

PULL MOTIVATION AND TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS OF VISITORS TO IDANRE HILLS CULTURAL HERITAGE SITE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Culture and heritage sites have increasingly gained global attention thereby adding to the rise in recognition of world tourism. This study aimed to investigate the travel characteristics and pull motivations of visitors to Idanre Hills, Ondo State, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty copies of structured questionnaire were randomly administered to visitors at the site. Preference for pull motivations were measured using choice cards and the data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics and mixed logit specification. The results revealed that the visitors were visiting for the first time and they heard about the site from family and friends. The results also revealed that Hills, Agboogun Footprint, On-site accommodation and public taxi were the attribute levels that significantly predict the likelihood of visitors choosing Idanre Hills as their tourist destination. Management should therefore pay attention to the improvement of these features so as to improve the destination's competitiveness in the tourism market.

Key Words: *Attributes, Culture, Trip, Leisure, Tourism, Visit*

Introduction

Cultural heritage can be described as resources inherited from past generation which residents identify, independently of ownership, as expression of the residents' developed values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions (Aremu and Alabi, 2014). Culture and heritage sites have increasingly gained global attention thereby adding to the rise in recognition of world tourism. The attractions that appeal to tourists the most have been found to be cultural heritage sites due to their outstanding ambience that shows the

history, lifestyle and environment of a particular people or place (Salim and Mwaipopo, 2016). Fulfillment of tourists with cultural heritage sites cannot be overemphasized (Dhankhar and Singh, 2014), though the interests of tourists lies in experiencing, exploring and gaining lessons about different cultures (Csapo, 2012). Tourism cultural capital gives room for activities that portray new realities, challenges and opportunities at the heritage site (Addo, 2011). What the heritage site can showcase regarding cultural capital and tourist activities will

have a significant impact on a tourist's decision to patronize the site as well as the tourist's expectations of the site (Salim and Mwaipopo, 2016).

For a long time, the push and pull motivation framework has been agreed upon to be used in travel motivation research (Khuong and Ha, 2014). Pull motivation involves the tangible and intangible resources inherent at the site that attracts visitors to visit the destination from the visitor's perspective (Chen and Mo, 2014). From a tourism destination perspective, pull motivation is described as attractions at the destination which they supply to visitors (Pansiri, 2014). Cultural heritage sites have emerged and developed to preserve the heritage while educating and entertaining visitors (Donohoe, 2012). These sites have caused an increase in modern tourism marketing (Csapo, 2012) by attracting a large number of visitors all around the globe (Patuelli *et al.*, 2013). A number of nations around the globe have identified the significance of heritage sites as determining needs and expectations of both local and foreign tourists (Li *et al.*, 2008). Visitors usually make trips to heritage sites to experience different and outstanding cultures, while also experiencing the image and identity of the host nation (Donohoe, 2012).

Majority of the nations in Africa have a large amount of cultural heritage but the rate at which they are appreciated as well as site competitiveness in the tourism market has not interpreted and reflected these unique cultural sites as being important (Debes, 2011). It is obvious that experiencing different features and activities offered by natural and cultural environments serves as motivation preference for tourists to travel (Pileliene and Grigaliunaite, 2014). However,

previous studies did not result in conclusion on the characteristics that have effects on tourists' fulfillment with cultural heritage sites (Debes, 2011; Osei and Gbadamosi, 2011). Recently, Salim and Mwaipopo (2015) argued and emphasized that cultural heritage sites have created a huge and sudden increase in tourism around the world, but the number of studies regarding this does not portray its significance. This study has thus investigated the pull motivations and travel characteristics of tourists to Idanre Hills Cultural Heritage site in order to shift the focus of the management of the site to the attributes that attracts tourists the most so as to enhance their competitiveness in the market by paying special attention to the management of these attributes.

Materials and Method

Study Area

The study was carried out at Idanre Hills which is listed on the World heritage site tentative list by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Idanre Hills is situated in Idanre Local Government area of Ondo state about 20 kilometers Southwest of Akure which is the state capital. It lies between latitudes 7°00' N to 7°15' N and longitudes 5°00' E to 5°15' E of the equator and Greenwich meridian respectively. Idanre hill is a cluster of hills that surrounds Idanre town, the hill is significant for the bio-physical landform features and its role as a cultural landscape (Adisa, 2010). Its physical attributes include Owa's palace, shrines, old court, Agboogun footprint, thunder water (*Omi Aopara*) and burial mounds and grounds. It has varieties of flora and fauna species. The hills contain very important bio-physical and land form

features whose interaction with the physical features has created an enduring cultural landscape within the setting (Ojo, 2014). The terrain of Idanre town is gently undulating with a lot of mountaneous areas, especially the *Alade* community. Annual mean rainfall is between 1400 – 2000 mm. The wet season spreads over eight months, from April to November

while the dry season spreads over the remaining four months, from December to March. The temperature is fairly moderate and ranges between 21°C and 30°C depending on the time of the year. The Idanre hill area covers about 50 km radius and takes a total of three days to be thoroughly transversed (Idanre Historical site, 2012).

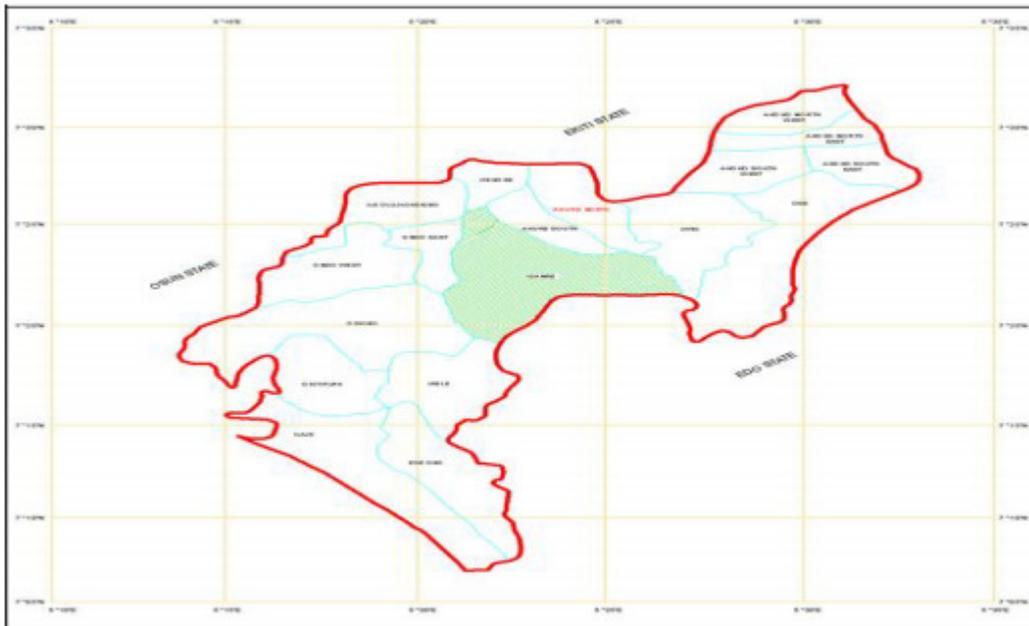


Figure 1: Map of Ondo State showing Idanre Local Government
Source: Ondo State Ministry of Lands and Housing, Akure (2010)

Data Collection

Primary data was used for this study through the use of one hundred and twenty structured questionnaires that were administered to visitors of the site randomly. The questionnaire was divided into three categories. The first category captured the visitors' socio-demographic characteristics, the second section captured their travel characteristics while the third captured their choice for pull-motivation using choice cards in which the respondents faced eight repeated choice tasks with each task containing two alternatives. After data cleaning that

removed invalid responses, estimation procedure only included 616 observations. After estimating several standard and mixed logit models to elicit the preferences of respondents for the selected attributes, a mixed logit model (MIXL) fitted best the data used for this study.

Data Analysis

After retrieval, the valid questionnaires were coded to obtain quantitative values for statistical analysis. The data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, tables and mixed logit model specification.

Results

Findings revealed that majority of the visitors at the site were females (50.8%), within their youthful age and were single

(57.5%). Also, highest percentage of the visitors had tertiary education (72.5%), Christians (82.5%) and are self-employed (35%).

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of visitors

Variables	Frequency (N=120)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	61	50.8
Male	59	49.2
Age group		
15-19	20	16.7
20-24	27	22.5
25-29	29	24.2
30-34	20	16.7
35-39	11	9.2
40-44	3	2.5
45-49	3	2.5
Above 50	7	5.8
Level of education		
No formal education	4	3.3
Primary	1	0.8
Secondary	28	23.3
Tertiary	87	72.5
Marital status		
Single	69	57.5
Married	48	40
Widowed	2	1.7
Divorced	1	0.8
Religion		
Christianity	99	82.5
Islam	21	17.5
Occupation		
Civil servant	29	24.2
Self – employed	42	35
Trading	6	5
Student	32	26.7
Others	11	9.1

Table 2 presents the travel characteristics of visitors to Idanre Hills. Majority of the visitors were visiting the site for the first time (65%) as most of them claimed they had heard about the

heritage site before (96.7%) through friends/family (73.3%). Also, higher percentage of the visitors affirmed they visit the site occasionally (48.3%).

Table 2: Travel characteristics of visitors

Variables	Frequency (N=120)	Percentage (%)
First time visit		
No	42	35
Yes	78	65
Have you heard about Idanre Hill before?		
No	4	3.3
Yes	116	96.7
Source of awareness about Idanre Hills		
Friends/family	88	73.3
Advertisement	7	5.8
Through internet	15	12.5
Flyers and brochures	1	0.8
Others	9	7.5
Visit frequency		
Daily	2	1.7
Weekly	5	4.2
Monthly	8	6.7
Occasionally	58	48.3
Rarely	47	39.2

Table 3: Mixed Logit Model Estimates of Pull-motivations of Tourism at Idanre Hills

Variables	Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	Pr(> z)	Significance
Entrance Fee	-13.6241	146.0908	-0.0933	0.9257	NS
Hills	31.1486	16.2155	1.9209	0.05474	*
Vegetation	-9.7529	14.2322	-0.6853	0.49318	NS
Ancient Palace	17.2432	15.5433	1.1094	0.26727	NS
Agboogun Footprint	43.7885	21.665	2.0212	0.04326	**
Potential On-Site	53.1358	27.1233	1.959	0.05011	*
Accommodation					
Public Taxi	-163.647	85.2818	-1.9189	0.055	*
Clean Portable Water	-7.8856	4.8819	-1.6153	0.10625	NS
Unobserved Heterogeneity					
Hills	133.9555	81.5746	1.6421	0.10056	NS
Vegetation	14.673	9.1664	1.6007	0.10943	NS
Ancient Palace	28.2154	17.1809	1.6423	0.10054	NS
Agboogun Footprint	142.9934	87.937	1.6261	0.10393	NS
Potential On-Site	44.8721	27.7887	1.6148	0.10636	NS
Accommodation					
Public Taxi	108.3758	66.4323	1.6314	0.10281	NS
Clean Portable Water	104.3167	66.0256	1.5799	0.11412	NS

Significance codes: 1% ‘***’; 5% ‘**’; 10% ‘*’, NS- Not Significant

Table 3 shows the Mixed Logit Model Estimates of Pull-motivations of Tourism at Idanre Hills. The most attracting

features which significantly predict the likelihood of visitors choosing Idanre Hills as their tourist destination are the

Hills (Pr=0.05474), Aboogun Footprint (Pr=0.04326), potential On-site accommodation (Pr=0.05011) and public taxi (Pr=0.055).

Discussion

The visitors were majorly females who were in their youthful and active age, had obtained tertiary education, self-employed and single. This shows they had the required resources such as effort, time and money to patronize and enjoy a cultural heritage site and they were also knowledgeable enough to participate in the study and also understand and get educated about the cultural features at the site. This is consistent with findings by Lončarić *et al.* (2017) that the visitor is a collaborative partner who creates value with his own resources which are knowledge, effort, money and time, and as a result value-in-use is created. Also, the visitors were majorly first time visitors who got aware of the site through their family and friends. This shows that these family and friends might have visited the site before and got satisfied before they could spread positive word of mouth to the visitors too and this is supported by Salim and Mwaipopo (2016) that visitors are willing recommend it to friends and families if they were satisfied with it

The positive direction and significance of the coefficient of Hills implied that visitors were positively induced to choose Idanre as their destination because of the Hills. It is an obvious fact that visitors are inclined to visit the site because of the hills which is the main attraction as a core determinant of why it is named a world heritage site. Agboogun footprint which is a cultural and historical feature was shown to positively predict the likelihood of respondents choosing Idanre as a

destination implying that the visitors had a preference for this feature among other alternatives included in the choice experiment which were burial mound and ground, old court and ancient palace out of which only ancient palace entered the estimation variables included in the mixed logit model (MIXL). Ancient palace, although with a positive sign, was not shown to be a significant predictor of choice of Idanre as tourism destination for the visitors. These features at this site form the core attractions of the site which has elevated the status of the heritage site to being listed on UNESCO's tentative list of World Heritage sites and this has created a good image for the host Nigeria as supported by Csapo (2012) that cultural heritage sites have emerged as a critical resource for positioning, strengthening, forming, developing and creating the national identity of nations.

In the context of accommodation, two variables were included. These were onsite and offsite accommodation options. Visitors were shown to be positively disposed to the option of potential On-site accommodation even though the site did not have on-site accommodation as at the time of this study. This shows the visitors had expectations for on-site accommodation as it has an influence in them choosing tourism destination and the management should work on providing this at the site so that visitors can conveniently stay more than a day at the site conveniently and more income would be generated for the site too as Xia *et al.* (2009) stated that accommodations are strategic players for both the competitiveness of a site and visitors' fulfilment.

The last variable that was significant in the MIXL was public taxi which was included as a level in the infrastructure

attribute. The coefficient was negative implying that the presence of this transportation option reduced the likelihood of respondents choosing Idanre as a destination. This may suggest the fact that visitors would prefer other better transportation option like car hire. In another sense, the fact that respondents preferred on-site accommodation may have contributed to their disutility for public taxi since they would want to stay rather than move around. Clean portable water was another infrastructure option included in this estimation. This did not significantly predict the likelihood of respondents choosing Idanre.

In terms of model specification, the absence of significant heterogeneity in respondent's valuation of the elicited attributes for this study showed that a standard multinomial logit model that assumed homogenous preference could as well be fitted for the data used in this study without significant loss of information.

Conclusion

This study investigated the pull motivation and travel characteristics of visitors to Idanre Hills Cultural Heritage site and concludes that there were more first time than repeat visitors at the site who heard about the site from family and friends. The visitors have heard about the site before because it is a renowned heritage site in Nigeria with unique natural and cultural features capable of attracting visitors. Of all the attractive features inherent at the site, the hills, agboogun footprint which is a cultural feature and potential on-site accommodation were the destination features that motivated the visitors to visit the site. Management should therefore pay attention to the improvement of these features so as to improve the destination's competitiveness

in the tourism market. Management of the site should also develop the site features to taste so as to attract visitors to them thereby reducing concentration at these preferred site features.

Furthermore, according to findings in this study, development of on-site accommodation facilities can significantly increase the length of stay of most visitors and consequently improve the revenue generation at this tourism site. On-site accommodation should therefore be developed.

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