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Tourists' perception of Osun Osogbo Festival in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Osun Osogbo festival is one of the biggest art festivals in Nigeria with over 235, 518 tourist visits in 2014. The purpose of this study is to generate data on the tourists' perception of Osun Osogbo Festival in Osogbo, Osun State Nigeria. Based on the population of 199, 860 tourist visits at Osun Osogbo festival in 2013, Krejcie and Morgan sample size table was used to select 768 tourists/respondents. Likert questionnaire were used to elicit data from the respondents. Descriptive statistic was used to describe the characteristics of respondents and analyse the tourists' perception of the festival. The findings from data analysed suggest that the trend of domestic and international tourist visits in the past ten years for the festival had shown a consistent increase since 2004 except in 2007 and 2008 and continue to increase up to 2013. This is an indication that the tourists are satisfied with traditional, historical and authenticity features of the festival. Also, findings from the study revealed that the tourists are not satisfied with the number of toilets at Osun Sacred Grove, crowd control of visitors during the festival, medical personnel to cater for visitors during the festival, etc. In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested; provision of more toilets at Osun Sacred grove, Osogbo Heritage Council to recruit festival guides to help control the huge crowd at the festival, the Government of State of Osun in conjunction with Red Cross Society should engage adequate medical personnel to cater for medical needs of visitors at the festival, etc.

Keywords: Festival, Perception, Positive, Tourists

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1. Introduction

Festivals play a significant role in the lives of communities (Viviers, 2010) and staging event can be beneficial to the host community with positive impacts that often include the stimulation of the local economy and promotion of the region. This may influence future tourism activity and lead to long-term benefits (Fredline, Raybound, Jago and Deery, 2005). The use of local festival as an instrument for tourism development has gained worldwide momentum in recent years. While in some instance time-honoured existing local cultural or religious events have been revived or repackaged as tourism events, in order case new festival have been invented and promoted for the singular purpose of drawing new visitors to a city or region. The most obvious reasons for the popularity of the local festival as a tourism promotion tool are that:

- i. festival increase the demand for local tourism (Smith and Jenner, 1998),
- ii. successful festivals can help recreate the image of a place or contribute toward the exposure of a location trying to get on the tourism map (Kotler, Haider and Rein, 1993), and
- iii. the strategic placement of a festival in the local tourism calendar can help extend the tourism season (Getz, 1997).

As festival increase pride and create cultural identity, cohesion and increased knowledge of the area, it becomes important to understand the perception of tourists. The purpose of this study is therefore to assess the tourists perception of one of the biggest art festival in Nigeria; the Osun Osogbo festival in Osogbo, Osun State Nigeria. This is done by exploiting demographic characteristics of the tourists and assessing tourists' perception of the festival.

2. Osun Osogbo Festival

Osun Osogbo (Sacred Grove) festival is an annual affair which revolves round the Ataoja and the Osogbo people. It is the renewal of the mystic bonds between Osun and other deities of the people. The 12 day festival starts and ends in the town palace of the Ataoja, beginning with (Iwopopo) the physical and ritual cleaning of the pilgrimage route from the palace in the centre of the town (Gbaemu) to the grove by the royal priestess (Iya Osun) and the priest (Aworo)

accompanying the household of the Oba with traditional chiefs, high Chiefs and other notables with dancing and singing.

The second to the fifth day of the festival witnesses the appearance of masquerades dedicated to ancestors as well as Sango, the Yoruba deity of thunder. The night of the 6th day of the festival is dedicated to Osanyin, a Yoruba deity responsible for healing through the knowledge of the use of herbs and sixteen-point lamp using palm oil soaked in cotton wicks is lighted from 7pm to 7am. The Ataoja, his wives, Ifa priest would dance round the sixteen point lamp, three times to the admiration of a cross section of the Osogbo people present at the palace grounds. The 7th day is dedicated to the Ifa (divination) priests who also dance round Osogbo town. While the 8th day includes acrobatic performances by personified deities likes Oya, one of the wives of Sango with who Osun was in good terms (Oya has a sacred area within the main grove). On the 9th day, the Ataoja and his high chiefs pay compliments to his in-laws in a procession that leads from one house to the other. In a build up towards the grand finale, the tenth day witnesses the laying out of the crowns of the past and present Oba for a rededication to Osun. On this occasion, chief's priests and priestess will prostrate before the crowns a salute to the royal ancestors. The occasion is to invoke the spirit of the ancestors of the Ataoja for a bestowal of blessing on Osogbo people. This is followed by eating and drinking at the courtyard. The 11th day is devoted to the final preparation for grand finale that occurs on the 12th day. The whole population of Osogbo undertakes a procession into the sacred grove. The procession begins at about 9am. It is led by the votary maid, (Arugba), the Ataoja, and devotes supported by high chiefs to the Osun courtyard, around the location of the first palace within the grove, the point of offering on the bank of the river.

The procession is accompanied with drumming, singing and dancing. One of the star attractions is the flogging ceremony by youths of Osogbo. Flexible twigs of plants are used to whip each other to the admiration of the Oba and all spectators. The flogging stops when the Oba gives out money to the youths. The festival also witnesses the display of various Egungun (ancestral) masquerades. The votary maid (Arugba) who carries the ritual calabash of medicine follows the ritual route to the Osun temple where she puts down

the calabash in front of the Osun Priest who accompanies her to the shrine. When the Arugba arrives, there are loud ovations with beating of drums and dancing. The Ataoja is then called into the temple where he sits on the stone throne to offer prayers to Osun with a calabash of sacrifice prepared by the Priestess, the priest and other relevant Osun devotees. The Ataoja offers prayers, after which the priestess and priest pray fervently for the Ataoja, Osogbo community, other citizens, and participants. The sacrifice is then carried to the river for offering. This discharge of offering is hailed by all and sundry and every one present begins to pray earnestly to Osun for individual and collective needs at the river side. Vows which must be honoured are made. The votary maid meanwhile retires into the inner part of the temple and stays there till the end of the festival. Therefore, the king who leads the pilgrimage along the public route to the Ojubo shrine addresses the audience and prays that Osun will make it possible for them to come same time next year and then everyone disperses.

The Osun Osogbo festival officially ends when the votary maid successfully returns to the Osun shrine in the palace. For the people of Osogbo the role of the votary maid (Arugba) goes beyond that of a precarious being. She is the soul and represents the life giving force of their spiritual being. She is the soul of the celebration. Two bitter cola nuts are placed in her mouth so that she cannot speak out the wondrous things that fill her mind on visiting Osun. She must not stumble lest her fate and subsequently that of Osogbo will be exposed to hazards of stumbling throughout the following year. This is evidence of the inseparable links of the Orisa and its followers. The key facts about Osun Osogbo festival is summarized in Table 1.

3. Study area

Osogbo is the capital of Osun State, Nigeria and it is located within longitude 4.3°E and 4.4°E of the Greenwich and latitude 7.4°N and 7.8°N of the Equator. It is bound in the north by Olorunda Local Government Area, in the south by Ede North and Atakumosa Local Government Areas, in the east by Obokun and Boriye Local Government Areas, and in the west by Egbedore Local Government Area. Osogbo is the Headquarters of Osogbo Local Government Area. Osun Osogbo sacred grove is 75 hectares of undisturbed rainforest and the main venue

of Osun Osogbo festival. Osogbo has a total area of 250Km².

4. Methodology

This survey study generated data from festival tourists/attendees whose population was estimated to be 199,860 during the 2013 Osun Osogbo festival (National Commission for Museums and Monuments, 2014). Therefore, the study used Krejcie and Morgan sample size table cited in Abdullateef and Olajide (2013) to determine the population sample size of 768. Likert questionnaire is used to solicit data from the 768 festival tourists/attendees on the day of grand finale and a day after the 2014 Osun Osogbo festival. See appendix 1. Descriptive statistic was used to describe the characteristics of respondents and analyse the tourists' perception of the festival.

5. Results and discussion

The Characteristics of Tourists

The characteristics of tourists attended Osun Osogbo festival in 2014 is obtained from respondents at the festival on the 22nd August, 2014 and a day after the festival, 23rd August, 2014. Two days survey was carefully conducted to ensure that residents residing in Osogbo (study area) were excluded in the surveys. Respondents were asked to say where they came from before questionnaire is given to them. This strategy ensures that tourists captured in the surveys are domestic tourists (Nigerians outside the study area) and international tourists. The tourist data surveyed are gender, age, marital status, educational level and nationality. These tourist profiles are considered important in understanding of tourist's perception as argued by Awartife (2007), Awartife (2013) and Odjugo (2008). The tourist's demographic data analysed are shown Table 2 and are:

Gender

The gender of respondents indicated that male are 391(50.9%) and female 377(49.1%).

Age

Age is always recorded in terms of completed years on the last birthday. Ages of respondents shown Table 2 as follows: 1-20 years, 5 (1%), 21-40 years, 201(26%) and 41 and above years, 562(73%).

Marital Status

The marital status of the respondents is as thus: un-married 31(4%), married 662(86%), divorced 6(1%), widow 64(8%) and widower 5(1%). The marital status of respondents indicated that the festival is for every tourist; un-married, married divorced, widow or widower.

Educational Level

The educational status of a person refers to the highest level of educational completed by him. The respondents educational level revealed that none school are 193 (25%), Primary 216(28 %%), Secondary 194(25%), and Polytechnic/University 165(22%). The educational level of respondents is an indication that there is no educational requirement to attend the Osun Osogbo festival. That means any tourist can attend the festival if he or she so wish.

Nationality

The demographic profile of tourists attended the festival, nationality is important. However, nationality of tourists shows domestic and international arrivals. Table 2 gives respondents nationality; Nigerians (domestic) 663 (86%) and foreigners (international) 105(14%). It is important to note that in spite of Federal Government of Nigeria warning that foreign tourists should not attend the festival because of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), 14% of foreign tourists were sampled.

Tourists' Perception of Osun Osogbo Festival

The data shown in Table 3 indicates that 12 out of 20 tourists' perception statements are with response rate mean of above 3.5, which is interpreted as 'accept'. These 12 or 60% positive tourists' perception statements include; the festival promotes social interaction between the tourists and local residents (4.28), the festival is an interface of cultural exchange between the tourists and local residents (4.41), the tourists during the festival imitate the local residents (4.23), the tourists during the festival buy local crafts as souvenirs (3.97), the tourists during the festival buy local foods (3.81), the tourists during the festival visit historic sites (4.19), local residents welcome tourists to the festival (4.42), the tourists fetch Osun water for spiritual healing during the festival (4.27), the tourists are satisfied with the organization of the festival (4.20), the tourists are satisfied with the authenticity of the festival (4.61), the tourists are satisfied with the

historical values of the festival (4.58) and the tourists are satisfied with the cultural values of the festival (4.69). However, tourists' perception statement 8 had response rate mean of 1.37, which is also accept. That is 'there is no resentment between the tourists and local residents during the festival'.

Also, data available in Table 3 signify that 7 out of 20 tourists' perception statements have response rate mean below 3.5, which is interpreted as 'reject'. These 7 or 35% tourists' perception statements are: the tourists are satisfied with the crowd control measures during the festival (1.27), the tourists are satisfied with the sanitary condition of the town during the festival (1.41), the tourists are satisfied with the accommodation facilities during the festival (1.84), the tourists are satisfied with the services of tour operators during the festival (1.91), the tourists are satisfied with services of restaurant and eateries during the festival (1.88), the tourists are satisfied with services of festival guides (1.76), and the tourists are satisfied with services of medical personnel during the festival (1.49).

6. Conclusion

The foregoing discussion on tourists' perception of the Osun Osogbo festival indicates that tourists perceived the festival more positively. This contributes to continue increase in tourist's attendance to the festival over the years. This also account for sustainability of the Osun Osogbo festival over the years. However, tourists' perception statement 14 to 20 indicates that there is negative perception of tourists on some visitor's management issues during the festival. These visitor management issues include crowd control measures (1.27), sanitary condition of the town (1.41), accommodation facilities (1.84), services of tour operators (1.91), services of restaurants/eateries (1.88), services of festival guides (1.76) and medical personnel (1.49). See table 3 above.

7. Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested.

Visitor Pressure

Visitors exert negative impact on conservation of sculptures at the Osun sacred grove. As suggested by

Orga (2015) that education of visitors who attend the annual Osun Osogbo festival can make a valuable contribution to visitor pressure during the festival. The Infogem Nigeria limited, the festival marketers should increase efforts to embark on visitor education as it become very important. Visitor education should be carried out in such a way that it helps to reduce visitor pressure as well as their activities without undermining their experience and pleasure at the festival. Festival educators should be at strategic points at the festival routes to educate visitors during the sequence festival intermittently without interfering with their personal activities.

Recruitment of Festival Guides

Effective crowd control measures can become veritable tool at the annual Osun Osogbo festival as visitors continue to increase over the years. There is need for Osogbo Heritage Council to recruit festival guides and/or volunteers (as festival guides) to be at sequence festival to help control the huge crowd at the festival. Thus, this will complement the efforts of festival educators in crowd control management at the festival. In addition, the recruited festival guides should be properly train on how to handle and manage visitors and crowd control strategies.

Provision of Adequate Medical Personnel

Participant observations revealed that there were inefficient medical personnel at 2014 Osun Osogbo festival. This is not a good situation at an annual festival that attracts nearly two hundred thousand (200,000) visitors in 2013. It was observed during the 2014 Osun Osogbo festival that there were cases of some visitors falling or suffocating as they struggle to catch a glimpse of votary maid (Arugba) as she carry the ritual calabash to the Osun sacred grove. It is therefore, suggested that the Osun Heritage Council (the festival organisers) in collaboration with Local Red Society and/or International Red Cross Society provide adequate medical facilities and personnel to care for medical emergencies which may emanate at the sequence festival.

Measure to Control Crowd at Bank of River Osun

In fact, Iya Osun can invoke the divinity to come to land in the form of Iko (Osun fish messenger) which pours "holy water" (medicinal water). People who take the medicinal water claim to have come under

assort of afflatus (i.e. divine impulse or inspiration). The water can be used to cure the sick and to make barren women become fertile and productive. This claim makes visiting tourists crowd at bank of river Osun in Osun sacred grove fetching the 'holy water'. As it is now, there is only one passage leading to/from the river Osun pond where tourists fetch 'holy water'. Therefore, it is suggested that the Osogbo Heritage Council in Collaboration with National Commission for Museums and Monuments provide exit route(s) for tourists out of the river Osun in Osun sacred grove.

Education and Re-orientation of Atori Boys

The deductions from the participant observations indicated that the Atori boys with their long sticks harassed tourists attended the festival. It is important to note that the Atori boys and their masquerades is an additional attractions for tourists at the festival. What is undesirable about the Atori boys is the harassment of tourists at the festival. Therefore, the education and re-orientation of Atori boys to conduct themselves decently at sequence festival can make a valuable contribution to Atori boy's proper conducts.

Ban of Hawking Activities at the Osun Sacred Grove during the Festival

It was observed at 2014 Osun Osogbo festival that hawkers were allowed to carry out petty trading activities at the Osun sacred grove. Their activities pollute the Osun sacred grove. It is suggested that the hawking activities at Osun sacred grove all times should be ban by Osogbo Heritage Council, the organisers of the festival. This appropriate action will help to keep Osun sacred grove clean and sacred.

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Table 1. Key Facts about Osun Osogbo Festival

Type of event	Annual cultural festival
Organisers	Osogbo Cultural Heritage Council
Event history	Osun Osogbo festival is as old as Osogbo itself started in the 18 th century to commemorate and renew the pact between Osun goddess and Laroye, the founder of Osogbo that Osogbo will always be protected and blessed if the people continue to worship her.
Event hold	In August, every year.
Event contents	The 12 th day's festival starts and ends in the town palace of the Ataoja.
Visitor statistics	Over 235, 518 visitors attended the festival in 2014
Award and certification	The venue of the festival, Osun Osogbo sacred grove is the UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) in 2005. The festival is recognised as international festival by UNESCO.
Event destination specific qualities	Osun Osogbo festival is characterized by historical, tradition, cultural and authenticity features.

Survey field, 2015

S/No.	Statements	Perception						Remark
		SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	
1	The festival promotes social interaction between the tourists and local residents.	249	507	2	3	7	4.28	Accept
2	The festival is an interface of cultural exchange between the tourists and local residents	416	305	5	32	10	4.41	Accept
3	The tourists during the festival imitate the local residents.	351	484	8	14	11	4.23	Accept
4	The tourists during the festival buy local crafts as souvenirs.	189	490	12	32	45	3.97	Accept
5	The tourists during the festival buy local foods.	127	522	21	4	52	3.81	Accept
6	The tourists during the festival visit historic sites.	407	258	15	21	67	4.19	Accept
7	Local residents welcome tourists to the festival.	354	401	5	5	3	4.42	Accept
8	There is resentment between the tourists and local residents during the festival.	2	3	1	269	493	1.37	Accept
9	The tourists fetch Osun water for spiritual healing during the festival.	375	327	2	33	31	4.27	Accept
10	The tourists are satisfied with the organization of the festival.	254	471	5	26	12	4.20	Accept
11	The tourists are satisfied with the authenticity of the festival.	601	108	3	39	17	4.61	Accept
12	The tourists are satisfied with the historical values of the festival.	578	133	1	43	13	4.58	Accept
13	The tourists are satisfied with the cultural values of the festival.	613	122	1	21	11	4.69	Accept
14	The tourists are satisfied with the crowd control measures during the festival.	30	12	2	53	671	1.27	Reject
15	The tourists are satisfied with the sanitary condition of the town during the festival.	28	23	1	135	581	1.41	Reject
16	The tourists are satisfied with the accommodation facilities during the festival.	39	5	1	478	245	1.84	Reject
17	The tourists are satisfied with the services of tour operators during the festival.	89	44	1	216	418	1.91	Reject
18	The tourists are satisfied with services of restaurant and eateries during the festival.	53	49	1	317	348	1.88	Reject
19	The tourists are satisfied with services of festival guides.	46	61	1	221	439	1.76	Reject
20	The tourists are satisfied with services of medical personnel during the festival.	17	37	1	197	516	1.49	Reject

Table 2. Characteristics of Tourists

Characteristics	Tourists	
	F	%
Gender:		
Male	391	50.9
Female	377	49.1
Total	768	100
Age:		
1-20	5	0.7
21-40	201	26.2
41 & above	652	73.2
Total	768	100
Marital status:		
Single	31	4
Married	662	86.2
Divorced	6	0.8
Widow	64	8.3
Widower	5	0.7
Total	768	100
Educational level:		
None	193	25.1
Primary	216	28.1
Secondary	194	25.3
Poly/University	165	21.5
Total	768	100
Nationality		
Nigerians	663	86.3
Foreigners	105	13.7
Total	768	100

Source: Field survey, 2015

Note: F = Frequency % = Percentage

Table 3. Summary of Tourists' Perception of Osun Osogbo Festival

Source: Field survey, 2014.

Appendix: Tourists Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

I am conducting a survey on “**Tourists' Perception of Osun-Osogbo Festival in Osogbo, Osun State Nigeria**”. The responses provided in the questionnaire shall be treated confidentially, and shall be used solely for the purpose of this research. Your participation in this survey will contribute in achieving the objectives of the research.

Thank you.

The Researcher

Please, tick the appropriate box.

PART A: The respondent's demographic data.

1. Gender: Male [] Female []
2. Age: 1-20 [] 21 - 40 [] 41 and above []
3. Marital status: Single [] Married [] Divorced [] Widow [] Widower []
4. Educational level: None [] Primary school [] Secondary school [] Polytechnic/University []
5. Your nationality:

PART B: Tourist's Perception of Osun Osogbo Festival

For each of the statement below, please indicate by placing a tick in the appropriate box.

S/N o.	Statements	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly disagreed
1	The festival promotes social interaction between the tourists and local residents.					
2	The festival is an interface of cultural exchange between the tourists and local residents.					
3	The tourists during the festival imitate the local residents.					
4	The tourists during the festival buy local crafts as souvenirs.					
5	The tourists during the festival buy local foods.					
6	The tourists during the festival visit historic sites.					
7	Local residents welcome tourists to the festival.					
8	There is resentment between the tourists and local residents during the festival.					
9	The tourists fetch Osun water for spiritual healing during the festival.					
10	The tourists are satisfied with the organization of the festival.					
11	The tourists are satisfied with the authenticity of the festival.					
12	The tourists are satisfied with the historical values of the festival.					
13	The tourists are satisfied with the cultural values of the festival.					
14	The tourists are satisfied with the crowd control measures during the festival.					
15	The tourists are satisfied with the sanitary condition of the town during the festival.					
16	The tourists are satisfied with the accommodation facilities during the festival.					
17	The tourists are satisfied with the services of tour operators during the festival.					
18	The tourists are satisfied with services of restaurant and eateries during the festival.					
19	The tourists are satisfied with services of festival guides.					
20	The tourists are satisfied with services of medical personnel during the festival.					

Thank you.