

HARNESSING TOURISM POTENTIALS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

A CASE OF OWU WATER FALLS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The important roles of the tourism sector as the main instrument in socio-economic development of any nation cannot be overemphasized. Although some of the tourist centres in Nigeria are not well developed to promote socio-economic development however, the only way to realise the important roles of tourism is through a well developed, packaged and promoted tourist attractions. This paper therefore examines the potentials of Owu falls for socio-economic development of the host Community, State and Country to ensure sustainable tourism development in Africa. The paper goes further to explain the concept of tourism, benefits of tourism to the host community, the state and the country at large. The main challenges and future prospects of the falls were also highlighted. In order to achieve the aim of the study, 200 copies of structured questionnaire were administered to both the tourists and residents of the host community. Focus group discussion and interview were used to source information from the people of the community and the staff of Kwara State Tourism Board respectively. Findings revealed that Owu falls has no socio-economic impact on the host community with calculated P-value of (0.421). Conclusion was made that sustainable tourism development is visible and possible if government can just shift a little attention to its development.

Keywords: Tourism, Economic Development, Waterfalls, Natural Resource and Environment.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a nation is endowed with both natural and material resources that can be harnessed to aid the economic development of the country by providing revenue and foreign exchange. Tourism plays significant roles in socio-economic development of many nations. This is because it contributes towards alleviating the major political, social and economic problems that characterize the rural areas. It equally helps in developing the urban centres. Tourism has been discovered to be a very important instrument to poverty alleviation, attainment of the millennium development goals (MDGs) and sustainable development (Olorunfemi and Raheem, 2008). Hence, governments of many developing countries have begun to commit huge financial resources to the sector. Tourism is a means of rural and urban development, employment generation at all levels of government in developed Nations such as Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Australia and the United States (Hall and Jenkins, 1995). Also in less developed countries such as Kenya, Cuba, and Srilanka.

Tourism is the key to the growth of the economy of any local area, State government and National government. According to Filion et al (1994), tourism is said to be one of the fastest growing economic activities in the world. It has been appraised as

one of the largest foreign exchange earners throughout the whole world if given a very good attention. It could contribute to the preservation of the environment if it is planned and implemented in an environmentally and socially friendly manner. Tourism has been reborn as a possible tool to spur economic development while at the same time benefiting the environment and local social condition without harming the environment (Reynold and Braithwaite, 2001). It is an activity that contributes to a better understanding of places, people and their cultures.

In the early years, agriculture used to be the backbone of Nigeria but after the discovery of crude oil in the early 1970s, attention was now shifted from agriculture to the oil sector. People focused mainly on the oil sector and this encouraged a lot of rural-urban migration in search of employment in the oil sector, other government offices and industries. The concentration on the oil sector was so much that other sectors of the economy that could have generated much needed revenue were neglected. Tourism is one of the neglected sectors, until very recently when government of Nigeria started plans to develop it as a means of improving the socio-economic well being of the Nigerian people and diversifying its economic base. For this to be successful, Nigeria's tourism industry depends on its sustainability. Therefore, for tourism to be sustainable, it should adhere to economic, social, environmental and ethnic considerations in the host regions.

In Nigeria, there are many natural tourist attractions and these include the Ikogosi Warm Spring, Owu Falls, Niger-Benue confluence, Assop falls and Wikki warm springs among others. All these natural attractions if well developed have the potentials of improving the economic development of Nigeria as a country to ensure sustainability. It is against this background that this paper seeks to examine the neglect of Owu falls in Kwara State and how the fall can be developed to boost the economy of the host State and country to ensure sustainable tourism in Africa as a WHOLE.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- i. Identify existing infrastructure prior to identification of the fall.
- ii. Identify new ones after identification of the fall.
- iii. Assess the impact of the fall on the host community and the state as a whole.
- iv. Highlights the problems and future potentials of the fall.

CONCEPT OF TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT

The term tourism is derived from "tour" meaning.... "a journey at which one returns to the starting point: a circular trip usually for business, pleasure or education during which various places are visited and for which an itinerary is usually planned" (Webster (1961). Tourism can be regarded as a catalyst for national and regional development, bringing employment, exchange earnings, balance of payments advantages, and important infrastructural developments benefiting locals and visitors same way (Glasson *et al*, 1995). The World Tourism Organisation (1996) defined tourism as comprising of: "Activities of persons travelling to and staying in place outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year and not less the 24hours for leisure, holiday, business and other non-remunerated purpose". It is referred to as the totality of the relationship and phenomenon arising from the travel and stay of strangers, provided the stay does not imply the establishment of a permanent residence and is not connected with a remunerated activity. The International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (AIEST) adopted this definition by bringing out the unique elements of tourism.

1. Making a journey by non-residents
2. Temporary stay in the area visited
3. Stay not connected with any activity involving earnings

Tourism is therefore seen as a composite phenomenon which embraces the incidence of a mobile population of travellers who are strangers to the places they visit. It is essentially a pleasure activity in which money earned in one's normal domicile is spent on the place visited. Getis et al (2004) defined tourism as undertaking for the purposes of recreation rather than business. Bhatia (1982) is of the opinion that tourism is distinguished by the mass character from the travel undertaken in the past because of its relatively modern origin. The mass movement of people annually from their home location to another country for temporary stay for a few days or week is a growth that is very largely of recent origin.

Godwin (2002) sees tourism as the only sector where the good at the point of production remain, at the point of sale and additionally it affords several buyers the opportunity to buy the same product over and over again. McIntosh and Gupta (1980) again defined tourism as "the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business, host government and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors". Oxford English Dictionary defines the tourist as one who travels for pleasure or culture, visiting a number of places for their objects of interest, scenery or the like.

CATEGORISATION OF TOURISM

- 1) Ethnic Tourism: This is travelling for the purpose of observing the cultural expressions and life-styles of truly exotic people. Examples include visits to native homes, attending dances and ceremonies and possibly participating in religious rituals.
- 2) Cultural Tourism: This type of tourism involves having experience and in some cases participates in a vanishing lifestyle that lies within human memory e.g. costume festivals, folk performances, arts and crafts etc.
- 3) Historical Tourism: Travelling to places where there are museum, cathedral circuits that stresses the glories of the past e.g. guided tours of moments.
- 4) Environmental Tourism: To travel for the purpose of "getting back to nature", man-land relationships. It is primarily geographic in nature and will include destinations such as Assop waterfalls, Plateau state. Aso rock, Abuja rock formation, Jos Plateau, Yankari National Park and other natural wonders.
- 5) Recreational Tourism: It includes taking part in sports, sun bathing "Ayo" or ludo game and social contacts in relaxed environment.
- 6) Business Tourism: This centres on participation in conventions, meetings, seminars form of travel.

Development is generally associated with positive socio-economic change. It means moving forward to something that is better than the present (Wikipedia, 2009). The Volunteering Option (2008) says "Development is empowerment; it is about local people taking control of their own lives, expressing their own demands and finding their own solutions to their

problems". Development implies a qualitative change in the way the society carries out its activities such as through more progressive attitude behaviour by the population, the adoption of more effective social organisation and more advanced technology which may have been developed elsewhere. The New York Times Company (2009) says development describes the growth of human throughout the life span from conception to death.

Economic development therefore is the process of creating wealth through the mobilisation of human financial, capital, physical and national resources to generate marketable good and services. From a policy perspective, economic development can be defined as efforts that seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community by creating and/ or retaining jobs and supporting or growing incomes and tax base. Habibi (2002) is of the opinion that economic development is fundamental about enhancing the factors of productive capacity land, labour, capital and technology of a national, state or local economy. According to Wikipedia (2008) Economic Development is the development of economic wealth of countries or region for the well being of their inhabitants. It is the process by which a nation improves the economic, political and social well being of its people (Wikipedia 2009).

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Tourism planning requires sustainability because its growth usually brings increasing pressure on the natural, cultural and socio-economic environments of the destination. It should be noted that sustainability has an economic dimension alongside its social and environmental dimensions. Sustainable tourism development as defined by WTO (2004), means meeting the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. Sustainable tourism has three interconnected aspects: environmental, socio-cultural, and economic. Sustainability implies permanence, optimum use of resources, including biological diversity; minimization of ecological, cultural and social impacts; and maximization of benefits for conservation and local communities. It also refers to the management structures that are needed to achieve this. Therefore, in a bid to develop Owu falls to serve us, our environment must also be protected. Meaning to have sustainable development of tourism in Nigeria, there should be adequate security both for the tourists and inhabitants of the host communities; infrastructure must be made readily available as well as human resources, and capital. Sustainability also includes socio-economic impact of the industry on the wellbeing of the citizens of the country.

The socio-economic impact of tourism in a country can be seen in its contribution to GDP and social well being of the citizen of a particular country in terms of improved standards of living, employment and conditions of economic and social progress. For instance, in 2002 tourism generated an estimated 199 million jobs – one in every 13 jobs worldwide. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimate that tourism contributed 9.2 per cent of world GDP and predicted that it will be 9.4 percent at a growth rate of over 4 per cent per annum during the next ten years (WTTC 2010). In Australia, tourism makes a direct contribution to the economy of \$40.639 million in GDP or 3.6% of total GDP and 4.7% of total employment (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

In Nigeria the contribution to government revenue from levies on Hospitality sector (registration and other charges) recorded N1.149m in 2004 while N100m was generated in 2009. Furthermore, N313m was generated by company tax (National Bureau of Statistics, NBS). In 2011, the industry contributed about N1, 232.2 billion (3.3percent) to the GDP in Nigeria. In its report, the WITC forecasts that the industry will generate 897,500 jobs representing 1.4percent of Nigeria's total workforce in 2012 and that over the next 10 years, the amount is expected to grow by 6.5 percent per annum to N483.4

billion in 2022. From the foregoing, the only way to have sustainable tourism is through the development of the entire neglected tourist sites in Nigeria. This would translate to increased contribution towards Gross Domestic Product, employment generation, improved economic and social progress within Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

RURAL TOURISM

Rural tourism is a more recent phenomenon which is just attracting the attention of policy makers in Nigeria. Local communities can benefit more from tourism development in the sense that they have access to employment opportunities and also realise some incomes. Rural tourism is one of the surest ways to open up rural areas, especially in the provision of infrastructures. Nature and rural environment are the main precondition for rural tourism development. Craftsmen in the villages benefit from rural tourism by increased sales of crafts. For instance in India is Hodka in Gujarat which is well known for its fine handicrafts. According to Dilys et al, (2001) the tour package for Hodka includes visits to crafts villages which would educate visitors about the handicraft as well as offer them the opportunity to buy it. Tourism can be used to revitalise the declining rural areas and improve the living standards of people in the rural areas. Swarbrooke (1996) pointed out that rural tourism development increase the number of opportunities for social interaction for local people who often live relatively isolated lives in agricultural communities.

ROLES OF TOURISM IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The roles of tourism in the economic development of any nation are numerous and cannot be overemphasized. Kinwar (2002) noted that tourism industry has become a job generator, both services oriented and product oriented in the sense that the people are employed in order to provide services to the tourists. This means increased income by job generation which will eventually raise people's standard of living. He stressed further that the diversification of various new economic activities can lessen the big social problem of unemployment. For effective development of tourism, infrastructure such as roads, hotels, electricity, and pipe-borne water among others must be developed. One of the potentials of well planned and managed tourism is to bring economic benefits to host communities and help alleviate poverty and conserve natural and cultural assets.

Other advantages of tourism include:

- 1) Provision of revenue and diversification to rural communities. This is because foreign currencies from foreigners remain within the local economy.
- 2) Tax revenue realised from foreigners can be used for further development of some facilities such as swimming pools, golf courses, restaurant and shopping facilities.
- 3) Inhabitants of the host community will be interested in some of the events planned for tourists.
- 4) It attracts location of industries because of the quality of services and recreational resources provided.
- 5) Foreigners may become permanent residents if the country is a pleasant place to reside.

However, despite all these advantages there are still some disadvantages that affect the development of tourism. These include:

- 1) It is capital intensive
- 2) Exerts pressure on public services.
- 3) It requires promotion, marketing and time.

METHODS OF STUDY

The study focuses on the potentials of Owu falls as a tourist attraction for sustainable development in Kwara State. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. However, the method of study includes reconnaissance survey of the study area followed by administration of copies of structured questionnaires to both the residents of the community and the tourists. This was done between August 2011 and January 2012 with the help of some field assistants. This is because tourists visit the waterfall mostly during wet and festive seasons except for few ones that visit any period of the year (for example, students and associations on excursion). Focus group discussion and interview were also used to source information from the people of the community and the staff of Kwara State Tourism Board respectively. Information was also sourced from Kwara State visitor's guide, journals, textbooks, magazines among others. Two sets of questionnaires were used and a total number of 200 copies of questionnaires were administered. 150 copies were administered in a systematic random way to the residents of the community and 50 copies to the tourists through accidental sampling method. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed in order to determine the impact of the fall on socio-economic development of the host community in terms of employment generation, provision of infrastructural facilities and improvement in the level of living.

HYPOTHESES

Hypotheses 1:

H₀: There is no significant socio-economic impact of Owu falls on the host community.

H₁: There is a significant socio-economic impact of Owu falls on the host community.

THE STUDY AREA

The study area is Ifelodun Local Government Area (fig.1) of Kwara State. The Local Government Area was created in 1976 with the administrative headquarters in Share. It has nine districts namely Agunjin, Idofian, Igbaja, Oke-Ode, Omupo, Ora, Oro-Ago, Share and Ilere Districts. The entire study 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 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. 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. To the South, it is bounded by Kogi 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. The total annual rainfall in this area is between 800mm and 1200mm and mean temperature between 30⁰c to 35⁰c. 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).

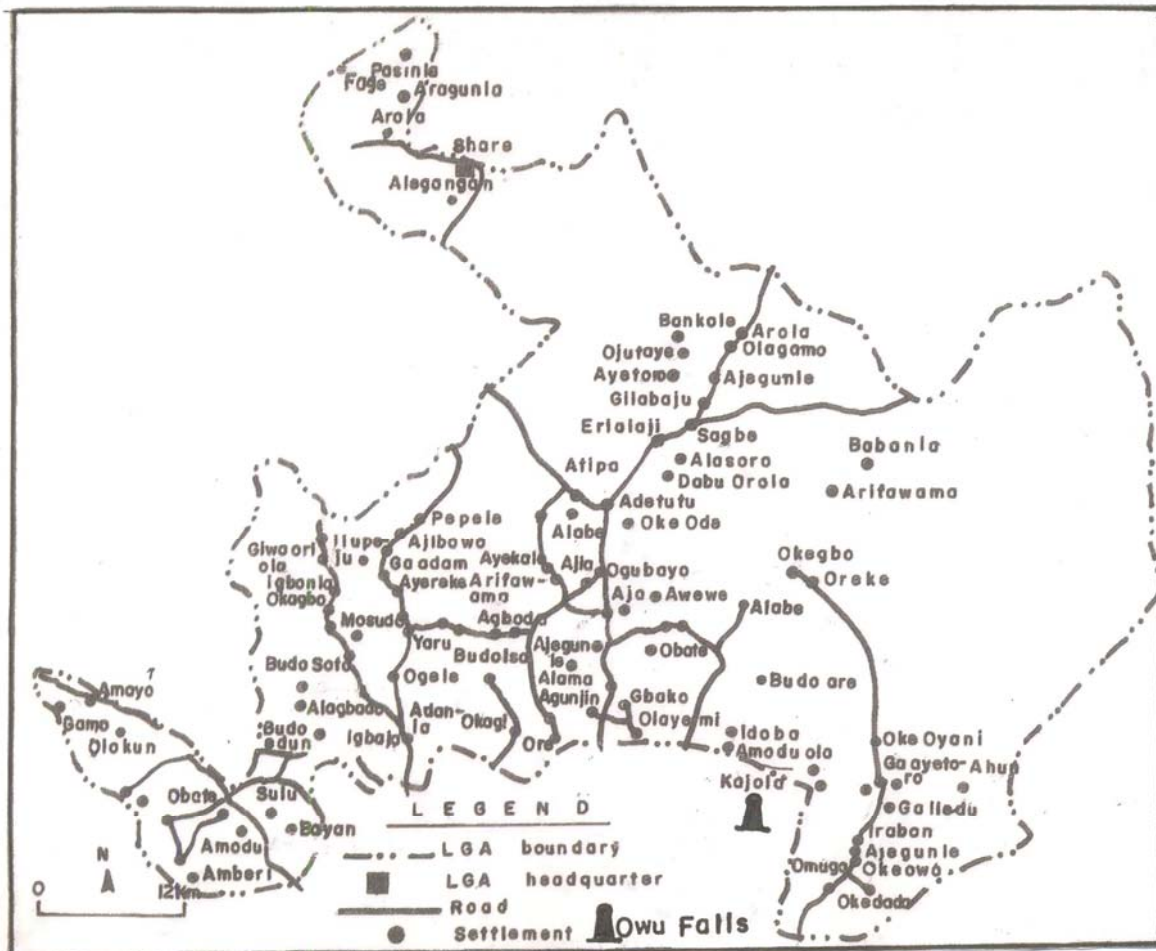


Fig 1: Map of Ifelodun LGA showing the settlement pattern and location of Owu-falls

Source: Ministry of Lands and Housing, Ilorin

Owu falls (see fig 2) is one of the highest and most spectacular waterfalls in West Africa at its best during the rainy season and capable of generating between 5MW and 8MW of electricity. It is a perennial waterfall cascading from a height of about 120meters (330feet) down an escarpment, with rocky outcrops to a pool of water below. It is surrounded by a mountainous terrain that extends to Ekiti and Kogi states and by a luxuriant vegetation and beautiful landscape which provides the site with a refreshing atmosphere. It is referred to as “wonder in the wilderness”. The waterfall is located at the out skirt of Owa – Kajola in Ilere district of Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State and compare favourably with Niagara fall in U.S.A and Victoria Fall in East Africa. It is accessible through state and local roads and it is about 112km distance to Ilorin, the state capital.



Fig 2: Owu falls in Kwara State

Source: Author's field survey, 2012

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the interview conducted with the staff of Kwara State Tourism Board, it was gathered that Owu Falls was first discovered by the people of the community but was brought into limelight by Revd Welfare Guy (British man) in 1928. Kwara State Tourism Board was however established in 1980 which was backed up with enabling edict No 3 of 1989. The interview further revealed that only tourists who do not know how to get to the fall contact the State Tourism Board for a guide and they pay between N5, 000.00-N20, 000.00 as guide fee. However, a lot of tourists visit the fall without contacting the Tourism Board. This is simply because there is no staff from Kwara State Tourism Board to monitor the activities at the fall site. Past records of the Tourism Board reveal that over 500 tourists have contacted the State Tourism Board for guide to visit the fall site.

Furthermore, there are no access roads (see fig.3) to the fall site and tourists have to trek 1km to and 1km fro (2hrs) where cars can be parked. The inhabitants of the community where the fall is located lack infrastructure before the discovery and even after the discovery of the fall. In relation to infrastructural facilities, it was gathered that before the discovery of the fall, there were no infrastructure and even after the discovery and till date, there are no infrastructural facilities that can encourage people from different parts of the world to visit



Fig. 3: Road to Owu falls

Source: Author's field survey, 2012

and relax at the site. For example, there are no good roads to link the site, recreational centres such as hotels to lodge in, hospitals, supermarkets, pipe-borne water, restaurants just to mention a few. At times, tourists who could not trek the distance from where cars are parked to the site usually go back to their destination without visiting the site.

Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents in the host community

The findings (see Table 1) revealed that majority 56.7% of the respondents are above 60years of age. This is as result of migration of youths to urban areas for better standard of living. About 56.7% are male and 64.7% are married. Most of them, 55.4% do not have formal education and are farmers. Majority earn less than N50, 000 annually. All these are indications that Owu-falls has not improved the standard of living of the residents of the host community.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents from the host Community

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Age of Respondents			
18-29 years	5	3.3	3.3
30-39 years	7	4.7	8.0
40-49 years	6	4.0	12
50-59 years	47	31.3	43.3
60-69 years	75	50	93.3
Above 69years	10	6.7	100
Total	150	100	
Sex			
Male	85	56.7	56.7
Female	65	43.3	100
Total	150	100	
Marital Status			
Married	97	64.7	64.7
Single	25	16.7	81.4
Divorced	15	10	91.4
Separated	03	2	93.4
Widowed	10	6.6	100
Total	150	100	
Level of Education			
No formal education	83	55.4	55.4
Adult Education	27	18	73.4
Primary Education	15	10	83.4
Secondary Education	15	10	93.4
Post Secondary Education	05	3.3	96.4
Others	05	3.3	100
Total	150	100	
Main Occupation			
Civil Servants	10	6.7	6.7
Artisan	20	13.3	20.0
Business	24	16.0	36.0
Farmers	86	57.3	93.3
Others	10	6.7	100
Total	150	100	
Annual Income			
Below N50,000	97	64.7	64.7
N50,000-N100,000	33	22	86.7
N101,000-150,000	20	13.3	100
N151,000-200,000	-	-	
Above N200,000	-	-	
Total	150	100	

Source: Author's Research

Impact of the fall on socio-economic development of the host community

To determine the impact of the fall on socio-economic development of the host community, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed. If the calculated P-value is greater than 0.05, there is no significant impact of Owu falls on socio-economic development of the host community hence H_0 is accepted and H_1 rejected. If the calculated P-value is less than 0.05, there is a significant impact of Owu falls on socio-economic development of the host community and H_1 is accepted while H_0 is rejected.

Table: 2 Analysis of Variance on the impact of Owu falls on Socio-Economic Development of Resident Community

Settlements	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean square	F	P-Value
Within Group	2915.864	12	242.987	0.421	0.948
Error	30035.600	52	577.608		
Total	32951.446	64			

Source: Computer output

Table 2 revealed that the calculated P-value (0.421) is greater than the $F = 0.05$, hence there is no significant impact of Owu falls on socio-economic development of the host community. Therefore we accept the null hypothesis H_0 and reject the alternative hypothesis H_1 .

The followings are the factors militating against the development of the fall:

1. Funding
2. No proper planning
3. Problem of infrastructural facilities
4. Political problem
5. Cultural problem

POTENTIALS OF OWU FALLS

According to the information gathered from the State Tourism Board, the followings are the potentials of the water-fall if developed.

1. As a source of revenue through various bills from local foreign tourists/visitors.
2. The fall if developed can generate between 5MW and 8MW of electricity
3. If well developed, it will promote the state at both National and international Tourism market.
4. Construction of roads leading to the fall site would enhance the socio-economic activities of the communities around it.
5. Development of the fall would further encourage the development of infrastructural facilities such as roads, electricity and communication among others.
6. Production of spring water from the fall would increase revenue generation base of the site.
7. The tourists would have the opportunity to visit two other water falls (Aise and Ijoko waterfalls at Isanlu –Isin.
8. Development of the fall would create employment and income generating opportunities to the inhabitants of the community where the fall is located. This will improve their standard of living.

Furthermore, the water-fall requires the following development in order to make it a standard holiday resort in Nigeria: Construction of motor able roads, building of standard hotels and students hostel, swimming pool, restaurants, Recreation Park, Botanical garden/mini zoo, infrastructural facilities, art gallery, conference hall, staff quarters for essential staff and provision of utility vehicles and packaged tour vehicles.

CONCLUSION AND PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

Tourism has been seen as one of the industries that can improve the economy of a country if well developed. Owu falls is an important tourist attraction that can be developed to boost the economic activities of the host community since inhabitants will be involved in activities such as selling foods, local materials, drinks and providing services in restaurants and hotels among others to the tourists. Improvement in economic activities will lead to better standard of living and well being of the inhabitants. This paper tried to emphasize the need to develop all tourist sites within the country and Africa at large since it is a critical issue for sustainable tourism in Africa. From the findings, it was revealed that Owu falls is yet to have significant impact on the socio-economic development of the inhabitants of the host community and the state at large.

Promotion of tourism particularly Owu falls will develop the community, state, country and Africa as a whole. Government should therefore shift a little attention to it based on its potentials by encouraging investors and stakeholders to develop the site as well as the host community. This in turn will enhance sustainable development and improve the well being of the residents of the host community. Furthermore, indigenous knowledge, community participation, support for local capabilities and cultural exchange with tourists would assist in sustaining both cultural and natural resources of the study area. This kind of participation can also be copied by other communities with similar tourist attractions. Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) should combine efforts at developing the fall to enhance sustainable development. Furthermore, there is the need for integrated ecological, economic and institutional research on long term basis in order to have a holistic management approach

of sustainable tourism development. For tourism to therefore be sustainable, it must make adequate use of environmental resources while maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity. This will go a long way towards tourism development and management in Africa.

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