

SECURITY CHALLENGES AND SUSTAINABLE ECO/RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: EXAMPLES OF IDANRE HILLS AND OWU FALLS

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ABSTRACT

Eco and rural tourism are keys to sustainable economic development in most developing countries, including Nigeria. In Nigeria, security challenges have threatened eco and rural tourism, impeding economic development. This paper examines the effects of national insecurity on tourism development in Idanre (Idanre Hills) and Owu-Isin (Owu falls) in Nigeria. It identified types of insecurity issues common in the study areas; examined causes of insecurity; determined the effects of insecurity in relation to patronage; and assessed the coping strategies. A total of one hundred residents of the host communities were randomly sampled with copies of the questionnaire, while tourist guides and tourists were interviewed. Tables, frequencies, Chi-square and trend analysis, were employed to analyze the gathered data. Findings revealed the common insecurity challenges in the host communities, including abduction and farmer/herders clashes. Causes include neglect of the people (82.0%) and poverty (74.0%). Effects identified include: giving the country a bad image and low patronage at the tourist sites. Coping strategies include using detective equipment and CCTV camera, education and community policing. It can therefore be concluded that eco and rural tourism hold promise for sustainable development of the host communities if security is guaranteed, and basic social amenities provided especially at Owu falls.

***Keywords:** Ecotourism, Insecurity, Rural Areas, Sustainable Development, Tourism*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the fastest growing industry as it enhances the growth of the economy of many regions of the world. It plays fundamental roles in socio-economic development of a lot of countries by contributing towards solving the major political, social and economic problems that characterized the rural areas. It is the mainstay of the economy of most countries of the world (Nuva & Shamsudin, 2009). Tourism involves travel for recreational, leisure or business trips. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (1995) defined tourism as “the movement of people to and stay in places outside their usual home for at least twenty-four hours but not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to any form of employment from within the place visited.” Tourism comprises sub-industries such as travel agencies, hotels, airlines, airports, tour operations, manufacturing, credit card companies, car rental companies, convention and visitors’ business and other travel related services. The World tourism day is usually celebrated on 27th of September every year.

Okonkwo & Odum, (2010) posited it that tourism assists to conserve the natural environment through protection and maintenance of national parks as well as other protected areas, tourism helps in developing the host communities by creating employment opportunities, preventing rural-urban migration, enhancing income generation, foreign exchange earnings, and interchange of cultures and people particularly in developing countries.

According to Filion, Daniel & Thomson (1994), tourism is gaining prominence in the debate over how to move towards more sustainable patterns of development. A sustainable tourism development, therefore, is a practice that does not compromise the future needs for present satisfaction. According to Nijkamp (1999:2) sustainable tourism development can be referred to as “achieving a kind of tourism growth that prevents environmental degradation, since such a fact could have serious consequences on the future quality of life.”

Another proposition is that “sustainable tourism meets the needs of the present tourists and tourism industry, while protecting the environment and future opportunities, attempting to address all tourism actors’ demands of an economic, social, aesthetic, etc. nature, and maintaining the cultural and ecological integrity, the biological diversity and all life-supporting systems” (UNWTO, 1995, cited in Sava, 2006:59).

For any tourism industry to thrive well, security is a major requirement. Nigeria has high prospects in tourism but the insecurity issues ravaging the country do not allow tourism to thrive well. In the last few years, Nigeria has experienced exponential insecurity which is widely spread, thereby making most part of the country unsafe. For instance, security challenges such as kidnapping, ritual killings, terrorism, violent armed robbery, political assassinations and activities of Boko Haram impinge on the security of lives and property of both Nigerian citizens and foreigners living or even trying to embark on tourism journey to the country. Isma'il *et al.*, (2022) discovered that the residents of the communities surrounding Zuma rock in Abuja, Nigeria live in fear due to the prevalence of violent crimes in the vicinity of the rock.

This paper therefore examines the emerging security challenges and sustainable eco and rural tourism development in Nigeria using Idanre hills and Owu falls as examples. Specifically, the study identified types of insecurity issues common in the study areas; examined causes of insecurity; determined the effects of insecurity on eco and rural tourism for sustainable economic development; and assessed the coping strategies to insecurity issues confronting the tourists and the host communities.

ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism is a neologism, meaning ecology and tourism. It can be regarded as any form of tourism that entails travels to natural areas, conserving the environment, and improving the well-being of the local people. Ecotourism is an embodiment of tourism inclined essentially by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures (Ziffer, 1989). McCormick, (1994) submits that ecotourism is a purposeful travel to natural areas so as to understand the culture and natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people.

Ecotourism is one of the leading segments of tourism industry in the world today. The International Ecotourism Association, estimated that the world's Natural Ecotourism revenue grows at the rate of 10–12% every year, this is an important direction of tourism in the 21st century (Shi *et al.*, 2022). Examples of these can be found in Nepal (Regmi and Walter, 2017), India (Ghosh-Harihar *et al.*, 2019) and Kenya (Cheung, 2015).

Ugwu (2022) asserted that ecotourism provides secure ways of protecting the ecosystems as well as provides jobs and enhance community development. It ensures sustainable use of environmental resources in the process of generating economic opportunities for the local people (Bhattacharya, Chowdhury & Sarkar, 2011 cited in Kiper, 2013). Sustainable ecotourism takes into consideration future protection and development of opportunities based on environment's present needs (Akbari, 2007). Ecotourism is a sustainable form of natural resource-based tourism and involves four sectors; the tourists, the host communities, the environment and the tourism industry. It encourages conservation of land, generates income for park management and provides income for the rural people.

RURAL TOURISM

All tourism activities in a rural area is known as rural tourism. According to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), rural tourism is "a type of tourism venture in which the visitor's escapade is linked to a wide range of products generally connected to nature-based activities such as agriculture, rural lifestyle, culture, angling and sightseeing." Rural tourism can be defined as the movement of people from their normal place of residence to rural areas for a minimum period of twenty-four hours to the maximum of six months for the sole purpose of leisure and pleasure. Rural Tourism enterprise takes place in "non-urban areas with the following characteristics: i) low population density, ii) landscape and land-use dominated by agriculture and forestry and iii) traditional social structure and lifestyle".

Fleischer & Pizam (1997) associate rural tourism with the 'country vacation' whereby tourists spend the large proportion of their vacation period engaging in recreational activities in a rural environment be it farm, ranch, tourist sites, country home, or the surrounding areas. Derno (1991:4) conceived rural tourism as tourism activities in a 'non-urban territory where human (land-related economic) activity is going on, primarily agriculture: a permanent human presence seems a qualifying requirement'. Tourism activity in rural areas can be described with different terms to include farm tourism, rural tourism, agri-tourism, soft tourism, eco-tourism, alternative tourism, and several others, which have a different meaning from one country to another. Rural tourism has a high potential to invigorate local economic growth and social change because of its interdependence with other economic activities, its contribution to GDP and job creation, and its capacity to promote the dispersal of demand in time (fight seasonality) and along a wider territory.

STUDY AREA

There are two study areas for this research. These include Idanre hills in Idanre LGA, Ondo State and Owu falls in Ifelodun LGA, Kwara State. Idanre L.G.A is a local government in Ondo State, Nigeria. The LGA is made up of several towns and villages such as Atosin, Odode, Alade, Owena, Onisere, Akinmoji, Gbalegi, Lisagba, and Ojadale. The Local Government headquarter is in Owena town. The Local Government Area is located between latitudes 06° 42' and 07° 42' north

and 05° 00 and 05° 32' east (fig 1). It is bounded to the north by Akure and Ifedore Local Government Areas. Owo Local Government Area is the boundary at the East and to the West, by Ondo and Ore-Odigbo Local Government Areas and Edo State is the boundary at the South. The average humidity level of Idanre LGA is 60 percent while average wind speed in the area is 11 km/h. The LGA is characterized by several hills and rocks and the land area covers 1832km² (Adegeye, 1993). The area has an average temperature of 78-83°F between January and July. The area is characterized by forests and rocky hills. The estimated population of Idanre LGA is 169,732. The primary activities found here is agricultural production and the major crops grown include cocoa, plantain, cassava, cocoyam, sweet potatoes, maize, palm kernel, groundnut among others. Trade, tourism, blacksmithing, and textile weaving and dyeing also thrive well in Idanre LGA.

Owu falls is located in Ifelodun Local Government Area (Fig.2), Kwara State. Ifelodun local government area is located between longitude 10° 15'E and 10° 17'E and latitude 12° 18'N and 12° 4'N of the equator. The local government was created in 1976 with the administrative headquarters in Share. It has nine districts namely Agunjin, Idofian, Igbaja, Ilere, Oke-Ode, Omupo, Ora, Oro-Ago and Share districts. The Local Government Area is situated in the extreme north of Kwara State between Bode Sa'adu in Moro Local Government Area and Isaraji in Edu L.G.A. of Kwara State. The area has a land mass of about 400 square kilometres making the L.G.A to be the largest in size in Kwara State. It is bounded to the North by Jebba in Moro L.G.A. and to the south by Irepodun and Isin L.G.A of Kwara State. At the east, it is bounded by Tsaraji in Edu L.G.A and at the West; it is bounded by Ilorin South, East, Asa and Moro L.G.A. The total annual rainfall in this area is between 800mm and 1200mm and mean temperature between 30°C to 35°C. The vegetation of Ifelodun L.G.A. is savannah grassland which is intercepted by few fringes that is in Oro-Ago and Ilere districts of the Local Government. The area has a population figure of 206,042 people with 104,944 males and 96,525 females (NPC, 2006).

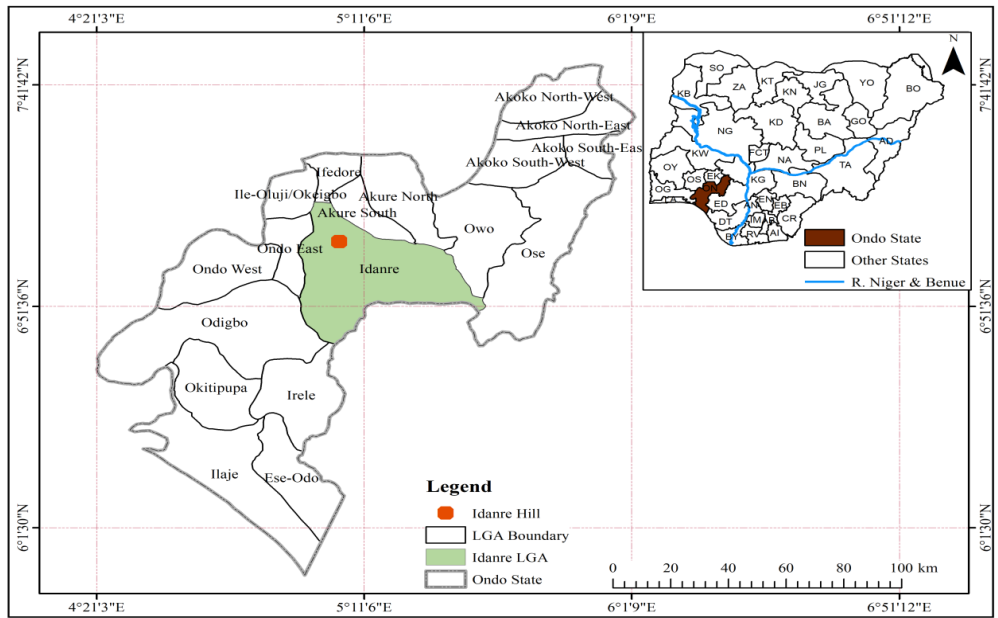


Figure 1: Ondo State showing Idanre LGA and Idanre hills
Source: Ministry of Lands & Housing



Plate 1: Idanre hills
Source: Wikipedia google map

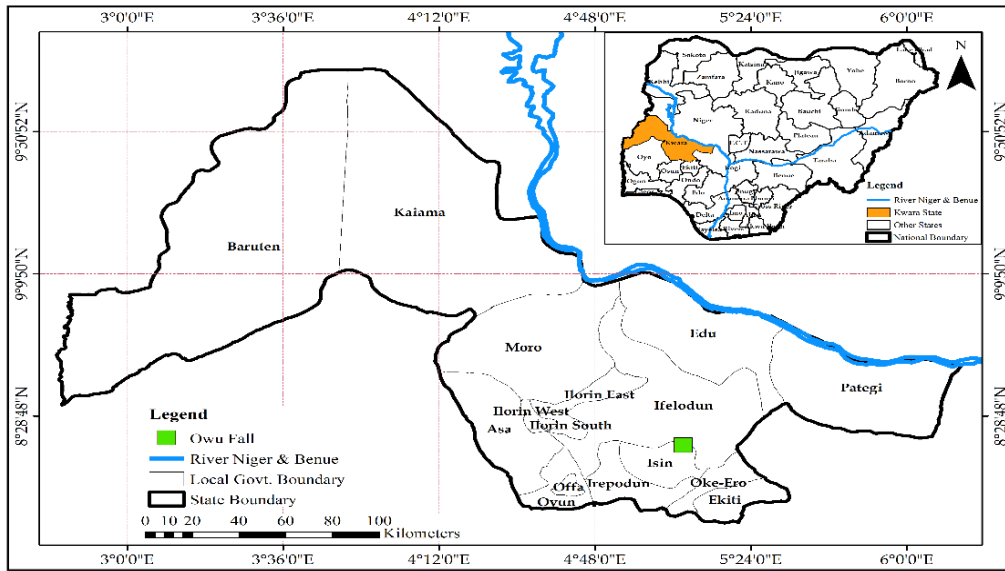


Figure 2: Kwara State showing Owu falls
Source: Ministry of Lands & Housing



Plate 2: Owu falls in Kwara State
Source: Authors' field survey, 2022

METHODOLOGY

The last census carried out in Nigeria with figures of settlements was in 1991, hence, the current population figure of the two sampled settlements could not be determined. A total of one hundred residents of the host communities were therefore randomly sampled with copies of questionnaire while tourist guides and tourists were interviewed using face-to-face oral interview method. Systematic random sampling technique was employed to sample 50 residents from each of the host communities with copies of questionnaire. This was done by sampling only household head in every 3rd building until a total of fifty respondents were sampled from each community. This is because the residents are the ones that are aware of whatever activity that is going on in the community. They were asked questions about types of insecurity issues common in the study areas, causes of insecurity, effects and coping strategies. Two tourist guides were interviewed using face-to-face oral interview method about the effects, level of patronage and coping strategies.

For the purpose of this research, a non-probability sampling known as convenience sampling/accidental sampling was employed for face-to-face oral interview with some of the tourists met at the site. In Owu-Isin, there are no records to reveal level of patronage by tourists, therefore, some community members especially those living very close to the site were interviewed using face-to-face oral method. Descriptive statistics such as tables, percentages and frequencies were used to analyze types of insecurity issues common in the study areas, causes of insecurity and coping strategies. Trend analysis was also employed to analyze the effects of insecurity in relation to level of patronage while chi square was used to show the relationship between the socio-economic and socio-demographic characteristics of the sampled residents of the two host communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic and Socio-economic characteristics of Residents of Host Communities

Table 1 shows the socio-economic and socio-demographic characteristics of the sampled residents of the host communities, in Idanre, majority (62.0%) of the sampled respondents are within the age group of 10-50 years while in Owu-Isin, majority (64%) are also in the age group of between 10 and 30 years.

Table 1: Socio-demographic/socio-economic characteristics of the residents

Characteristics	Name of Community				Chi-Square	P-Value
	Idanre	Owu-Isin				
Age	n (%)	Cumulative %	n (%)	Cumulative %	49.475	0.000
10-20	11 (22.0)	22.0	17 (34.0)	34.0		
21-30	6 (12.0)	34.0	32 (64.0)	98.0		
31-40	5 (10.0)	44.0	0 (0.0)	98.0		
41-50	9 (18.0)	62.0	1 (2.0)	100.0		
≥51	19 (38.0)	100.0	0 (0.0)	100.0		
Sex					1.563	0.211
Male	21 (42.0)	42.0	15 (30.0)	30.0		
Female	29 (58.0)	100.0	35 (70.0)	100.0		
Marital Status					10.461	0.015
Single	16 (32.0)	32.0	26 (52.0)	52.0		
Married	26 (52.0)	84.0	24 (48.0)	100.0		
Separated	5 (10.0)	94.0	0 (0.0)	100.0		
Divorced	3 (6.0)	100.0	0 (0.0)	100.0		
Primary Occupation					80.522	0.000
Business	23 (46.0)	46.0	0 (0.0)	0.0		
Civil Servant	4 (8.0)	60.0	0 (0.0)	0.0		
Farmers	12 (24.0)	64.0	43 (86.0)	86.0		
Retiree	2 (4.0)	68.0	0 (0.0)	0.0		
Students	9 (18.0)	100.0	7 (14.0)	100.0		
Educational Status					81.293	0.000
No formal education	4 (8.0)	8.0	5 (10.0)	10.0		
Primary	24 (48.0)	56.0	33 (66.0)	76.0		
Secondary	20 (40.0)	96.0	10 (20.0)	96.0		
Tertiary	2 (4.0)	100.0	2(4.0)	100.0		
Monthly Income					46.380	0.000
≤50000	10 (20.0)	20.0	50 (100.0)	100.0		
51,000-100000	34 (68.8)	88.8	0 (0.0)	100.0		
101,000-150,000	6 (12.0)	100.0	0 (0.0)	100.0		
≥151,000	-	100.0	0 (0.0)	100.0		

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2022

In terms of sex, more female (58.0% in Idanre and 70% in Owu-Isin) were sampled more than the male (42.0% in Idanre and 30% in Owu-Isin). In Idanre, 46% of the sampled respondents are business people while in Owu falls larger percentage (86%) of the people sampled are farmers. In terms of education, 92% and 98% of the sampled respondents are educated in Idanre and Owu-Isin respectively. Income of the respondents revealed that majority of the respondents in Idanre earn between #50,000 and #100,00 while all the sampled respondents earn less than #50,000.00 in Owu falls.

The chi square results showing the relationship between the socio-economic and socio-demographic characteristics of the sampled residents of the two host communities revealed that there is a significant relationship in the age (P-value of 0.000), educational status (P-value of 0.000) and monthly income (P-value of 0.000) of the sampled residents of the host communities. For sex and marital status, there is no significant relationship with 0.211 and 0.015 respectively.

Types and causes of insecurity issues common in the study areas

Sampled residents claimed there are various types of insecurity issues in the two study areas although with multiple responses. For instance, as seen in Table 2, in Idanre, 70.0% of the sampled respondents reported abduction as the most common, followed by kidnapping with 66.0%.

Table 2: Types and Causes of insecurity issues common in the host communities

Common insecurity issues	Idanre		Owu –Isin	
	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Kidnapping	33	66.0	0	0.0
Violent armed robbery	33	66.0	1	2.0
Political assassination	16	32.0	0	0.0
Ritual killing	30	60.0	0	0.0
Abduction	35	70.0	1	2.0
Communal clashes	30	60.0	8	16.0
Farmers/herders clashes	31	62.0	43	86.0
Terrorist attacks	29	58.0	6	12.0
Causes of insecurity				
Poor distribution of resources	30	60.0	0	0.0
Neglect of the people	41	82.0	0	0.0
Terrorism	33	66.0	8	16.0
Ethnicity	31	62.0	1	2.0
Religious differences	23	46.0	6	12.0
Poverty	37	74.0	38	76.0
Violent resistance to exploitation by government	14	28.0	0	0.0
Conflicting political factions	22	44.0	0	0.0
Cult clashes	21	42.0	0	0.0
Unemployment	24	48.0	5	10.0
Porous border	11	22.0	0	0.0

***Multiple Response**

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2022

In Owu-Isin, the two most common insecurity issues are herder/farmers (86%) and communal clashes (16%).

Similarly, interviews were conducted with the tourist guides at Idanre hills about type of insecurity issues common in the host community, according to these guides, clashes between host community/tourists and farmers/herders are more predominant in the study area. These insecurity issues are frequently being experienced because of their volatility. Tourists are often reported as stretching beyond their limits when they come visiting, while herders disrupt farming activities in the community during grazing. Violent armed robbery and kidnapping were also mentioned as other type of insecurity issues.

Causes of insecurity were highlighted by the sampled respondents in the study area. Table 2 revealed that neglect of the people with 82.0%, poverty with 74.0% and terrorism with 66.0% were observed as the major reasons for insecurity in the study area. Supporting this, is Nadube & Akahome (2017), where they reiterated on political instability and national insecurity as challenges facing customers' patronage of tourism destination in south-south region of Nigeria. Also, Asongu *et al.*, (2019), accentuated this fact when they illuminated on violent crimes, political instability, violent demonstration and homicides as insecurity issues that impedes tourism development in the world.

To buttress the responses of the sampled residents of the host communities, tourist guides were orally interviewed on causes of insecurity in the study area. According to a guide, he says:

“Poverty is the main cause of insecurity, because people are poor, they look for quickest way to get rich by kidnapping and asking for ransom”

Another tourist guide has this to say:

“The cause of clashes between tourists and residents is usually when a male tourist is running after a male resident's girlfriend or wife. Also, farmland destruction by cattle is the cause of clashes between farmers and herders in Idanre”

This finding is in tandem with the study of Ogunsusi & Adeleke, (2021) when they enumerated farmland destruction, attack on villages, murder, kidnap, clash with farmers, stealing from farm produce as the effects of herdsman menace on tourism in southwest, Nigeria. It was generally observed that insecurity has a high impact on the level of patronage on the tourist site in Idanre as acclaimed by the guides.

According to one of the guides:

“the existing security problems in the host community has made very few tourists to patronize the site, while foreign patronage has however reduced drastically”

On reasons why tourists visit the site, a guide has this to say:

“Most visits are for school excursion, film production and site seeing. However, some tourists still patronize the site for relaxation and social exposure usually during vacation”

At Owu falls, there are no tourist guides to interview, so no interview was conducted there.

In order to authenticate the emerging security challenges that bedevils tourism in the two study areas and measures to avert the challenges, oral interviews were also conducted on the tourists. On the purpose of visit, majority of the tourists usually visit Idanre hill for film production, school

excursion and relaxation while in Owu falls, tourists visited the place for excursion and relaxation. According to the tourists at the two sites, their place of residents varies but all are from Nigeria especially the nearby states such as Ekiti, Kwara, Osun, Oyo, Lagos among others. On their length of stay, they claimed to be there only for few hours in Owu falls while in Idanre, it varies from few hours to three days. The tourists interviewed claimed they feel safe to a certain extent. One of them in Idanre retorted:

“Kidnappers don’t just kidnap without an insider. I don’t think anybody is after my life because I don’t have anything. Kidnappers work on information gotten.”

Another one has this to say:

“I am a student and my parents are poor, if they kidnap me, where will they get the ransom they want to collect from”

On reasons why level of patronage is low at the site, another tourist in Owu falls says:

“I think a lot of people are afraid of visiting this place because the site is not even well developed. No security measures put in place for tourists”

Also, in Owu falls, a tourist says:

“It’s God that is protecting us because we met herdsmen with their cows on our way to and fro the fall”

The tourists were asked about the effect of insecurity on the development of the host community, most of them said it slows down the development of the site as well as the host community. One of them says:

“it affects income realized from the site as well as the income realized by trader/business men and women involved in the provision of goods and services in the host community”.

Another tourist says:

“it does not encourage international tourists to visit the sites as they will be afraid of being kidnapped or attacked by hoodlums”.

Effects of insecurity on eco and rural tourism for sustainable development in terms of patronage

The effects of insecurity on tourism for sustainable development in the study areas were generally unfavorable. In Idanre, the most palpable effect that ranked 1st is the bad image it has on the country with a mean value of 3.74. This is confirmed as 74.0% of respondents agreed to it. Low foreign investment ranks second (2nd) with a mean value of 3.58 and 58.0% of the respondents attesting that foreign investments are low as a result of insecurity malaise in the country, particularly, in Ondo State.

Table 3: Effects of insecurity on tourism and development at Idanre

Effects	Idanre					Mean \bar{x}	Rank
	SA	A	U	D	SD		
Slows down development	28 (56.0)	17 (34.0)	5 (10.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.46	4 th
Reduced foreign currencies	25 (50.0)	23 (46.0)	2 (4.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.46	4 th
Low patronage	24 (48.0)	26 (52.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.48	3 rd
Unemployment	25 (50.0)	4 (8.0)	11 (22.0)	10 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	2.88	8 th
Low foreign investment	29 (58.0)	21 (42.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.58	2 nd
Image of the country dented	37 (74.0)	13 (26.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.74	1 st
Existing facilities become moribund	26 (52.0)	13 (26.0)	9 (18.0)	2 (4.0)	0 (0.0)	3.26	6 th
Residents live in fear	24 (48.0)	2 (4.0)	9 (18.0)	15 (30.0)	0 (0.0)	2.70	10 th
Reduction in national income	23 (46.0)	4 (8.0)	22 (44.0)	1 (2.0)	0 (0.0)	2.98	7 th
Impedes further development of other sectors	25 (50.0)	5 (10.0)	4 (8.0)	16 (32.0)	0 (0.0)	2.78	9 th
Leads to migration of residents	24 (48.0)	18 (36.0)	8 (16.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.32	5 th

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2022

Note: SA = Strongly agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

In Owu falls (Table 4), low patronage ranks first with a mean value of 4.60 and bad image for the country ranks second with a mean value of 4.48. Due to insecurity insurgency in the country and specifically Owu falls, there has been low turnout of tourists, resulting to low patronage of tourist sites sampled, with 60.0% of respondents agreeing to this fact. The study of Nwagba, *et al.*, (2020) is in tandem with this study having affirmed that insecurity impacts negatively on general patronage of sites, foreign direct investment and employment in the tourism and hospitality industries in Niger Delta region within the period, 2004-2009.

Table 4: Effects of insecurity on tourism and development at Owu-Isin

Effects	Owu- Isin					Mean \bar{x}	Rank
	SA	A	U	D	SD		
Slows down development	17(34.0)	33 (66.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.34	3 rd
Reduced foreign currencies	5 (10.0)	21 (42.0)	13 (26.0)	5 (10.0)	6 (12.0)	3.28	8 th
Stops further development of other sectors	23 (46.0)	11 (22.0)	6 (12.0)	0 (0.0)	10 (20.0)	3.74	6 th
Unemployment	21 (42.0)	6 (12.0)	7 (14.0)	16 (32.0)	0 (0.0)	3.64	7 th
Low foreign investment	27 (54.0)	14 (28.0)	0(0.0)	4(8.0)	5(10.0)	4.08	4 th
Image of the country dented	29 (58.0)	16 (32.0)	5 (10.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	4.48	2 nd
Existing facilities become moribund	23(46.0)	10 (20.0)	9 (18.0)	8 (16.0)	0 (0.0)	3.96	5 th
Leads to migration of residents	6 (12.0)	6 (12.0)	7 (14.0)	15 (30.0)	16 (32.0)	2.42	10 th
Reduction in national income	4 (8.0)	9 (18.0)	11(22.0)	21 (42.0)	5 (10.0)	2.72	9 th
Residents live in fear	1 (2.0)	4 (8.0)	11 (22.0)	24(48.0)	10 (20.0)	2.24	11 th
Low patronage	30 (60.0)	20 (40.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.60	1 st

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2022.

Trend of local and international level of patronage at study areas

The local patronage level (Table 5) of tourists at Idanre hills is seen to be high and reached its peak in the year 2015. However, there was a sharp fall in patronage from the year 2015 to 2018 although there was a bit rise in patronage in the year 2019. In year 2020, there was another fall and this has been continuous till 2021 (Figure 3).

Level of patronage in the last ten (10) years at Idanre Hill

Table 5: Patronage Patern at Idanre Hill

SN	Year	Local Patronage	International Patronage
1	2012	2,927,211	400,121
2	2013	4,487,417	597,487
3	2014	4,210,418	1,270,710
4	2015	5,974,817	1,280,698
5	2016	2,007,984	697,982
6	2017	1,528,972	812,896
7	2018	1,078,932	398,750
8	2019	1,499,994	597,821
9	2020	785,495	178
10	2021	691	91

Source: Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2022)

This could be attributed to COVID-19 and the insecurity that pervades the country. In general, the pattern of patronage is as a result of emerging insecurity issues and disappearing interest in tourist attraction sites. The trend line graph contrasts the study by Adigun *et. al.*, (2016), where the trend line graph shows an upward slope indicating a gradual increase in the patronage of the tourists in Idanre hill from 2005-2013.

Similarly, the level of foreign patronage (Table 5) at the site reached its peaks both in the year 2014 and 2015 respectively, but kept dwindling down the years until a stable low patronage was observed from 2019 to 2021 (Figure 3). This is also due to emerging insecurity issues which has dented the image of the country internationally. This confirms the study of Ajayi *et al.*, (2010) in their research on prevailing issues and rate of tourists' patronage of historical monument when the slave route and relics in Nigeria were considered. Similarly, the study is in support of Ogunwusi & Adeleke (2021) when they reported that safety and security concerns for international and local travelers occasioned by terrorist attacks on highways in southwest Nigeria could make tourism destinations and businesses suffer from low patronage. There was no record to show level of patronage at Owu falls.

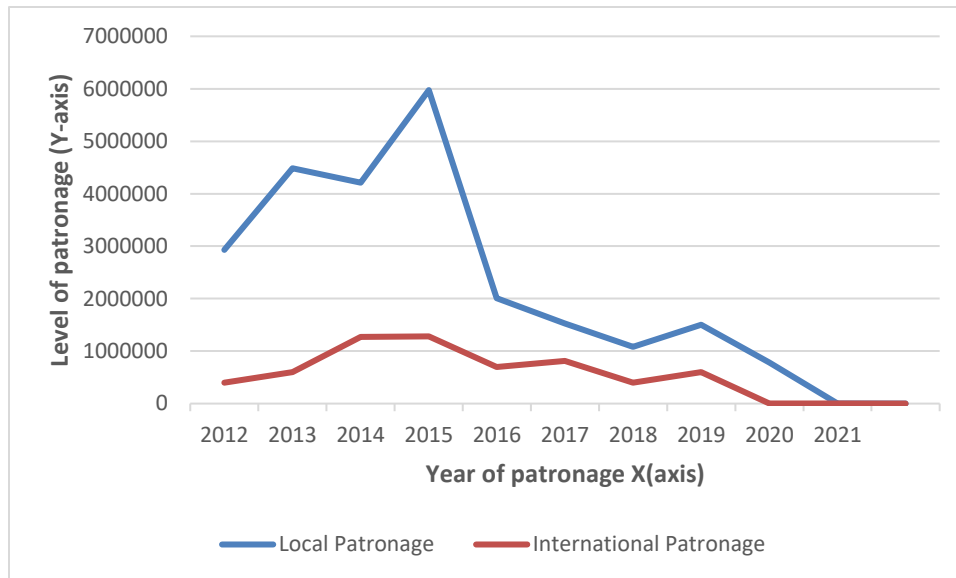


Figure 3: Trend in both local and international level of patronage at Idanre hill
Source: Authors' fieldwork/computer output (2022)

To buttress the trend line graph on the perceived factors affecting level of patronage at Idanre hills, two tourist guides were engaged in face-to-face oral interview. According to these guides, insecurity and worsened economic situation in the country were mentioned as perceived factors affecting level of patronage. This corroborates the study of Boluwaji (2017), when reiteration was made on bad accessibility, deficient level of awareness of destination, worsening economic situation of the State of destination sites as the perceived factors affecting the patronage of domestic tourism in Osun State.

In Owu falls, there are no tourist guides and no record to confirm the level of patronage, therefore, some residents of the host community were interviewed orally. According to them, there has been a decrease in the number of people that visit the site in the last few years and this can be attributed majorly to insecurity issues in the country and lack of development of the site and the host community. For instance, a resident has this to say:

“in spite of the fact that the site is not well developed tourists still visit the site and enjoy themselves but since kidnapping is now common in the country, only few people now visit the site”

Another resident says:

“A lot of herdsmen rear their cattle along the route to the site to the extent that we the residents are afraid not to talk of visitors since killings and kidnapping by herdsmen are now common in the country”

Comment by another resident is that:

“insecurity I believe is a major determinant of patronage of this site but at the same time, government of Kwara State should come and develop this site to international standard as this will encourage more patronage especially international patronage which will equally enhance income generation for the

state and the community as well. Part of development is to provide security personnel for the site, tourists will visit once they are aware their security is guaranteed”

Coping strategies to insecurity issues confronting the host communities

The measures to adopt in order to curtail insecurity issues in the study areas include the use of security apparatus such as detective equipment and CCTV camera, community policing and education. When detective equipment is worn by the tourists, it will beep whenever there is danger and the unit of the police attached to this will be able to detect the problem on time. Similarly, the use of CCTV camera will assist in detecting any danger. Community policing will deter evil perpetrators once they are aware of its existence within the host community. Education is paramount in confronting insecurity issues between the tourists and the host communities in the study area. Most importantly, educating the host community on the need to peacefully co-exist with tourists is very essential. Tourists in like manner must be educated on the rules guiding the site which must be carried out by a well experienced tourist guide. Surroundings should not be bushy, environment should well-lit and visiting hours should be regulated. Security personnel should be put in place especially at the major tourist sites within the country. New programmes and mentoring that will reduce poverty as well as reduce the number of unemployed youths in the country should be embarked upon. This can be done through the local government. Keeping records of people moving into the communities and the fringes should be encouraged. Religious leaders should be involved in the security of its citizens by preaching love and discouraging evil acts in the “house of God”. Stakeholders such as community leaders, men leaders, women leaders, youth leaders and other leaders of Community Based Organizations should come up with lasting solutions to the security problems confronting the host communities.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that the two tourist sites studied have rich tourism potentials that can be harnessed, however, the insecurity situation of the country is impeding further development of these sites. The level of patronage of Idanre hills has decreased drastically while Owu falls has no record to reveal patronage level but the residents of the host community confirmed reduction of tourists’ visitation. It can be concluded that eco and rural tourism hold promise for sustainable development of the host communities if security is guaranteed and basic social amenities are provided especially at Owu falls. Stakeholders should therefore come together to form a synergy that will reduce possible hostile attitudes from the host communities, make destination safer and more attractive. Also, curb various insecurity issues confronting tourist sites and the whole country as a whole. Tourist sites especially at the rural areas should be allowed to establish and operate security outfits in order to reduce the insecurity issues in the country. Efforts should be directed towards modernizing the security agencies and institutions by Nigerian government. Hence, the goal of ecotourism to acknowledge and appreciate nature in both rural and urban areas will be achieved. In the same vein, the goal of rural tourism in revitalizing declining rural areas will also be achieved.

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