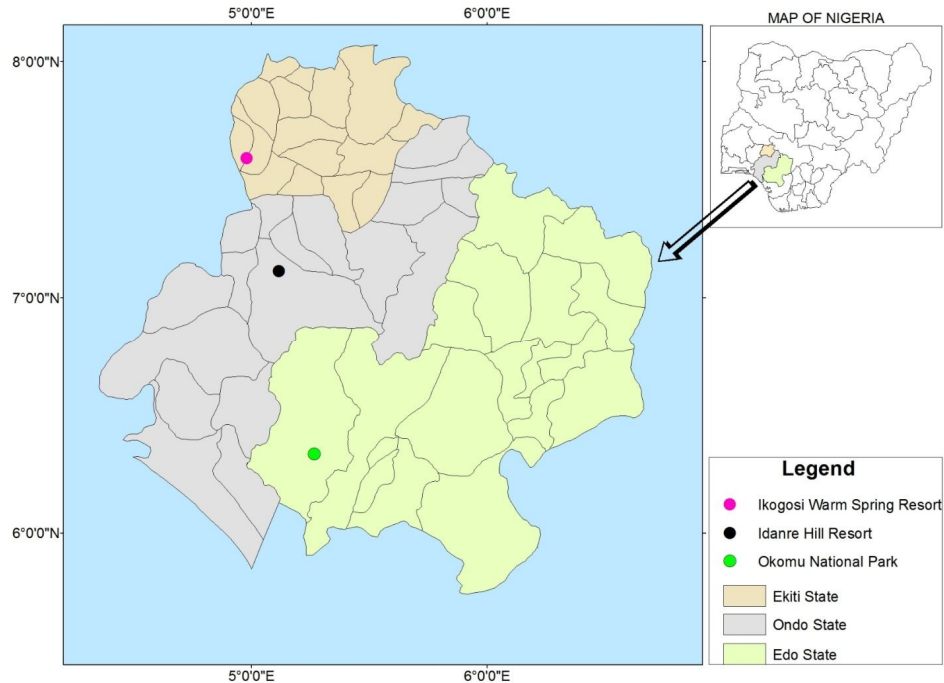


Figure 1: Map of study areas

Materials and Methods

The study took place in Okomu National Park, Edo State, Idanre Hill Resort, Ondo State and Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort, Ekiti State. Okomu National Park, formerly known as the Okomu wildlife sanctuary, a forest block within the 1,082km² Okomu forest reserve, is located in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria (Edo State Investment Guide, 2001). It is the smallest national park in Nigeria with a land area of 212km² (National Park Service, 2009). The annual rainfall in Okomu National Park ranges 995m to 1550mm, and the average daily temperature ranges between 27^oc to 35^oc.

The historic Idanre hills resort is located in the ancient town of Idanre, located about 15km south-west of Akure town, the Ondo State capital (Akinsuroju, 2015). It spreads across five kilometres with well apportioned and fitted blend of sophisticated and traditional African motifs. Ikogosi Warm Spring is located in the small town of Ikogosi in Ekiti State in Western Nigeria. It lies between lofty, steep-sided and heavily wooded, north-south trending hills about 27.4 km east of Ilesha (Osun State), and about 10.5 km southeast of Efon Alaye (Ekiti State) (Hairul, Ojo, Kasimu, Gafar, Okoloba &

Mohammed, 2013). The resort is just North of the 7° 35' N latitude and slightly west of the 5° 00' E longitude. The resort is believed to be one of eight warm springs in the world which is peculiar in being the only one in its very natural state (Edun, 2009).

Table 1: Population and Sample Size of Residents

Community	Distance from tourist site		Total	No selected	Population	No of respondents
	0-5km	6-10km				
a. Idanre	5	5	10	10	370,801	431
b. Okomu	4	4	8	8	39,968	47
c. Ikogosi	3	3	6	6	19,169	22
Total	12	12	24	24	429,938	500

The population of this study consists of selected households within 0-5km and 6-10km of the selected communities in the study destinations. The sample size of 500 was obtained from 429,98 using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination. The sample size was proportionally distributed among the study locations based on their population. Therefore, 431 respondents were selected from ten (10) communities in Idanre Hills Resort; there were 47 respondents from eight (8) communities in Okomu National Park and 23 from five (5) communities in Ikogosi Warm Spring (Table 1).

Results

Table 2: Community Residents' Distribution by Socio-economic Characteristics

Variables	Okomu National Park (N=41)		Idanre Hill Resort (N=436)		Ikogosi Warm Spring (N=23)	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex						
Male	20	48.8	228	52.3	13	56.5
Female	21	51.2	208	47.7	10	43.5
Age (years)						
0 – 14	-	-	12	2.8	2	8.7
15 – 24	9	22.0	88	20.2	7	30.4
25 – 54	21	51.2	188	43.1	11	47.8
55 – 64	10	24.4	126	28.9	3	13.1
> 64	1	2.4	22	5.0	-	-

Religion						
Islam	4	9.8	125	28.7	6	26.1
Christianity	37	90.2	311	71.3	17	73.9
Educational Qualification						
Primary	4	9.8	38	8.7	4	17.4
Secondary	17	41.5	158	36.2	11	47.8
Tertiary	19	46.3	227	52.1	5	21.7
Non- formal	1	2.4	13	3.0	3	13.1
Marital Status						
Single	11	26.8	113	25.9	12	52.2
Married	24	58.5	266	61.0	10	43.5
Divorced	5	12.2	41	9.4	1	4.3
Widowed	1	2.4	16	3.7	-	-
Family Size						
1-5	25	61.0	214	49.1	56.5	56.5
6-10	11	26.8	208	47.7	43.5	43.5
11-15	2	4.9	10	2.3	-	-
16-20	1	2.4	1	0.2	-	-
> 20	2	4.9	3	0.7	-	-
Occupation						
Student	7	17.1	98	22.5	7	30.4
Public Servant	13	31.7	116	26.6	9	39.1
Private Sector	7	17.1	100	22.9	2	8.7
Self Employed	5	12.2	55	12.6	-	-
Unemployed	8	19.5	43	9.9	3	13.1
Retiree	1	2.4	24	5.5	2	8.7
Nature of Employment						
Permanent	22	53.7	187	42.9	7	30.4
Temporary	19	46.3	216	49.5	16	69.6
Part-time	-	-	22	5.0	-	-
Casual	-	-	11	2.5	-	-
Type of						

Residency						
Native	18	43.9	245	56.2	19	82.6
Non-native	23	56.1	191	43.8	4	17.4
Length of Residency (years)						
0-5	6	14.6	72	16.5	4	17.4
6-10	7	17.1	122	28.0	2	8.7
11-15	3	7.3	66	15.1	3	13.1
16-20	6	14.6	53	12.2	5	21.7
> 20	19	46.3	123	28.2	9	39.1
Monthly Income (₦)						
≤ 20,000	8	19.5	53	12.2	-	-
20,001 – 40,000	12	29.3	193	44.3	17	73.9
40,001 – 60,000	6	14.6	75	17.2	1	4.3
60,001 – 80,000	6	14.6	44	10.1	3	13.1
> 80,000	9	22.0	71	16.3	2	8.7

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Socio-economic Characteristics

Table 2 shows that there were more females (51.2%) represented than males (48.8%) at Okomu National Park. It also reveals that the highest age group was 25-54 years (51.2%). Also, 90.2% of the residents practice Christianity. The study further revealed that 46.3% and 41.5% of the respondents attained tertiary and secondary education, respectively. Furthermore, 58.5% of the respondents were married. The family size of between 1-5 had the highest percentage (61.0%). Concerning occupation, 31.7% of the residents are public servants. Also, 53.7% of the respondents have permanent employment. The majority (56.1%) were non-natives of the community while 46.3% of the respondents had lived in the community for over 20 years. Moreover, 29.3% of the respondents earned a monthly income of between ₦ 20,001 and ₦40,000.

For Idanre Hill Resort, males (52.3%) were more represented than females (47.7%). The dominant age group was 25-54 years with 43.1%; more (52.1%) of the respondents had tertiary education. In addition, 61.0% of the respondents were single, while 49.1% and 47.7% of the respondents had family sizes of between 1-5 and 6-10, respectively. The study further reveals that 26.6% of the respondents were public servants, followed by those who worked in the private sector (22.9%). Also, 49.5% of the respondents had

temporary employment. As regards nativity, 56.2% are natives of the host community. Also, 28.2% of the respondents have lived in the community for over 20 years. Furthermore, 44.3% of the respondents earned a monthly income of between ₦20,001-₦40,000.

Of the total respondents at Ikogosi Warm Spring, 56.5% were males while 43.5% were females. Majority of the respondents were within the age range of 25-54 years (47.8). Furthermore, 73.9% of the residents of the host community were Christians, while 47.8% attained secondary education. The study further revealed that 43.5% of the respondents were married. Furthermore, 56.5% had a family size of between 1-5 individuals. For occupation, 39.1% of the residents were public servants, with 69.6% of the respondents having temporary employment. Majority (82.6%) of the respondents were natives of the community while 39.1% of the respondents had lived in the community for more than 20 years. Also, 73.9% of the respondents earned a monthly income of between ₦ 20,001 and ₦40,000

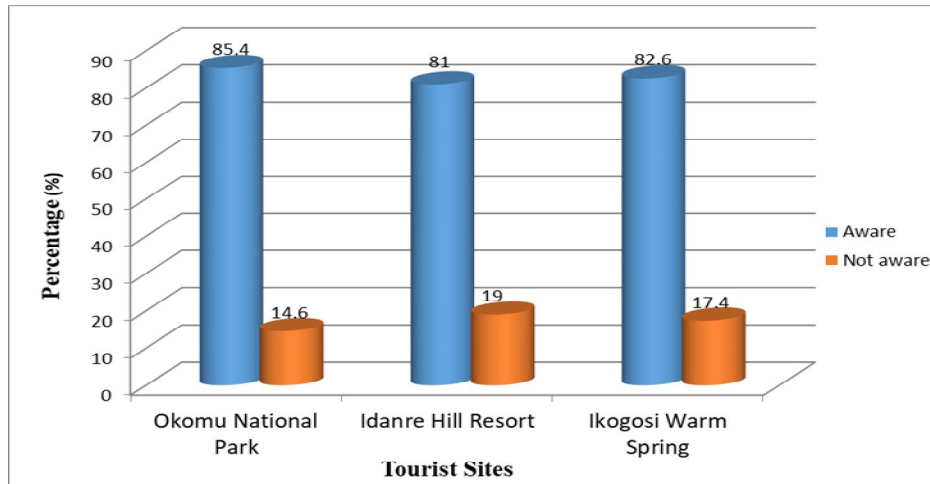


Figure 2: Residents' awareness of tourism activities
Source: Field Survey, 2017

Figure 2 indicates that most of the residents (85.4%) around Okomu National Park were aware of tourism in the park while 14.6% indicated that they were not aware. At Idanre Hill Resort, 81% of the residents were aware of tourism in their communities while 19.0% indicated that they were not aware. At Ikogosi Warm Spring and Resort, most of the residents (82.6%) were aware of tourism in their communities while 17.4% indicated that they were not aware

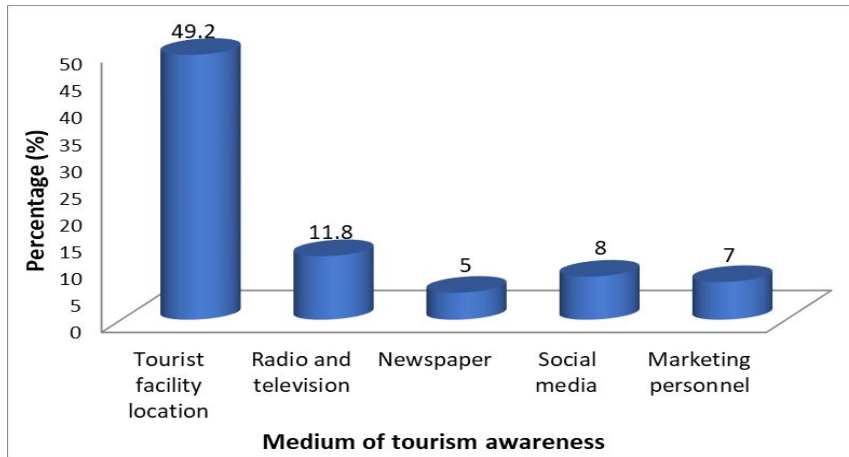


Figure 3: Medium of residents' awareness of tourism
 Source: Field Survey, 2017

Field survey also shows that 49.2% of the respondents indicated that the tourist facility was the medium of their tourism awareness, followed by radio and television (11.8%), social media (8.0%), marketing personnel (7.0%) and the newspaper (5.0%).

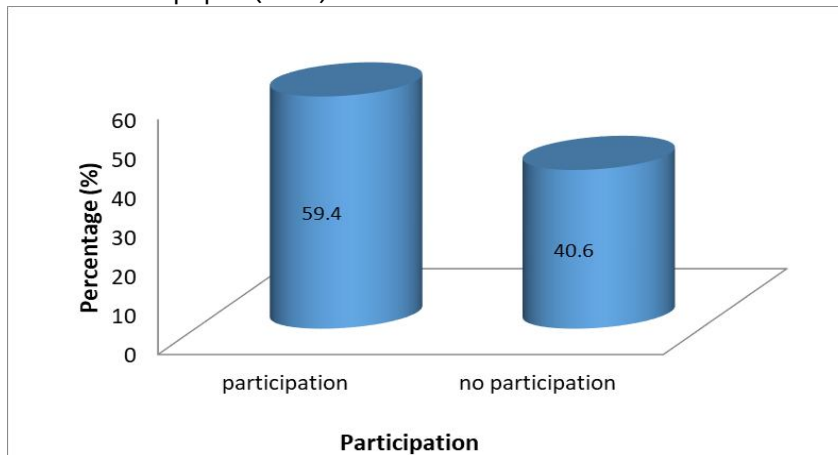


Figure 4: Community residents' participation in tourism
 Source: Field Survey, 2017

Figure 4 reveals that majority (59.4%) of respondents participated in tourism in their communities while 40.6% did not participate in tourism activities.

Table 3: Socio-economic Differences Among Selected Residents in the Communities

Socio-economic factors	F	Sig. Level
Sex	0.702	0.496
Age	2.948	0.053
Religion	0.797	0.451
Education	0.616	0.541
Marital status	3.241	0.040*
Family size	1.579	0.207
Occupation	0.627	0.534
Nature of employment	1.078	0.341
Type of residency	4.607	0.010**
Length of stay	2.579	0.077
Income	1.262	0.284

*Significant at 0.05 probability level, **Significant at 0.01 probability level
Source: Field Survey, 2017

The result from Table 3 reveals that significant differences existed in socio-economic characteristics among the selected communities based on marital status ($p < 0.05$) and type of residence ($p < 0.01$). However, no significant socio-economic differences existed among the selected communities on sex, age, religion, education, family size, occupation, nature of employment, length of stay and income ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4: Socio-economic Predictors of Residents' Awareness and Participation in Tourism in Okomu National Park, Idanre Hill Resort and Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort

Independent Variables	Awareness of tourism					Participation in tourism				
	B	SE	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)	B	SE	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Sex	0.27	0.27	1.02	0.31	1.31	0.40	0.20	3.84	0.05*	1.49
Age	-0.47	0.20	5.39	0.02*	0.62	-0.13	0.16	0.69	0.41	0.88
Education	-20.52	9294.69	0.00	1.00	0.00	-1.87	0.78	5.72	0.02*	0.15
Family size	-20.30	17286.77	0.00	1.00	0.57	0.45	0.16	8.13	0.00*	1.58
Occupation	-0.85	0.92	0.85	0.28	0.60	1.32	0.75	3.09	0.08	3.76
Type of residence	42.72	41256.58	0.00	1.00	0.00	21.95	40197.20	0.00	1.00	3395130421

y										
Length of residency	0.53	0.13	16.92	0.00**	1.69	0.04	0.09	0.21	0.64	1.04
Income	0.58	0.17	10.88	0.01*	1.78	-0.21	0.11	3.51	0.06	0.81
Constant	-2.96	43756.29	0.00	1.00	0.05	-43.24	42324.75	0.00	1.00	0.00
Correct Prediction	82.8%					68.2%				
Final Model Fit										
-2 log Likelihood	385.23					595.18				
Nagelkerke R Square	0.28					0.20				

* Significant at 0.05 probability level, ** Significant at 0.01 probability level

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Research result also reveals that no significant difference existed among the residents with regards to awareness of tourism. However, a significant difference existed in participation ($p < 0.05$) of the host communities in tourism.

The likelihood ratio test for the three sites (Table 4) indicates that the logistic regression model is significant with Chi-square statistics of 385.23 for awareness and 595.18 for participation. Thus, the socio-economic variables of the respondents were significantly related to their awareness and participation in tourism in the study areas. Furthermore, the model predictions are correct at 82.8% and 68.2% for awareness and participation respectively. Therefore, the explanatory variables can be used to specify the dependent variables (i.e., awareness and participation in tourism in the study locations) in the discrete term (0,1) with a high degree of accuracy. Age ($p < 0.05$), length of residence ($p < 0.01$) and income ($p < 0.01$) were statistically significant with residents' awareness of tourism while sex, education, family size, occupation and type of residence were not significantly related to respondents' awareness of tourism ($p > 0.05$). Sex ($p < 0.05$), education ($p < 0.05$) and family size ($p < 0.01$) were statistically significant with participation in tourism while age, occupation, type of residence, length of residence and

income were not significantly related to residents' participation in tourism ($p > 0.05$). The final model signified that the logistic models explain 28.0% and 20.0% of the variation in the awareness and participation in tourism respectively. This result indicates a weak relationship between the predictors and the predictions.

Discussion

The result of the socio-economic factors of the residents revealed that there were more males (50.2%) than females (49.8%). This is consistent with the study carried out by Castillo *et al.* (2016) which revealed that the male proportion of local people of Boa Vista and Sal, Cape Verde was higher than the females. This study also revealed that the majority of the residents was between the age group of 25-54 years, and therefore are young, energetic, agile and able-bodied and can partake in tourism activities. The report of Zenelaj & Prifti (2013) which posits that it is more often than not, the young people that are more involved in providing services to tourists corroborates this finding. Also, the majority of the local residents have been living in the community for over six years, and 72.2% are employed. According to María *et al.* (2016), studies carried out in Boa Vista and Sal, Cape indicated that more than 70% of the local people have been living permanently on the island for over seven years with 63.5% of them being employed. Thus, to a considerable extent, the residents have intricate knowledge of their tourism resources.

In all of the three study sites, residents showed a high level of awareness of tourism activities in their respective locality. It is possible that the tourist sites carry out awareness campaigns of their sites. This is supported by the result showing that tourism facilities are the dominant medium of tourism awareness. For instance, the research carried out by Hairul, Ojo, Kasimu, Gafar, Okoloba, and Mohammed (2013) on the perception of community residents about Ikogosi Warm Spring shows that 100% of the interviewee were fully aware of the resort and its historical and traditional endowments. . In contrast, a report by Litheko & Potgieter (2016) on residents' awareness and support of tourism in Mahikeng, South Africa revealed that a significant percentage of the residents reported that their level of tourism awareness was not good.

Conclusion

It is a fact that there is a limited number of empirical studies on residents' level of awareness and participation in rural based tourism. This study developed and empirically tested the level of awareness and participation of residents' in tourism development activities. From the results

of the comprehensive data analysis and procedures, this study shows that the socio-economic variables of the residents are significantly related to their level of tourism awareness and participation in the study destinations. The research findings have made valuable contributions to the insights about the need for tourism development stakeholders to develop initiatives that will improve the social well-being of the residents to sustain their awareness and participation in rural based tourism development activities.

As key players in rural tourism development initiative, the rural communities should be involved at all stages of tourism development planning through sensitization and encouraging them to participate in tourism development activities. The communities should equally be made to perceive tourism development as an economic development activity that will provide them off-farm income generating activities.

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