

**RESIDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM  
DEVELOPMENT IN IGBO OLODUMARE SACRED GROVE, OKE-IGBO,  
ONDO STATE, NIGERIA**

**BY**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

I certify that this project titled “Residents` Participation in Community- Based Ecotourism Development in Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, Oke-Igbo, Ondo State, Nigeria” was carried out by Mr. F. C. Adeyemi (166743) in the Tourism and Development Programme, Centre for Sustainable Development, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my mother Mrs. Dorcas Omotola Adeyemi for her undying love and motherly care and to my lovely wife Mrs. Abisola Olaiya Adeyemi for her undying love and endurance, especially during the final stages of the project.

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## ABSTRACT

Community-based Ecotourism Development (CbED) approach, which emphasizes residents' participation, is crucial to actualising full ecotourism potential in any society. Efforts to develop the tourism potential of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove (IOSG) in Ondo State has been on for half a century without limited success. Previous studies of ecotourism focused on residents' well-being, livelihoods, and project impacts with little emphasis on residents' participation. This study, therefore examined residents' participation in CbED in IOSG with a view to evaluating their knowledge of ecotourism potential and willingness to participate as well as inhibiting factors to participation.

Richard Tarnas' Participation Theory and Community Readiness Model served as the framework, while the mixed methods (Quant + Qual) design was adopted. Four communities within 10km radius of IOSG were purposively selected, while 361 adult residents were also purposively selected across the communities (Kajola-114; Ajejigi-73; Igbo Olodumare-53; Oke Alafia-121). The instruments used were; the Knowledge of Ecotourism Potential ( $r=0.84$ ) and the Willingness to Participate in CbED ( $r=0.73$ ) scales. Key Informant Interviews were conducted with four community heads, two members of the Oke-Igbo Tourism Committee, one policy maker each from the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments. A Focus Group Discussion session was held with members of each community council. Quantitative data were subjected to descriptive statistics and Multiple Regression at 0.05 level of significance, while the qualitative data were analysed using narrative approach.

Most adult residents (35.5%), had tertiary education, married (67%), predominantly Christians (92.5%), and farmers (60.1%). However, very few residents' (0.6%) had prior involvement in planning the IOSG project. The residents had high knowledge of ecotourism potentials of IOSG ( $\bar{x}=3.3 \pm 1.86$ ), their level of willingness to participate in CbED was moderate ( $\bar{x} = 21.08 \pm 6.75$ ) and their length of stay was high ( $\bar{x} = 29.08 \pm 21.45$ ). Residents level of education ( $\beta = -0.15$ ), length of stay ( $\beta = 0.42$ ) and religion ( $\beta = 0.15$ ) influenced willingness to participate, while knowledge of ecotourism potential did not. The inhibiting factors to residents' participation in CbED included poor state of infrastructures, low level of relevant tourism and hospitality skills, poor destination branding and marketing, top-heavy management approach, community residents' exclusion from decision-making processes, community residents prohibition from accessing IOSG, and absence of benefit-sharing mechanism acceptable to community residents.

Residents' participation in Community-based Ecotourism Development in Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove is poor, however their willingness to participate is high. Level of education, religion, and length of stay largely influenced willingness to participate in Community-based Ecotourism Development. Capacity building initiatives with emphasis on involvement in planning, implementation, and evaluation, should be introduced by the stakeholders, particularly at the community level, for improvement in residents' participation.

**Keywords:** Igbo Olodumare sacred grove, Ecotourism site, Tourism development, Ecotourism Education.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Title page</b>	<b>i</b>
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv-v
Abstract	vi
Table of contents	vii-x
List of tables	xi
List of figures	xii
List of plates	xiii-
	xiv
List of abbreviations	xv

### **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

1.1	Background to the study	1
1.2	Statement of the problem	5
1.3	Research questions	7
1.4	Aim and objectives of the study	7
1.5	Justification of the study	8
1.6	Scope of the study	9

### **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1	Review of conceptual issues	10
2.1.1	The concept of community-based ecotourism	10
2.1.2	The nature of ecotourism	12
2.1.3	Harmony with the local environment and the local culture	15
2.1.4	Biodiversity conservation in Nigeria	16
2.1.5	Indigenous conservation method	17
2.1.6	Capacity building and the sustainable development of communities	18
2.1.7	Environmental education: residents awareness, knowledge, attitude and participation	24
2.1.8	Limitations of ecotourism as a tool for sustainable development	25
2.1.9	Community residents participation	25
2.1.10	Local benefits and involvement of the local community	26

2.1.11	Socio-economic benefits	27
2.1.12	Eco-village development	28
2.1.13	Poverty alleviation through community-based ecotourism	29
2.1.14	The six avenues for poverty alleviation through community-based ecotourism	31
2.1.15	The seven steps: UNWTO ST-EP recommendations and projects	32
2.1.16	Pro-poor but non-mass tourism in Nigeria	35
2.1.17	Slum, rural and community-based tourism	38
2.1.18	Socio-cultural considerations: tradition, governance and the political environment	39
2.1.19	Tourism development in Igbo Olodumare and the 5 A`S of a successful tourism destination	41
2.1.20	Protected area establishment and the legal status of Igbo Olodumare	41
2.1.21	Negotiating stakeholders competing interests	45
2.1.22	Guidelines for community-based ecotourism	49
2.1.23	Community-based ecotourism development in Igbo Olodumare	51
2.2	Review of theoretical issues	53
2.2.1	The free-market theory and tourism as a capitalist venture	53
2.2.2	Butler`s theory: Tourism area life cycle (TALC)	54
2.2.3	Stakeholders theory	56
2.2.4	Community readiness and awareness theory	58
2.2.5	Participation theory	60
2.3	Review of methodological issues	62
2.3.1	Observation method and diagramming	62
2.3.2	Interview method	63
2.4	Review of empirical issues	63
2.5	Summary of the literature and identified gaps	67
 <b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</b>		
3.1	Research design	69
3.2	Study area	70
3.3	Study population and sampling	73
3.3.1	Sample size determination	77
3.4	Methods of data collection	79
3.4.1	Sources of data collected for this study	79



3.5	Description and preparation of Instrument	80
3.5.1	Administration of research Instrument	80
3.5.2	Validity and reliability of research instrument	82
3.6	Description and measurement of variables	83
3.7	Methods of data analysis	84
3.8	Ethical considerations	85
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</b>		
4.1	Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents	86
4.2	The nature of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove	100
4.2. 1	D.O Fagunwa’s writings and his conservation agenda	109
4.2.2	Biodiversity in the grove	110
4.2.3	Traditional beliefs	116
4.2.4	Key places/attractions in Oke-Igbo town, connected with Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove	118
4.2.5	Key attractions within the Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove	123
4.2.6	Benefits to local communities	139
4.3	Assessing residents’ knowledge of ecotourism potentials in IOSG.	141
4.4	Determining the extent to which community residents are willing to provide support services for CbED.	145
4.5	Determining the contributions of socio-demographic factors, and knowledge of ecotourism potentials in predicting willingness to participate in CbED.	152
4.5.1	Regression model determination	155
4.6	Identifying barriers to resident’s participation in the development of Igbo Olodumare as a Community based ecotourism destination.	157
4.7	Discussion	177

**CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1	Summary	187
5.2	Conclusion	188
5.3	Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research	189
5.4	Recommendations of the study	190
5.5	Contributions to knowledge	192

<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>193</b>
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<b>APPENDIX I</b>	<b>204</b>
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<b>APPENDIX II:</b>	<b>212</b>
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## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 2.1:</b>	World International Tourist Arrivals (UNWTO, 2015)	<b>30</b>
<b>Table 2.2:</b>	Types of pro-poor tourism strategies	<b>36</b>
<b>Table 2.3</b>	Top five most dominant tree species in Igbo Olodumare	<b>52</b>
<b>Table 3.1:</b>	Sample size selection	<b>74</b>
<b>Table 3.2:</b>	Summary of research sampling method adopted	<b>78</b>
<b>Table 4.0a:</b>	Age of the respondents	<b>87</b>
<b>Table 4.0b</b>	Gender, and marital status of the respondents	<b>90</b>
<b>Table 4.0c:</b>	Educational qualifications of the respondents	<b>92</b>
<b>Table 4.0d</b>	Occupation of the respondents	<b>94</b>
<b>Table 4.0e:</b>	Religion of the respondents	<b>96</b>
<b>Table 4.0f:</b>	Length of stay of the respondents in the communities.	<b>98</b>
<b>Table 4.1</b>	Local communities' benefits from visits to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove	<b>140</b>
<b>Table 4.2a:</b>	Respondents' responses to survey on knowledge of ecotourism potential	<b>142</b>
<b>Table 4.2b:</b>	Aggregated scores of responses to residents' knowledge of ecotourism potential	<b>143</b>
<b>Table 4.2c:</b>	Residents' knowledge of ecotourism potentials in IOSG	<b>144</b>
<b>Table 4.3a:</b>	Residents' willingness to participate in CbED in IOSG.	<b>146</b>
<b>Table 4.3b:</b>	Community residents' participation by visiting Igbo Olodumare destination.	<b>149</b>
<b>Table 4.4:</b>	Relative contributions of socio-demographic factors and knowledge of ecotourism potentials in predicting willingness to participate in CbED.	<b>153</b>
<b>Table 4.5:</b>	Model summary, showing composite contributions of gender, level of education, length of stay and knowledge of ecotourism potentials in predicting willingness to participate.	<b>156</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 2.1:</b>	Forms of tourism	<b>14</b>
<b>Figure 2.2:</b>	The triple bottom line of sustainability	<b>20</b>
<b>Figure 2.3:</b>	The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals	<b>23</b>
<b>Figure 2.4:</b>	Relating territorial capital with place identity, image, and vision	<b>42</b>
<b>Figure 2.5:</b>	Model showing the robust linkages of stakeholders, benefits, and threats associated with sacred groves.	<b>46</b>
<b>Figure 2.6:</b>	Linkages between sustainable development, ecotourism, natural resources management and livelihoods.	<b>48</b>
<b>Figure 2.7:</b>	Guidelines for community based ecotourism development	<b>50</b>
<b>Figure 2.8</b>	Tourism area life cycle	<b>55</b>
<b>Figure 2.9:</b>	Stakeholders' views on enclave tourism	<b>57</b>
<b>Figure 2.10:</b>	Community readiness model	<b>59</b>
<b>Figure 3.1:</b>	Map of Okeigbo in Ondo State, Nigeria	<b>72</b>
<b>Figure 4.1</b>	Map of attractions within Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove	<b>124</b>

## LIST OF PLATES

<b>Plate 4.1:</b>	Ondo State Government poster showing Igbo Olodumare.	<b>101</b>
<b>Plate 4.2:</b>	A tarred section of the road from Oke-Igbo to IOSG	<b>104</b>
<b>Plate 4.3:</b>	A mud house under construction in Igbo Olodumare	<b>106</b>
<b>Plate 4.4:</b>	Dense vegetation cover in Igbo Olodumare	<b>112</b>
<b>Plate 4.5:</b>	Tree-felling in Igbo Olodumare	<b>115</b>
<b>Plate 4.6:</b>	A signpost in Yoruba language	<b>117</b>
<b>Plate 4.7</b>	A sign post welcoming visitors to Oke-Igbo	<b>120</b>
<b>Plate 4.8</b>	Outside the Oke-Igbo Palace	<b>122</b>
<b>Plate 4.9</b>	Entrance to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove	<b>126</b>
<b>Plate 4.10</b>	Stairways to Oke-Langbodo	<b>127</b>
<b>Plate 4.11</b>	Oke-Langbodo site	<b>130</b>
<b>Plate 4.12</b>	Oja Awon Iwin site	<b>132</b>
<b>Plate 4.13</b>	Statue of Baba Onirungbon Yeuke	<b>134</b>
<b>Plate 4.14</b>	The wealthy writers seat.	<b>136</b>
<b>Plate 4.15</b>	Ireke Onibudo site	<b>138</b>
<b>Plate 4.16</b>	Focus Group Discussion in Oke-Alafia	<b>158</b>
<b>Plate 4.17</b>	Road leading to Igbo Olodumare from Oke-Igbo	<b>161</b>
<b>Plate 4.18</b>	Front view of the “Tourism Office” in Igbo Olodumare	<b>163</b>
<b>Plate 4.19</b>	Front view of the Basic Health Care Centre, closest to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove	<b>165</b>

<b>Plate 4.20</b>	Row of houses in Igbo Olodumare, the village closest to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove.	<b>167</b>
<b>Plate 4.21</b>	A signage welcoming visitor to Igbo Olodumare	<b>172</b>

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ABS – Access and Benefits Sharing

AKASP - Awareness, Knowledge, Attitude, Skills, and Willingness to Participate

CAMPFIRE - Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources

CCB – Community Capacity Building

CBD – Convention on Biological Diversity

CBT – Community Based Tourism

CBET – Community Based Ecotourism

CbED – Community-based Ecotourism Development

CBNRM – Community Based Natural Resources Management

CCBEN - Cambodia Community-Based Ecotourism Network

CBT-i – Community Based Tourism Institute

CRM – Community Readiness Model

EE – Environmental Education

GEN - Global Eco-Village Network

IOSG – Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove

IUCN - International Union of the Conservation of Nature

IDI – In-depth Interview

KII – Key Informant Interview

NCMM - National Commission for Museums and Monuments

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

ST-EP – Sustainable Tourism Eliminating Poverty

TALC – Tourism Area Life Cycle

TIES – The International Ecotourism Society

UNWTO – United Nations World Tourism Organisation

UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

WWF – World Wildlife Fund

KCCO - Kpatawee Citizen Community Organisation



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

The concept of Community-based Ecotourism emerged as an approach to the holistic development of local communities including the preservation of ecological and cultural heritage. In 1983, Hector Ceballos Lascurian, an architect, coined the term “Eco-Tourism” as a contraction of the words “Ecological” and “Tourism”, having observed the destructive nature of physical development. He promoted this form of tourism as an alternative way of consuming ecosystem resources without destroying them, thus providing a short-term economic justification, for protecting and conserving ecosystems. Consequently, eco-tourism emerged as a highly favoured form of tourism across the world even though eco-tourism cannot be said to have commenced in 1983. Ecological tourism in America for instance can be traced as far back as 1872, when the Yellow Stone Park was established in the United States of America. Community-based Ecotourism subsequently emerged as a preferred form of eco-tourism in which local community participation is key.

Our physical environment comprise of biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living) components that exhibit complex interactions with one another. In the natural environment, a series of interdependent bio-geo-chemical processes are deployed to ensure sustainability into the indefinite future. Since the advent of the industrial revolution, however, human activities have constituted an unprecedented threat to this delicate balance of nature (Falola and Adeyemi, 2016). Therefore, through various means of adaptation and sustainable utilization, man has been on a quest to seek reconciliation with nature and to enhance biodiversity conservation while pursuing sustainable development. This search has led to the emergence of the non-consumptive use of forest resources by encouraging tourists to visit forests and other ecological destinations as a commercial enterprise that supports nature conservation.

In so doing, eco-tourism and many other terms have been used to link tourism development with the conservation of natural and cultural resources. Some of these other terms include: nature-based travel, adventure travel, sustainable tourism, alternative tourism and community-based eco-tourism.

In less developed countries where the need for development is greatest, Community-based Ecotourism (CbE) is potentially a proactive means of development (Ekwale, 2014). Therefore, government parastatals in charge of tourism in many developing countries, try to encourage Community-based Ecotourism Development (CbED) in local communities with attractive ecosystems and a rich cultural heritage. In rural areas, community-based ecotourism has been marketed as a strategy for environmental protection and developing countries' economic development (Ayittey, 1991; Cater, 1993; Khan, 1997; Foucat, 2002; Kiss, 2004; Parker and Khare, 2005; Stronza, 2007; Spenceley, 2008).

“Biodiversity” as a contraction of the words “biological” and “diversity” was first used in 1985 (UNEP, 2010). The United Nations (UN) report, *Our Common Future*, placed biodiversity on the political agenda (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987; Falola and Adeyemi, 2016). In terms of species, ecosystems, and genetic diversity, the report covered how biodiversity benefits humans. Particular focus was placed on the aspects of our environment, both living and non-living, that are crucial to the growth of society.

In Nigeria, the adventures of one of the most widely read Yoruba authors, D.O Fagunwa, led to his writing of five fictional novels that are inspired by nature and traditional folklore. The novels and their respective years of publication are *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole* (1938), *Igbo Olodumare* (1949), *Ireke Onibudo* (1949), *Irinkerindo ninu Igbo Elegbeje* (1954), *Adiitu Olodumare* (1961). These inspiring adventures, can be described as some form of indigenous African eco-tourism experience. Even though, traditional African societies had successful indigenous methods of conservation such as sacred groves (Adeyanju, 2020), modern African communities are now striving to replicate the industrial models of development which deplete natural resources. Meanwhile, the rules and taboos used to preserve and protect sacred groves are crumbling (Onyekwelu and Olusola, 2014). *Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove* (IOSG) has been identified as one of the few sacred natural sites in Nigeria

(Borokini, 2016). Sacred natural sites such as Igbo Olodumare, make possible, the use of indigenous methods as part of the conservation strategy. Tourist visits to sacred natural forests such as Igbo Olodumare have emerged as ecotourism activities that promotes cultural understanding and education about both nature and culture with the potentials for helping to curb the menace of over-exploitation of forest resources.

The 17 United Nations Universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to motivate the locals, researchers, investors, private organisations, governmental organisations and institutions at national, sub-national, regional and international levels as well as non-governmental organisations, traditional institutions and so on, towards sustainable development practice across board (United Nations, 2015). This calls for greater integration of development such that development is more holistic rather than one-sided. It also requires careful planning and formulation of local policy direction based on research and inclusive participation of various stakeholders towards the successful actualisation of the vision for sustainable development (United Nations, 2015).

A survey carried out by the UNWTO found that observation of wildlife is a crucial facet of tourism in numerous African nations, and it comprises 80% of the overall yearly travel earnings for associated tour operators. This percentage is anticipated to continue its upward trend – (UNWTO, 2015). This highlights the significance of wildlife watching to the tourist market in Africa which in turn generates earnings that can fund development. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), in its Tourism Position Statement (Denman, 2001) suggested that the long-term preservation of the natural environment should be the shared objective of WWF and the tourism sector. It outlines a vision for how tourism policy and practice ought to:

- function as a component of a larger sustainable development strategy;
- be suitable for efficient natural ecosystem protection; and
- include locals and their customs, making sure they receive an appropriate share of the benefits.

The goal of partnerships for development as captured in the United Nations Sustainable Development goals (UN-SDGs) is reflected by the Convention on

Biological Diversity (CBD) which stated clearly in its Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development that by engaging the commercial sector, local communities, and indigenous peoples, as well as encouraging infrastructure and land use planning based on the concepts of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, it seeks to strengthen the relationship between tourism and biodiversity (CBD, 2015).

Nigeria's fifth National Biodiversity Report identified tourism as one of the areas in which biodiversity is valued and appreciated by Nigerians, making it one of the crucial instruments that can be used to promote biological diversity. In fact, the report in its concluding statements suggested that the complete assimilation of biodiversity into the principal sphere of Nigerian Tourism Development is of utmost importance. The significance of biodiversity values should be emphasized, particularly about environmental education and the formulation of substantial tourism strategies for Nigeria. (National Biodiversity Report, 2014).

In Ondo State, Western Nigeria, the tropical rain forests are fast giving way to the pressure of over-exploitation resulting from the quest of government and locals to develop. Various forest management practices have failed to have the desired effect and local awareness and appreciation of the value of the natural ecosystem has been on a steady nose dive. While some sacred forests have thus been decimated over the years, others such as the Osun Osogbo Grove have remained intact. Igbo Olodumare has also enjoyed a reasonable measure of protection by the local community and the state government (Borokini, 2016; Adeyanju, 2020). The Ondo State Government working together with the community has been attempting to use a Community-based Ecotourism approach to develop Igbo Olodumare as a tourist destination and a strategy for the long-term conservation and sustainability of the grove.

To attain informed, engaged, complete, or substantial stakeholder involvement, tourism planners must first assess the degree of awareness and perception that stakeholders possess regarding tourism, its processes, impacts, and sustainability principles (Cardenas *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, Ondo State has recognized and maintained Igbo Olodumare as a Sacred Forest (Borokini, 2016). Meanwhile, the site is on the tentative list of Nigeria National Monuments (Adeyanju, 2020).

Goal 15 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda is designed towards ensuring the safeguarding, rejuvenation, and advancement of sustainable utilization practices for terrestrial ecosystems. It also aims at the sustainable management of forests, the prevention of desertification, and the cessation and reversal of land degradation, are critical objectives in the effort to put a stop to biodiversity loss (UN, 2015). From the foregoing, it is clear, that this goal and its various targets are of utmost relevance to the local problems in Ondo State, Nigeria and in Igbo Olodumare, in particular. For a community-based ecotourism project to be successful, certain pre-conditions have been identified as vital. Though local conditions vary, the need for residents' participation remain sacrosanct. Hence the need for local studies that can foster improvement in the understanding and appreciation of the place of residents in community-based ecotourism projects.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

According to Borokini (2016), over fifty percent of all sacred groves in the South-western part of Nigeria have been destroyed, while a further forty percent have come under significant threats. Perhaps the biggest threat to Southern Nigeria's sacred sites is a religious shift away from traditional African religion (Borokini, 2016). Today, Christians and Muslims make up more than 80% of Nigeria's population, and the two religions prohibit traditional modes of veneration or worship. This in turn, has contributed to the loss of sacredness in groves. In the South-western parts of Nigeria, the progressive eradication of sacred trees and groves is taking place (Borokini, 2016). This leaves Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove (IOSG) in the Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo Local Government Area of Ondo State as one of the survivors.

However, despite the high level of visitor turn over, a study found that there was greater tree shrubs species richness, a more even spread of species and a higher number of threatened species in Osun-Osogbo than in other primary forests. At the same time lower level of species richness in the Igbo Olodumare sacred grove was reported (Onyekwelu and Olusola, 2014). This suggests that the status of Osun-Osogbo as a UNESCO Heritage site and a major tourist attraction in South West Nigeria may have also brought ecological benefits.

In Igbo Olodumare however, ongoing efforts to get it some recognition as a National Monument and/or as a UNESCO Heritage Site have not made substantial progress. There is also a paucity of visitor to the destination as well as low level of species richness. The effort to have a Community-based Ecotourism Development (CbED) approach towards the management of Igbo Olodumare does not seem to be yielding great results. The level of community involvement in a community-based Ecotourism project could not be ascertained either. Whereas the drift towards community participation is due to the expectation that Local participation in tourism is a positive force for change and a passport to development (Claiborne, 2010). A Community-based Ecotourism Project, however, cannot be sustainable without community participation, endorsement and in fact involvement at the planning stages (WWF, 2001) as well as ecotourism-oriented environmental education.

Community readiness and willingness to participate in a Community-based ecotourism project are very important considerations before a CBE project kicks off. The opinion of tourism stakeholders such as government parastatals, non-governmental organizations, environmental groups, trade unions, road transport workers, business interests, and so on, is necessary. These stakeholders are important and capable of influencing the success/failure of the programme (Byrd *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive study that will consider relevant stakeholders in the management of a community-based eco-tourism project to determine the level of community readiness and willingness to participate. The need to do this constitutes the focus of this study. Thus, this research studied elements of community readiness in considering the place of Community-based Eco-tourism for sustainable tourism development of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove in Ondo State. The study focuses on community readiness and willingness to participate in the groves management and provision of services. The choice of the grove is based on the rich cultural history and famed indigenous biodiversity of the area, which has led the Ondo State Government to list the site as one of its prime tourist destinations. As a destination that is still under-developed, Igbo Olodumare presents an opportunity to study a destination that can serve as a case study to investigate the challenges of community participation in destination management in the early stages of the Butler's destination life cycle. This research was guided by the following questions.

### **1.3 Research questions**

The research is designed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of ecotourism knowledge among residents of communities around Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove?
2. To what extent are residents willing to participate in Igbo Olodumare Ecotourism project?
3. To what extent does socio-demographic factors and knowledge of ecotourism potentials, account for willingness to participate?
4. What are the barriers to residents' participation in the development of Igbo Olodumare as a Community-based ecotourism destination?

### **1.4 Aim and objectives of the study**

This research aims to examine residents' participation in community-based ecotourism development in Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, Oke-Igbo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

The objectives of this work are to:

1. Assess the level of ecotourism knowledge among residents of communities around Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove;
2. Determine residents' willingness to participate in Igbo Olodumare Ecotourism project;
3. Assess the contributions of socio-demographic factors, and knowledge of ecotourism potentials in predicting willingness to participate in CbED;
4. Identify the inhibiting factors to residents' participation in the development of Igbo Olodumare as a Community-based ecotourism destination.

### **1.5 Justification of the study**

The sustainability of Community-based Ecotourism projects poses a challenge in Nigeria and beyond (Mearns, 2010). The Igbo Olodumare Community-based Ecotourism project is not an exemption. The fascinating story that brought Igbo Olodumare to the limelight has been translated to English and French, making it available to a wider audience (Smith, 2013). However, in spite of its popularity, there is a dearth of tourists visiting Igbo Olodumare, raising questions about its viability as a

tourist destination. Similarly, the flora and fauna that is the major resources that the project depends on, continues to dwindle. Meanwhile, Igbo Olodumare has emerged as a Sacred Natural site, protected by the Ondo State Government (Borokini, 2016).

In addition, there are attempts to develop this site and present it as a potential World Heritage Site, like Osun Osogbo. A study of in-situ conservation in Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove suggested that further promoting this site as a historical and cultural heritage site may enhance biodiversity conservation and tourist patronage in the area. (Onyekwelu and Olusola, 2014). Hence the need for research that can inform policymaking, to sustain the project. It is in this light that a study that looks into the preconditions for a Community-based Ecotourism Project is justified. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) established guidelines for Community-based Ecotourism Development in 2001 (Denman, 2001). Various theories such as the community readiness theory, stakeholders' theory (Freeman, 1984), and participation theory alongside WWF's guidelines, among others were reviewed in examining the suitability of the Community-based Eco-tourism approach, for sustainable development in the rural communities, around Igbo Olodumare in Ondo State. A combination of plans and policy analysis with comparative case studies (Bagul and Bahar, 2009) earlier used in Malaysia, was adopted for this study.

The outcome of this study will contribute great value to government officials in charge of policymaking in the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism as well as the Ondo State Ministry of Natural Resources, Lawmakers, Community leaders, Hospitality business owners in Ondo State and in other parts of Nigeria. It may inform legislation for the protection of Igbo Olodumare as a Natural Monument under category III of the International Union of the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classification as well as other existing proposals, such as the establishment of a film village and so on. Also, the findings from this study will be of benefit to researchers who are active within the field of Community-based eco-tourism as well as community development practitioners in general.

## **1.6 Scope of the study**

Community-based ecotourism studies range from the assessment of flora and fauna and their level of utilization/depletion to tourists' satisfaction, impacts on local communities livelihoods, well-being and so on. This study is a multi-disciplinary study



which reviewed various issues ranging from biodiversity conservation to indigenous African belief systems to sustainable socio-economic development through the development and promotion of rural community-based ecotourism, all inspired by the literary work of D.O Fagunwa, originally written in the indigenous Yoruba language and reflecting Yoruba cosmology.

The study however focused on the assessment of local community residents' relationship with the Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, the level of community participation in its development as a tourist site, their willingness to participate and their socio-economic characteristics. The study area comprises of four communities in Okeigbo district of Ile-Oluji Okeigbo LGA in Ondo State where four communities were selected for in-depth study. The stakeholders covered in the public sector include the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism as well as the National Museums and Monuments Commission while the private sector stakeholders included the Igbo Olodumare Development Association, the Oke-Igbo Tourism Committee, Local Chiefs and Members of their council.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## **2.1 Review of conceptual issues**

### **2.1.1 The concept of community-based ecotourism**

Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) is a term used to refer to ecotourism initiatives that prioritize environmental conservation, involve high levels of local control and participation, and generate substantial benefits for the host community (WWF, 2001). CBE ventures have been described as “enterprises that are owned and managed by the community” (Sproule 1996 in Mearns, 2010). CBE has developed from the idea of community-based natural resources management (CBNRM), which has its origins in the Southern African region. There, natural resources managers came to the realization that residents of protected areas or those living nearby would only conserve and use their resources sustainably if they could gain benefits from them (Mearns, 2010).

The Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe is known to have been the foundation for the CBNRM concept. Notable is the fact that the CAMPFIRE was developed in Zimbabwe to grant rural people rights that are related to management access to benefits-sharing and the limitation of natural resource exploitation which is critical for sustainable resource management and environmental conservation (Child *et al.*, 1997). Although CBNRM was first focused on the use of wildlife, it swiftly expanded to include other resources, including products from the grasslands, marine resources, conservation of natural resources, craft manufacturing, resource sustainability, and community-based tourism (Mearns, 2010).

This idea of community-based ecotourism stands out from other ecotourism endeavours that are mostly or even entirely organized and managed by foreign operators and provide limited benefits to the local population (Scheyvens, 1999). Community-based ecotourism refers more specifically to tourism activities or businesses related to tourism that involve local communities; that are designed to commodify cultural and natural attractions and resources and operate on their grounds (Nelson, 2004). Clearly, the emphasis in Community Based Ecotourism lies in residents; their participation or involvement in planning, implementation and benefits sharing. The residents make up the community which hosts the ecotourism project.

Community can be defined as a collection of people who perform collective action and make collective choices, either because they are from a certain geographic area, share common traits or interests, or both (Mearns, 2010). Himberg (2011) identified CBE as

a method of bringing financial benefits to families while also preserving indigenous knowledge on how to use forests and recovering vanishing cultural traditions hence, recommending CBE as a source of alternative livelihood needed among the Taita Hills' rural population in Kenya. Himberg's recommendations may have as well been targeted at the residents of rural communities in Ondo State such as Igbo Olodumare.

Surely, Community-based eco-tourism is an option for rural development (Foucat, 2002) that is worth considering across Nigeria. However, a top-down approach to development with little involvement from the community cannot serve the entire community but instead leads to imbalances and uneven development (Leksakundilok, 2004). Therefore, it is important to encourage the participation or involvement of residents right from the planning stages. It is best in fact if, the CBE project started as an initiative of the community rather than as a government initiative that local communities are then required to buy into. This need for community involvement might have informed the suggestions of a Kenyan tourist who visited Igbo Olodumare and reiterated the earlier recommendations from Himberg (2011), suggesting that the option to earn some well-deserved Naira from persons visiting the forest should be provided to the neighbourhood surrounding the Igbo-Olodumare (Kolawole, 2011).

Such remarks may have helped shape the development of Igbo Olodumare as a CBE project, though the participation of community residents in planning, implementation and benefits sharing, remains suspect. It is noteworthy however that Igbo Olodumare can be said to have been initiated by the late indigenous language novelist, educator and explorer, Chief. D.O Fagunwa who is regarded as its founder. Not only are community involvement and benefit sharing emphasized in community-based ecotourism, but both are also principles of ecotourism. However, there is a greater emphasis on community residents in CBE. Ecotourism ordinarily thrives in parks and protected areas that usually come directly under the control of government thereby giving little room to community participation. Therefore, communities outside the parks and protected areas resort to promoting primarily their own cultural resources. Consequently, these practical changes have led to the emergence of the concept of Community-based Ecotourism which is being popularised and encouraged for sustainable development, especially in poor, rural areas.

### **2.1.2 The nature of ecotourism**

Ecotourism has been described as responsible visits to natural regions that protect the environment, maintain locals' quality of life, and entail explanation and education (TIES, 2015). Originally, the word "eco-tourism" was used to refer to a tourism concept that emphasized the need for tourism to be developed in a way that minimized environmental harm while ensuring that host communities received the maximum amount of economic and cultural benefits (Cook *et al.*, 2010). Since 1990, Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), development experts, and academics have developed and studied ecotourism as a strategy for sustainable development in addition to its definition as a type of nature-based tourism (Wood, 2002).

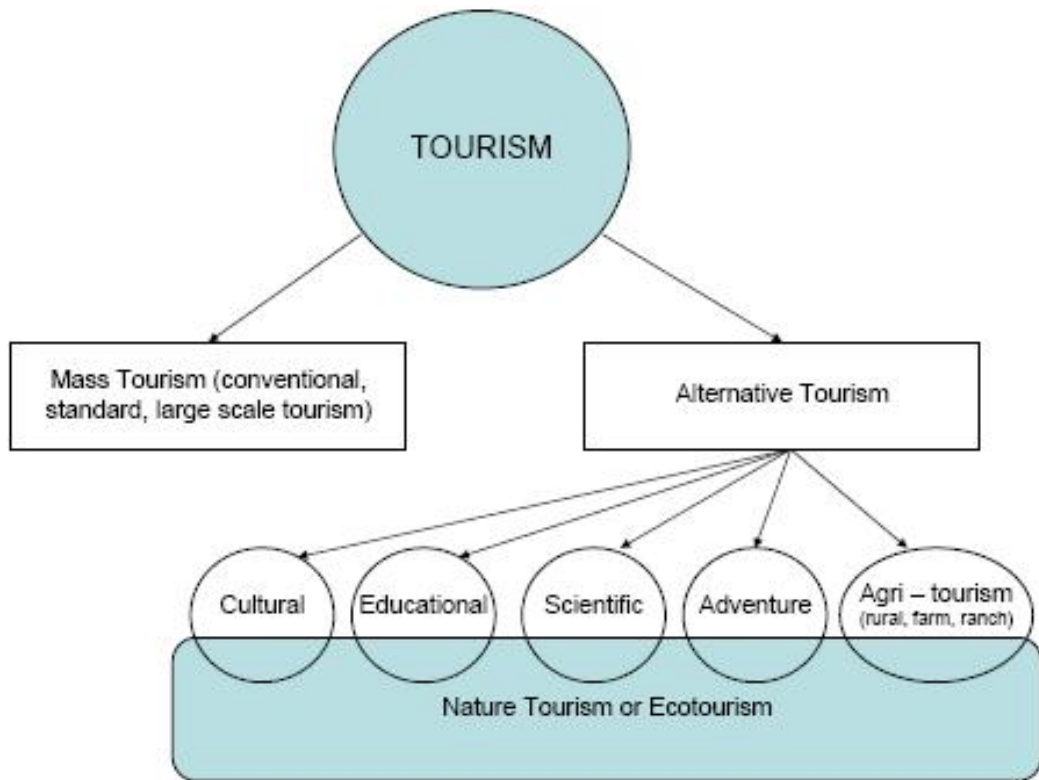
Ecotourism was birthed by increasing concerns for the environment as people became aware of the negative environmental impacts of the industrial revolution. Since the 1960s, through the 1970s and 1980s, increasing concerns for the environment led to the birth of eco-tourism. Eco-tourism is a major form of tourism that is fast becoming predominant in the tourism industry. It has been described as a type of tourism that has been established in natural areas to promote knowledge and appreciation of the environment and local culture. This type of tourism also promotes active participation and conservation, which benefits the community (Dragulanescu and Drutu, 2012).

Since Mexican architect, Hector Ceballos Lascurian first coined the term in 1981; various authors have defined eco-tourism in different ways. His first definition of eco-tourism appeared in 1987 in a paper titled "the future of ecoturismo". Ecotourism refers to a form of nature-based tourism that focuses on educating and interpreting the natural environment while ensuring that it is managed in an ecologically sustainable manner. Ecotourism describes visits to national parks and other natural areas with the goal of seeing and appreciating the local wildlife, vegetation, and indigenous traditions (Boo, 1990). Since 1991, Ecotourism has been described in terms of travelling to natural regions with the intention of learning about the history and culture of the area; taking care not to damage the ecosystem; creating of economic opportunities that benefit residents while preserving natural resources (Wood, 2002).

Travelling to relatively untouched or unpolluted natural places with the aim of observing, appreciating, and enjoying the environment, its untamed plants and animals, as well as any cultural features (past and present) found there is referred to as

ecotourism (Ceballos-Lascurian, 1993). Ecotourism therefore involves responsible travel to natural places that enhance community welfare and preserves the environment (Lindberg and Hawkins, 1993). Ecotourism has been recommended as a means of community development (Garraway, 2008). Ecotourism helps local communities grow by providing them with a more sustainable alternate source of revenue (Kiper, 2013). One of the many things that these definitions have in common is a reference to local people, that is community residents and their culture.

Ecotourism has thus evolved as a more ecologically friendly form of tourism (Fig 2.1). Therefore, ecotourism is also known as nature tourism, encompassing healthier alternatives to mass tourism such as cultural tourism, educational tourism, scientific tourism, adventure tourism, agricultural tourism, rural tourism, farm tourism, ranch tourism, and so on.



**Figure 2.1: Forms of Tourism.** (Source: Mieczkowski, Z. 1995. *Environmental issues of tourism and recreation*. Lanham: University Press of America.)

In 1990, The International Ecotourism Society identified a few principles of ecotourism and directed that all ecotourism should apply them in all their activities (TIES, 2015). The aforementioned principles of ecotourism aim to reduce the negative impacts of ecotourism, increase respect for and awareness of cultures and the environment, create enjoyable experiences for guests and hosts alike, deliver immediate financial gains for conservation, deliver financial gains and community empowerment, increase awareness of the political, environmental, and social environments in the host countries.

A closer look at these principles of ecotourism shows that ultimately, they are all related to the welfare of community residents. Negative impacts that need to be minimized include social, economic, and ecological impacts that affect the livelihoods of community residents.

The environmental and cultural awareness and respect that needs to be built is for the benefit of community residents who are sometimes oblivious to the uniqueness of their own environment/culture. Financial benefits for conservation and empowerment of local people are alternative livelihood sources for community residents. Sensitivity to political, environmental, and social climate fosters international cooperation in solving local problems faced by community residents. All of these again reiterates the need for the involvement of community residents in planning, implementation and benefits sharing, thereby ensuring harmony with the local environment and the local culture.

### **2.1.3 Harmony with the local environment and the local culture**

The principle of harmonization between the local environment/culture and the tourism business is regarded as the central guiding principle of ecotourism. For a tourism project to be regarded as ecotourism, it should be blended with or assimilated into the environment and local culture of the area (Cook *et al.*, 2010). There shouldn't be any shocking conflicts between the tourism sector and the host community. Tourism should blend seamlessly with local culture and practice what it teaches. Matching architecture to existing local structures and using natural vegetation of the area for grounds landscaping are strategies for blurring the boundaries between the community and ecotourism projects. This makes Community-based Ecotourism especially appealing and imperative as a pathway to holistic development since greater inclusion

of community residents can aid the blurring and blending of ecotourism initiatives into the local cultures and natural ecosystems while leading to improved livelihoods.

It is remarkable that the main basis for the emergence of eco-tourism as a preferred form of tourism is the need to conserve the environment, particularly its biological diversity while.

#### **2.1.4 Biodiversity conservation in Nigeria**

Biodiversity encompasses the variability of all creatures from all origins and the ecological systems they are a part of. This refers to diversity within and between species as well as within and between ecosystems (Emma-Okafor *et al.*, 2010). Emma-Okafor *et al.* (2010) identified three basic and hierarchically connected levels of biological structure in biodiversity. They include genetic diversity, which is the term used to describe the genetic variation among populations and individuals within a single species; species diversity, or the variety of species within an ecosystem and ecosystem diversity which refers to the range of ecosystems on earth and the diversity of habitat in each unit area.

A great diversity of primate species can be found throughout Nigeria, but Cross River State is particularly well-known as a primate hotspot. Some of the endemic species in Nigeria include: the Anambra waxbill (*Estrilda poliopareia*), the Ibadan malimbe (*Malimbus ibadanensis*), the Jos Plateau indigo-bird (*Vidua maryae*), and the Rock Fire-Finch (*Lagonostica sanguinodorsalis*). The white-throated monkey (*Cercopithecus erythrogaster*), the Cross River gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*), which are the most endangered gorilla subspecies on earth, are only available in a few protected areas in Cross-River State, Nigeria.

Nigeria is home to 148 animals and 146 plants that are listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species of species that are globally threatened. Of these, three animals and 15 plants are critically endangered worldwide, along with 26 animals and 18 plants that are considered endangered (Imarhiagbe & Egboduku, 2019). The loss of biodiversity at all scales is a result of both natural and man-made challenges, sociocultural issues, and direct and indirect effects of socioeconomic development. It is estimated that over the past 25 years, human activity has caused the loss of 43% of the forest ecosystem (Lewis *et al.*, 2015).



Ecological tourism however provides environmental education and interpretation which contributes to solving the aforementioned problems. With the Community-Based approach, it is even more effectively deployed. Ecotourism is, therefore, a means of biodiversity conservation which can be combined with other indigenous conservation methods to the benefit of local communities (Sardiana & Purnawan, 2015).

### **2.1.5 Indigenous conservation method**

The idea of conserving forests, wildlife and other natural resources in Nigeria was practised traditionally through the establishment and practice of stringent traditional conservation laws. These laws ensured the conservation of resources and effective management, ensuring that resources of forests and wildlife can replenish themselves and thus minimise the risk of extinction.

Some of the traditional conservation laws include laws of exclusion that prohibited entry into forests, lakes or rivers except at periods of severe scarcity and critical needs. There are also laws of selective extraction protecting certain species or prohibiting the extraction of certain species. There are laws for diversification of use through taboos, laws regulating exploitation by enforcing rites, laws communizing firing of land in preparation for a new farming season as well as laws protecting special species.

Igbo Olodumare was originally protected using indigenous conservation methods until Ondo State government through its Ministry of Culture and Tourism, listed it as a tourist attraction. The lack of a gazette as a protected area means that despite the involvement of the state government who has provided a curator and forest guard, Igbo Olodumare remains protected mainly by indigenous conservation methods. Indigenous conservation methods as a form of indigenous knowledge is not getting the attention it deserves. The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage as well as The Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) mechanism, both call for the protection of traditional institutions' indigenous knowledge (Borokini, 2016).

### **2.1.6 Capacity building and the sustainable development of communities**

Building community capacity is a prerequisite for development (Goodman *et al.*, 1998), hence it was described as the "essence of development" by Smith *et al.* (2001). The local community may operate and administer CBE in their region sustainably once their capacity for local development is built. They will then be able to do a better job at securing their economy, enhancing environmental preservation, and empowering themselves. In Thailand and elsewhere, many rural communities are applying the concept of ecotourism to the process of community development (Leksakundilok, 2004). CBE is a form of community development which however requires Community Capacity Building (Mohd Noh *et al.*, 2020).

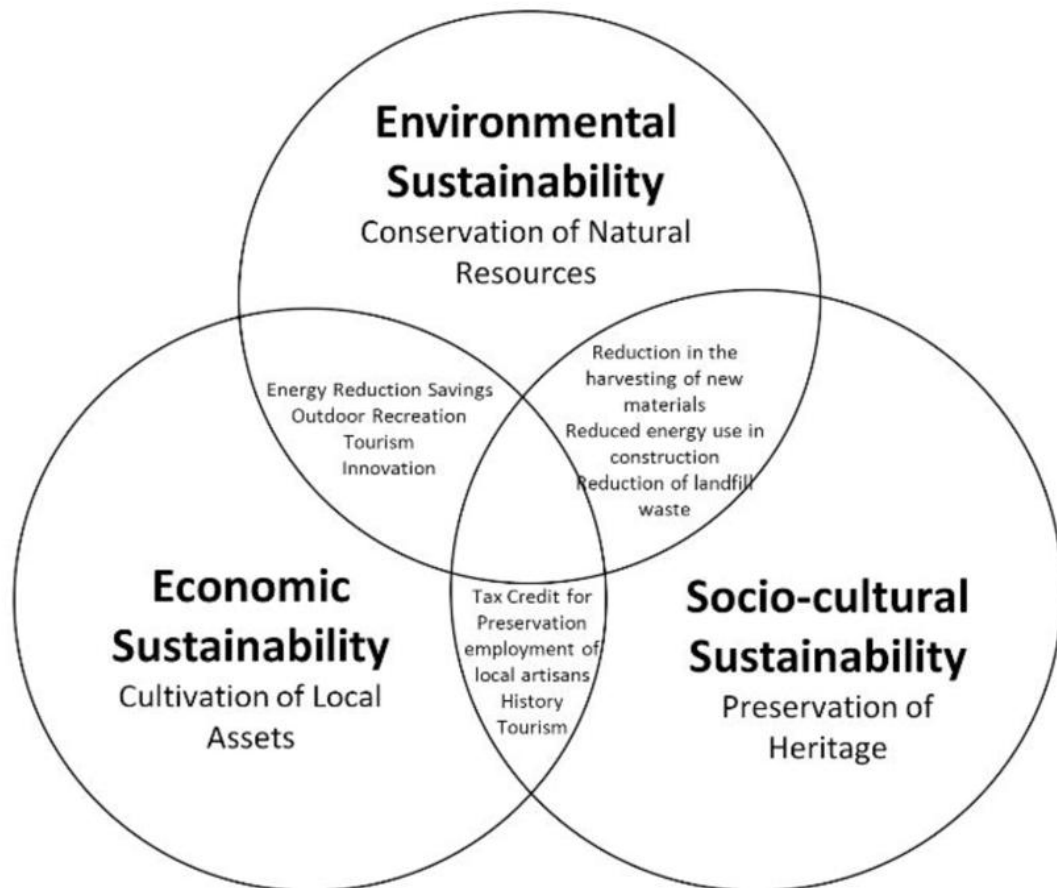
Community Capacity Building (CCB) empowers the neighbourhood by giving residents the resources and opportunities they need to grow. built using a more "bottom-up" approach to tourist development, with the ultimate objective being for the local community to run and control its own tourism enterprises that might profit them while assuring sustainable usage of the land by its rightful community. Hence, it is imperative for Community Capacity Building (CCB), to include the local community participation in CBE or any other form of community development. (Mohd Noh *et al.*, 2020). Development in general is a community-centric concept that therefore requires capacity building as criteria for its sustainability. Meanwhile, concerns for minimizing the negative impacts of development led to the emergence of the concept of sustainable development as an all-embracing term for development. In 1987, The Brundtland Commission defined Sustainable Development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This definition presents two essential concepts, the concept of needs and the concept of the limitation of the earth's ability to meet future needs if the present consumption rates go unchecked.

Studies on the interaction between society's needs and the limitation in the earth's ability to meet future needs if present consumption rates go unchecked have led unassailably to the introduction of the concept of sustainability as a core issue in development. Sustainable Development cuts across all areas of human endeavour. Three crucial principles/objectives of sustainability/sustainable development also

known as the Triple Bottom Line of Sustainability (See Fig 2.2) include environmental considerations, economic considerations and social/cultural considerations.

Sustainable Development attempts to ensure that all three aspects are kept in a harmonious relationship in order to ensure that resources remain available into an indefinite future.



**Figure 2.2: The Triple Bottom Line of Sustainability.** (Source: Goodland, R. 1995. The concept of environmental sustainability. *Annual review of ecology and systematics* 26.1: 1-24.)

The ecological or environmental considerations of sustainability or sustainable development is premised on the limitation of the planet's ability to meet future needs if the present consumption rates go unchecked. The environmental consideration of sustainability seeks to ensure that flora and fauna as well as natural ecosystems remain intact in many parts of the earth in order to continue to support the needs of present and future generations. Biodiversity conservation is thus being given serious consideration alongside developmental efforts aimed at poverty alleviation. The industrial revolution in Europe and America changed the world (including Africa) rapidly in many ways to the extent that concerns began to rise about the consequences of man's exploitation of planetary resources. Resource depletion, climate change, and the extinction of rare species led to the advancement of modern conservation methods, the declaration of protected areas by legislation and the evolution of various protected area management practices.

However, conservation is not a modern practice. It had been part of traditional societies in Africa elsewhere, but the indigenous methods of conservation are different from modern biodiversity conservation methods. The socio-cultural considerations set out to ensure that local cultures and indigenous knowledge are not eroded in the process of development while the economic considerations take care of the financial viability of such developments with respect to income acquisition, earning foreign exchange, generation of employment opportunities, poverty alleviation and so on. When all three considerations are held out in balance relative to one another, sustainable development takes place.

However, the three considerations sometimes imply conflicting interests depending on how individuals, organizations or communities prioritize these considerations, therefore forming specific interests. It is important to understand each interest in itself and then to understand the linkages between the three. An understanding of the linkages between the three helps us to realize the interdependence that makes it necessary for individuals, organisations, communities and our entire society to prioritise all three considerations equally. Since the concept of Sustainable Development was introduced in 1987, by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED/the Brundtland Commission), there has been increasing awareness at local and international levels about issues of sustainability such that

policies have increasingly moved towards sustainable utilization of resources, culminating in the Sustainable Development agenda which was adopted in 2015 by the United Nations as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets for the period between 2015 and 2030. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) express the various goals of Sustainable Development (Fig 2.3) but some critics assert that the goals are too many, making it difficult for many locals to assimilate.

The SDGs are a replacement for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) that was adopted by the United Nations for the 15-year period since the year 2000. The various developmental needs of any community can be seen spread across the seventeen goals. Community Capacity Building can be seen as subsumed under Goal 4 on quality education. CCB is based on learning and environmental education which are very important aspects of Ecotourism generally, and Community Based Ecotourism specifically. In fact, Ecotourism can be defined by three core criteria: nature, learning and sustainability (Beaumont, 2010).



**Figure 2.3: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals**

(Source: United Nations, 2019. 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved Oct. 10, 2019, from

[https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wpcontent/uploads/2019/01/SDG\\_Guidelines\\_AUG\\_2019\\_Final.pdf](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wpcontent/uploads/2019/01/SDG_Guidelines_AUG_2019_Final.pdf) )

### **2.1.7 Environmental education: residents' awareness, knowledge, attitude, and participation**

At the UNESCO-UNEP Tbilisi intergovernmental conference on environmental education, it was recommended that environmental education (EE) should aim to promote a clear awareness of, and concern for the interconnection of economic, social, political, and ecological systems in urban and rural areas, to give everyone the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, values, and commitment necessary to safeguard and enhance the environment and to instil new environmental behaviour patterns in individuals, groups, and society at large.

Awareness, knowledge, attitude, skills, and participation were all recommended as education objectives, by the global conference on environmental education (EE) held in Tbilisi by UNESCO and UNEP.

**Awareness:** This refers to helping individuals and social groups become more conscious of and sensitive to the larger environment and the problems it is associated with. Applied to ecotourism, this consciousness of the larger environment and associated problems presents opportunities to solve such problems by creating corresponding tourism products. Several catalysts have historically been able to aid in turning local awareness of tourism into products through the strong connection between community solidarity and communal action (Mitchell and Reid, 2001). This will obviously require the right knowledge, attitude, skills as well as participation.

**Knowledge:** This is to assist individuals and social groupings in gaining a fundamental comprehension of the environment and the difficulties it causes. This can extend to a fair grasp of the concept of ecotourism as a way to resolve environmental issues that comes with economic and cultural benefits. environmental knowledge contains the understanding of knowledge of ecotourism through thought, experience, and the senses from self-directed and school learning (Fang *et al.*,2018).

**Attitude:** This is to encourage individuals and social groups to develop a set of environmental values, feelings of environmental concern, and the drive to actively engage in environmental conservation and improvement.

**Skills:** This is to help individuals and social groups develop the abilities to recognize and address environmental challenges.



**Participation:** This is to provide individuals and social groups with an opportunity to be actively involved in all aspects of the effort to solve environmental challenges. (UNESCO, 1978).

According to Madsen (1996), environmental awareness, knowledge, and commitment, are necessary to achieve environmental protection and restoration. Madsen underlined the need for the general public to understand environmental issues on a basic level. He placed emphasis on the idea that awareness is the ultimate motivator for knowledge. Being better aware of the facts on the state of the environment is necessary in order to recognize that there is an environmental crisis. A personal commitment to strive toward resolving environmental issues is required for this level of environmental awareness. By classifying awareness into three categories—basic belief in an environmental problem, factual and scientific knowledge, and a commitment to resolving environmental problems—he highlighted the importance of the awareness aspect.

#### **2.1.8 Limitations of ecotourism as a tool for sustainable development**

The limitations of ecotourism as a tool for the attainment of sustainable development are largely due to inadequacies in terms of the community approach, particularly in developing countries (Tran *et al.*, 2010). People rarely understand their rights in tourism planning and their obligations to the environment in Vietnam, and there is a dearth of a common information channel between local government, tourism businesses, and citizens. Because of this, the development of the enormously successful "ecotourism" locations has little to do with benefit-sharing with the local population, who are thought to be the key to sustainable development (Tran *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, there is need for further emphasis on Community Residents Participation in planning, implementation and benefits sharing.

#### **2.1.9 Community residents' participation**

Every community comprise of various stakeholders but in the final analysis, communities are made up of individual residents. The participation of community residents have been identified as a crucial element that can make or mar a Community Based Ecotourism project. Sometimes, communities become hostile, due to lack of involvement, misinformation and grievances related to benefits sharing.

A study in Ghana revealed that residents of a Monkey Sanctuary, faced growing number of difficulties, including dwindling options for employment, inadequate community involvement in ecotourism projects, a visitor center in poor condition, insufficient government support, and poor roads (Eshun and Tonto, 2014). These challenges are reminiscent of the state of Igbo Olodumare, calling to focus, the place of inadequate community involvement in relation to the other challenges.

Government support or lack of it for instance can sometimes be driven by politics. Over-reliance on government may also indicate poor readiness or poor awareness of CBE business models, on the part of community residents. A study conducted at the Takamanda National Park, Southwest Region, Cameroon found that communities would rather work with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in coming up with a cooperative management form, than with government (Ekwale, 2014). This is an alternative through which an active population of community residents can run a viable CBE project, with little or no input from the government.

#### **2.1.10 Local benefits and involvement of the local community**

Community involvement is a crucial factor in Community based Eco-tourism. Indeed, this is a defining factor. As seen in Chambok, Cambodia, Thailand, among other places, high-level involvement of the local community with considerable benefits accruing to the local community is a requirement for a project to be described as Community based Ecotourism Project. A comparative analysis of how locals perceive the impact of tourism in two communities in Thailand indicated that a higher level of local participation leads to more perceived positive impacts and may therefore be regarded as more sustainable (Van, 2013).

In Community-based Ecotourism, the local community has considerable input in the decision-making processes of the project. Among others, the study of the Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary in Ghana revealed that residents faced various challenges including fewer opportunities for livelihood, insufficient participation in ecotourism projects, a visitor centre in bad condition, insufficient government backing, the deplorable condition of the roads and so on, makes it imperative to seek better understanding (Eshun and Tonto, 2014).

### **2.1.11 Socio-economic benefits**

The need for the development of CBE destinations is partly informed by the socio-economic benefits. Surprisingly frequently, promoting tourism in underdeveloped nations is an effective strategy for reducing poverty through inclusive economic growth (Mitchell and Ashley, 2010). Over 100,000 individuals travelled overseas every hour, or 924 million tourists in 2008. These trips were initiated in 75 percent of high- or upper-middle-income nations. 40% of these trips ended up in destinations in poor nations. Therefore, it has been found that foreign tourists greatly outperform development organizations in terms of spending money in underdeveloped nations (Mitchell and Ashley, 2010).

Tourist spending in poor nations reached US\$295 billion in 2007, almost three times the amount provided in official development assistance. Due to this, tourism has been referred to as the largest voluntary transfer of wealth from rich to poor people ever. Researchers have been captivated by the question of how this massive influx of wealthy people will affect developing nations ever before mainstream tourism began in the 1970s. (Mitchell and Ashley, 2010). In 2006, Francesco Frangialli, Secretary General of the World Tourism Organisation identified tourism potentials as a poverty alleviation tool (NTDC, 2006).

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the difference in the income generation in the industry has progressed over the years from 149 million in 2004 (registration and other charges from the hospitality sector) to 313 million in 2009 (generated by company tax). In 2011, the industry contributed 3.3% of the GDP (232.2 billion), promising a 6.5% workforce by 2022. For this to be a reality, Nigerian tourism potentials have to be harnessed which would increase the GDP, generate more employment and assist the economic and social sphere of Nigeria (Tunde, 2012). Internationally, Ethiopia and The Gambia are both small countries, but tourism is a significant economic driver in both countries, accounting for 29.8% and 33.1% of their total exports, respectively (Mitchell and Ashley, 2010). Tourism can aid poverty alleviation through the following six avenues: Direct employment; tourism-related businesses set up by the poor; infrastructural development; voluntary donations by tourists; spending tourism-related tax returns on poverty eradication programs;

international exchange and exposure. With proper planning, coordination and management of our vast cultural, ecological and historical resources, tourism can readily take over from oil as the main source of revenue, in the coming years. Ecotourism is the preferred tourism option for sustainable development and low impact on the natural environment.

### **Financing a community-based ecotourism project**

In order to improve the socioeconomic indicators for natural resource management, communities that practice good resource management should be rewarded with more secure access to resources and benefits that reflect the quality of their management. (IFAD, 2006). To facilitate the initial launch of CBE projects, financial help in the form of donor cash is required. This may require that local promoters in the host communities have fundraising skills alongside marketing and story-telling skills that will help them captivate an audience of target donors.

#### **2.1.12 Eco-village development**

One of the potential approaches that may be considered in planning towards the sustainable development of Igbo Olodumare is Eco-village development. This is in furtherance of D.O Fagunwa's recognition of the human-nature interdependence, as reflected in his works (Coker, 2021). In his essay on "Redefining Community in the Eco-village", Kasper (2008) described the eco-village in terms of being a human-scale settlement (typically more than fifty and less than five hundred people, with some exceptions) that is meant to be fully functional, offering food, manufacturing, leisure, social opportunities, and commerce, with the objective of harmonizing human activities with the environment in a way that promotes healthy human development in physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual ways (Bang, 2005).

Jackson (2004) suggests, that the ideal eco-village does not exist. It is a work in progress and a key element of the new paradigm, where there is still much to discover. Therefore, even if an eco-village might not fit the bill for this definition, its main goals are usually determined by this definition. Eco-villages do not aim to be totally self-sufficient, nor are they intended to be remote communities of escape, even though some level of energy and resource independence is ideal. The eco-village movement has been slowly working toward the idea that eco-villages should instead be connected

in networks of social, economic, and political ties. In 1995, 25 community representatives from around the world founded the Global Eco-Village Network (GEN), which gave the idea of a permanent organizational home. Especially in rural villages where hotel accommodation may not be readily available, the eco-village concept can form a very solid framework for the anchorage of homes stay programs which can be a major component of socio-economic benefits to local communities as well as social and cultural exchanges between hosts and guests. Homestay programs are very popular in Malaysia, allowing guests to participate in the host's daily activities. (Razzaq *et al.*, 2011).

### **2.1.13 Poverty alleviation through community-based ecotourism**

The very first goal of the UN-SDGs is to “End Poverty”. Tourism is the practice of individuals going to, staying in, or visiting locations outside of their normal environs for pleasure, work, or other reasons (IATA, 2015). The number of international tourists has been on a steady growth, since 2001 (Table 2.3). Meanwhile, International Tourists in recent years, spend over one trillion dollars annually in a foreign destination. In 46 of the 49 poorest nations on the planet, tourism already accounts for the majority of foreign exchange earnings. (IATA, 2015). Therefore, tourism turns out to be one of the veritable means, by which poor countries are growing their economies and getting improved livelihoods for their citizens.

A review of tourism in developing countries suggests that international tourism will continue indefinitely, within the framework of a free market economics (Harrison, 2015).

**Table 2.1: World International Tourist Arrivals, 2001 TO 2014.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of International Tourist Arrivals</b>	<b>Approximate change over previous year</b>
2001	682 million	
2002	702 million	+ 2.9%
2003	691 million	-1.6% (tourism slowed down due to SARS epidemic which decreased travel)
2004	763 million	+10.4%
2005	802 million	+5.1%
2006	847 million	+5.6%
2007	901 million	+6.4%
2008	920 million	+2.1%
2009	880 million	4.3% (tourism slowed down due to fear of the H1N1 outbreak and global economic downturn)
2010	938 million	+6.5%
2011	980 million	+4.4%
2013	1087 million	+5.0%
2014	1138 million	+4.5%

**Source: UNWTO, 2015**

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2015) projections, international tourist's arrivals will reach 1.6 billion by 2020, with over 1 billion tourist arrivals already in 2013 and 2014 (Table 2.1). UNWTO also assert tourism as a vehicle for poverty alleviation in developing countries (Manyara *et al.*, 2006). In 2007 alone, tourists spent US\$295 billion in developing countries; this is almost three times the level of official development assistance. The world economic forum (WEF) report (Bolwell and Weinz, 2008), indicated that the tourism industry creates most new jobs in developing countries.

Internationally, Ethiopia and The Gambia are both small countries, but tourism is a significant economic driver, accounting for respectively 29.8% and 33.1% of total exports (Mitchell and Ashley, 2010). There are six fundamental channels through which pro-poor tourism can be achieved and they include: Direct Employment; Tourism related businesses set up by the poor; Infrastructural Development; Voluntary contributions by tourists; Tourism tax spending; International exchanges, information and so on.

#### **2.1.14 The six avenues for poverty alleviation through community-based ecotourism**

Community-based ecotourism can lead to poverty alleviation through a series of avenues such as direct employment, tourism-related businesses set up by the poor, infrastructural development, voluntary contributions by tourists, tourism tax spending and international exchanges of information and exposure.

Travel and tourism are human-resource intensive due to the service nature of the industry (Bolwell and Weinz, 2008). The Tourism industry and tourism-related businesses create employment opportunities for poor people in the various fields, sectors and tourist attractions ranging from ecological to cultural sites as well as tourist services such as hotels and transport and so on. Most poor people are in the unskilled labour category and can get menial jobs as labourers and so on, in and around a tourist destination. However, it will be much better if they are trained in specialized skills that can increase their earning power as they provide needed services in the tourism industry. Some of such skills could include those of tour-guiding and so on.

Poor people should be encouraged, trained and empowered to set up businesses that can provide useful services and interesting shows, exhibitions, making of crafts and

souvenirs and so on, for tourists. Businesses can range from cultural troupes to transportation and hospitality or related services. Agricultural tourism can also be exploited as most rural poor people are farmers.

Tourism requires and demands a lot of infrastructure being put in place. It therefore serves as an incentive for infrastructural development as can be seen in Cross River State where the government has invested heavily in infrastructures in order to promote the state's tourism potential. Other states in Nigeria have followed suit and from Uyo to Lagos, flower gardens have replaced refuse dumps in roundabouts and along roadsides and sweepers are busy sweeping daily. This is a positive development that is related to tourism and has created employment for gardeners, florists and sweepers. Other tourism-motivated infrastructures that can benefit the poor include good roads, railways, waterways, power, hotels and guest houses, restaurants, potable water and so on.

Tourists can be encouraged to support specific projects in the localities they visit. These projects can be tourism development projects that will benefit the poor or direct poverty alleviation programs. Contributions can be in the form of cash or kind. It can be the donation of sundry items or even the rendering of free services.

Tourism-related tax earnings can be a very helpful source of helping the poor. This can be done by investing such earnings into poverty alleviation programs, rural infrastructural development and promoting pro-poor tourism.

Interaction with local and foreign tourists will expose poor people to a world of fresh ideas and possibilities that may not otherwise have occurred to them. They may gain from this exposure, some useful information, meet some potential clients/helpers and establish some beneficial contact/connection.

#### **2.1.15 The seven steps: UNWTO ST-EP recommendations and projects**

United Nations World Tourism Organization came up with a program called Sustainable Tourism Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) (Leijzer, 2007). This program was designed to promote pro-poor tourism that is, tourism practices that will lead to direct income for the poor. ST-EP came up with seven recommendations which are similar to the six avenues earlier discussed and they are highlighted below:

1. Employment of the poor in tourism enterprises: This involves
  - i. giving preference to local candidates,
  - ii. Providing relevant skills training



- iii. Ensuring compatibility of tourism employment with other livelihood and family commitments(part-time work)
  - iv. Considering possibilities for additional in-kind remuneration ST-EP example: Maasai Guide school Amboseli – Kenya
2. Provision of goods and services to the tourism businesses by poor people. This involves:
    - i. Strengthening the capacity of the suppliers ( being poor people) to develop their capacity for better production quality.
    - ii. Improving information on locally available products
    - iii. Agreeing on fair prices and contracts; not misusing the purchasing power of large enterprises ST-EP example: Seminar with hotelkeepers association Colombia; Business linkages with Crowne Plaza, Nicaragua
  3. Direct sales of goods and services to visitors by the poor. This involves:
    - i. Strengthening the capacity of the producers to improve quality and develop new products
    - ii. Creating opportunities for the poor to present their products to tourists
    - iii. Providing information to tourists about goods and services sold by poor producers ST-EP example: Health protection for female artisans in Djenné-Mali
  4. The founding and running of tourism enterprises by the poor. This involves:
    - i. Finding appropriate sources of finance (micro-fin.)
    - ii. Providing business development services to enterprises
    - iii. Encouraging women to establish businesses
    - iv. Providing market information to enterprises ST-EP example: Community-based ecotourism lodge in Anjozorobe, Madagascar; Cultural Tourism Enhancement and Diversification Programme, Tanzania
  5. Tax or levy on tourism income or profits with proceeds benefiting the poor. This involves:
    - i. Considering the possibility of linking tourism-related taxation to poverty reduction programs

- ii. Encouraging local programmes to generate revenues for poverty-related projects through fees, levies and so on.
  - iii. Transparency and consultation in the development of new programmes that involves taxation. ST-EP Example: Konso district visitor fee Ethiopia
6. Voluntary donation and support by tourists as well as by tourism enterprises. This involves:
- i. Cooperating with NGOs to start beneficiary programmes and then promoting them to operators.
  - ii. Providing better information to visitors about the possibilities to support development projects
  - iii. Explaining and showing clearly to visitors the way by which their contribution is used.
- ST-EP Example: Konso district donation mechanism
7. Investment in infrastructure stimulated by tourism also benefits the poor in the locality. This involves:
- i. Getting communities to participate in tourism planning.
  - ii. Getting benefits to the community through planning and regulations
  - iii. Putting tourism into consideration as part of infrastructure development plans, nationally and locally.
- ST-EP example: Kitengela Bridge Kenya.

### **2.1.16 Pro-poor but non-mass tourism in Nigeria**

Community-based ecotourism (CBET), which is founded on the idea that biodiversity must generate economic advantages, especially for locals, must pay for itself, has grown in popularity as a method for biodiversity conservation (Kiss, 2004). Pro-poor tourism strategies increase economic benefits, enhance non-financial livelihood impacts and enhance participation and partnerships (Anwar, 2012).

The use of CBT as a technique for pro-poor growth development is growing in popularity. There are currently numerous CBT networks in the Asia Pacific region, including the Thailand Community-Based Tourism Institute (CBT-i) and the Cambodia Community-Based Ecotourism Network (CCBEN). These networks serve as mechanisms for self-help and the exchange of expertise and knowledge, and they often receive financial support from international donor organizations. Nevertheless, many local and provincial government bodies lack a comprehensive understanding of the necessary steps for a community to harness tourism as a means of achieving economic, social, and psychological empowerment (Nair and Hamzah, 2015).

**Table 2.2: Types of pro-poor tourism strategies**

<b>Increase economic benefits</b>	<b>Enhance non-financial livelihood impacts</b>	<b>Enhance participation and partnership</b>
1. Increase local incomes and employment.	1. Training and capacity building	1. Improve the policy and planning environment.
2. Increase local business opportunities.	2. Reduce environmental effects.	2. Enhance the poor's participation in decision-making.
3. Establish sources of group income such as fees and revenue shares.	3. Consider divergent uses of natural resources.	3. Establish pro-poor collaborations with the commercial sector.
	4. Enhance social and cultural effects	4. Expand information and communication flows

**Source: Adapted from Anwar (2012)**

Tourism patronage in rural destinations such as Igbo Olodumare for instance is very low. Yet the six avenues as well as the seven ST-EPs require a certain minimal level of tourists for them to be effective yet mass tourism is to be avoided due to its unsustainability as a result of the tendency to put excessive pressure on resources. If poor locals are trained and set up tourism-related businesses, they can only benefit from this when there are customers that is, tourists to patronize them. Even employment will be minimal in the tourism industry unless there is a reasonable volume of tourists to serve. Mass tourism on the other hand is known to lead to ecological and sustainability challenges. Hence while it is necessary to boost tourist volume, it is also necessary to bear in mind the carrying capacity of respective communities and their resources. In order to boost tourist volume, niche marketing strategies need to be employed. Marketing should focus on domestic tourists, diaspora tourists, African neighbours and African Americans.

There is an urgent need to encourage local tourism in Nigeria. The ecological and cultural diversity of Nigeria already gives us a rare advantage. There is enough incentive to visit other parts of the country which offer a different scenery, culture and ecology. Besides, there are already sufficient local travellers. However, these travellers travel mainly for business and such purposes. They do not usually take time out to tour the states they visit. This is where marketing comes in. Similarly, there is a lot of seasonal movement from Lagos to the East every Christmas. The visits have been restricted to family meetings, Ibo men should be encouraged by marketers and by relevant government agencies to tour local tourist destinations each time they go home on Christmas holidays. The same goes for other parts of Nigeria including the people of Ondo State who should similarly be encouraged to visit Igbo Olodumare amongst other destinations. This can be done through massive promotions and campaigns such as the extension of the existing Made in Nigeria campaign to tourism products.

Nigerians in Diaspora are a huge potential tourist market that can be explored. Many of them are not familiar with their homeland and are curious; they want to know more about their home country. Some of them also are already in the habit of coming to Nigeria for family or business-related purposes.

Nigeria is a well-respected country amongst black Africans, especially, West Africans. Our tourist potential can be marketed to them and many Africans from neighbouring

countries would eagerly come to Nigeria provided the tourism industry in Nigeria is well developed and security is assured.

African Americans seeking to reconnect with their roots can also be targeted. Slave route destinations can be developed and marketed for this purpose. Many African Americans are eager to come to Africa on a regular basis to take part in cultural festivals.

### **2.1.17 Slum, rural and community-based tourism**

Slum tourism is a growing kind of tourism with immense potential for poverty alleviation. Slum tourism directly targets slums and areas densely populated with poor people as tourist destinations with the aim of familiarizing them with the conditions of living in such areas and helping the inhabitants of such places. While there are poverty tours available all over the world, including in wealthy nations like the United States and the Netherlands, the tours that are most frequently mentioned are those that visit Rio de Janeiro's favelas, South Africa's shanty towns, and India's squatter settlements, particularly those in major cities like Mumbai.

Some of these trips have been running for the best part of two decades, usually quietly, without heavy promotion (Kendle, 2008). A distinctive feature is that 80 percent of the after tax profit made from these Dharavi tours are donated to local NGOs. This type of tourism however is difficult to promote as many countries will prefer to deny the level of poverty in their slums. Some may even want to pretend as if such places do not even exist. The terms community-based tourism (CBT) and rural tourism are similar in that they both refer to family- or individually run businesses that are coordinated to some extent in order to benefit the community (Zielinski *et al.*, 2020).

### **2.1.18 Socio-cultural considerations: tradition, governance, and the political environment**

#### ***Social capital***

The term "social capital" refers to the collective value of existing or potential resources that arise from a stable network of formalized relationships characterized by mutual familiarity and acknowledgement (Wiesinger, 2007). Wiesinger introduced the concept of a territorial approach to social capital, which was initially discussed by Rifkin (2001). According to Rifkin, geography is the foundation of genuine culture, as it is the domain where intimacy occurs and where social trust and true feelings of empathy can be established (Wiesinger, 2007). Although social capital is not the only factor in effective regional development, it is crucial for understanding non-economic patterns. A community's social capital will grow because of a gathering to share a cultural event. There are numerous ways for tourists to improve social and cultural capital. Encouragement of pride in one's own culture, encouragement of the preservation of culture and cultural artefacts, encouragement of the development of traditional skills and forms of expression, and enhancement of a community's sense of identity are a few of these. Therefore, tourism both uses and helps create culture and cultures (Macbeth *et al.*, 2004).

Social capital cannot flourish in the absence of institutional support. Policies must enhance trust between local players by fostering cooperation and offering learning opportunities, such as through leader initiatives. However, policies can also damage social capital's foundation. (Wiesinger, 2007).

While small communities have a tendency to embrace their members and help those in need, their strong relationships also serve as contributory factors for social exclusion of individuals who find themselves incapable of conformity, to the local community's social norms. Young individuals with unconventional lives, people who hold beliefs that differ from those of the majority, and people who are not active participants in certain local organizations such as religious congregations may encounter the negative aspects of their community (Wiesinger, 2007). Religious organisations have thus demonstrated the full extent to which social bonds can be cultivated. Community based tourism promoters can borrow a leaf from this as they cultivate social bonds for the tourism initiatives in their localities. Often, they may find the need to leverage existing

organisations, perhaps even religious ones which they may find a way to link with the tourist destination.

The concept of a destination depends on how visitors perceive and interprets a location. It has been described as the totality or collection of items, services, natural features, and man-made components that draw visitors to a particular location, or as mashups of separately produced tourist amenities and services and a wide array of public goods (such as the landscape, seascape, sociocultural environment, and so on) that share some characteristics like attractions, accessibility, amusement, and so on. (Buhaliss, 2000; Tortora *et al*, 2014).

Thus, a location only becomes a destination when there is an interaction between the location, the offer, and the demand, in a kind of triangulation, where a location becomes a destination on the basis of goal-oriented strategies and organisational policies, on various primarily local and regional scales that capture and meet tourist expectations. (Tortora *et al*, 2014). Destinations in this context require a strong plan that can create a framework for all parties concerned. Competitiveness is these frameworks' primary strategic objective. Planning and development activities are governed by the political framework that governs a destination and is first and foremost pushed by the public sector. (Tortora *et al*, 2014).

According to Crouch (2007), strategic policy-driven frameworks aid in ensuring the development of tourism. For this framework to be effective, it must understand and relate the identity of the destination and the image of the destination.

### ***Identity***

The local identity is the first key component of competitiveness and attractiveness. It is promoted through a powerful image that evokes emotions and feelings that can be converted into values the location offers as a tourist product (brand). It reflects a place's customs, history, as well as development over time. To design a powerful, distinctive to connect amenities with culture, maintain the destination's individuality, and provide a range of benefits that are rigorously entrenched inside the site, there are four primary components of destinations (benefits, personality, culture, and amenities). Each and every stakeholder must be included in the identity-building process to ensure that the destination's identity is coherent and distinct enough for each actor to use it as



the foundation for their work. High degrees of cooperation and synergy, better communication, and promotion strategies will be guaranteed if that occurs, releasing benefits to everyone involved.

### ***Image***

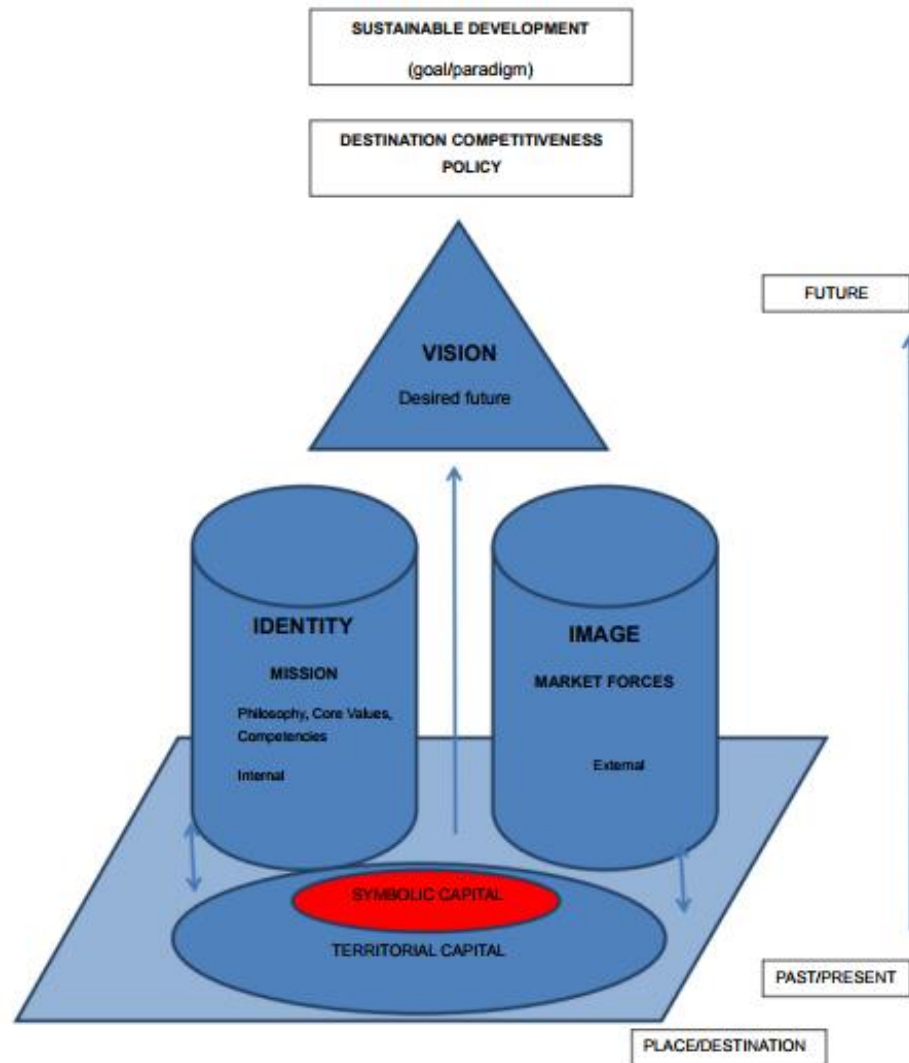
On the demand side, a place's reputation is the most crucial factor in deciding whether to travel there. The image of a place refers to the expectations and perceptions that a potential traveller has of it, whereas the image of a destination is the "lens" through which tourists view all of its attributes. The comparison of the destination's whole experience to expected expectations and perceptions will determine the level of consumer satisfaction. In other words, increasing consumer satisfaction also involves increasing the destination's perceived quality, or its attraction (Figure 2.4).

#### **2.1.19 Tourism development in Igbo Olodumare and the 5 A`s of a successful tourism destination**

Though tourism development at Igbo Olodumare is still in its early stages, the deplorable state of the 5 A`s namely; accommodation, accessibility, amenities, activities and attractions are of concern. This is directly tied to the poverty level of the adjoining communities themselves. Thus there is the potential for improvement of the livelihood of community residents while making provisions for visitors.

#### **2.1.20 Protected area establishment and the legal status of Igbo Olodumare**

A study of the effectiveness of Protected Areas in reducing habitat loss and population decline, (Geldman *et al*, 2013) concluded that available evidence suggests that PAs deliver positive outcomes, but there remains a limited evidence base and weak understanding of the conditions under which Protected Areas succeed or fail to deliver conservation outcomes. As per the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a protected area is a geographically distinct region that has been officially recognized, committed to, and managed in adherence to legal or other effective protocols to ensure the sustainable preservation of nature, including the associated ecosystem services and cultural values over the long-term.



**Figure 2.4: Relating territorial capital with place identity, image and vision.** (Source: Tortora, M., Randelli, F., and Romei, P. 2014. A conceptual framework for tourism transition areas based on territorial capital: A case study of Vinci. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality* 3.135.)

**Parks:** A park is a designated area of land or water that is well maintained and specifically devoted to the preservation of biological diversity, as well as to natural resources and their associated cultural assets. Parks started in Europe as hunting parks for royalty. With the advent of the industrial revolution, the old hunting parks evolved into government-owned parks, meant for conservation action. National parks are reserved lands.

**Sacred groves:** Sacred groves are protected areas that are managed by means of the spiritual beliefs of the local communities and they often represent the remnants of the peak vegetation of the area. (Singh and Kumar, 2020). Sacred groves are small patches of native forests and act as abodes of gods, protected by local communities. They are rich in biodiversity, and they are protected by local communities because of the deities perceived or believed to be linked with these forest patches (Deepa et. al., 2017).

A long-standing history of protecting land areas that are significant from a cultural and frequently religious perspective is represented by sacred groves. Several of these groves are isolated patches of forests in rural areas. Most of the time, locals are at the minimum, aware of these fragments, even if they are not actively engaged in their maintenance and conservation (Ormsby and Bhagwat, 2010).

Although sacred groves have been effective for conservation in the past, these forests are currently under a variety of threats, including pressure for various forest products, agriculture, and changes in cultures and religions. There are numerous ownership and management arrangements for sacred groves, therefore finding solutions on a case-by-case basis is required. To offer a paradigm for locally based natural resource management that is culturally appropriate, support for the tradition of sacred grove protection is required (Ormsby and Bhagwat, 2010).

In Nigeria and most parts of Africa and other indigenous cultures such as India, indigenous methods such as taboos and declaration of sacred forests/groves have been used historically as means of establishing parks and protected areas within the local context.

Igbo Olodumare, presently comes under the category of indigenous conservation methods as the local community revere the forest as being possessed by gods, thus a sacred grove. So far, there is no formal declaration of a protected area status through the use of state law even though the state ministry of culture and tourism is currently working towards the declaration of Igbo Olodumare as a Natural Monument which is

in the Category III of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). In the meantime, however, it is listed on the state website, various promotional pamphlets and reports, as a tourist attraction.

There various categories of parks recognized by the IUCN are:

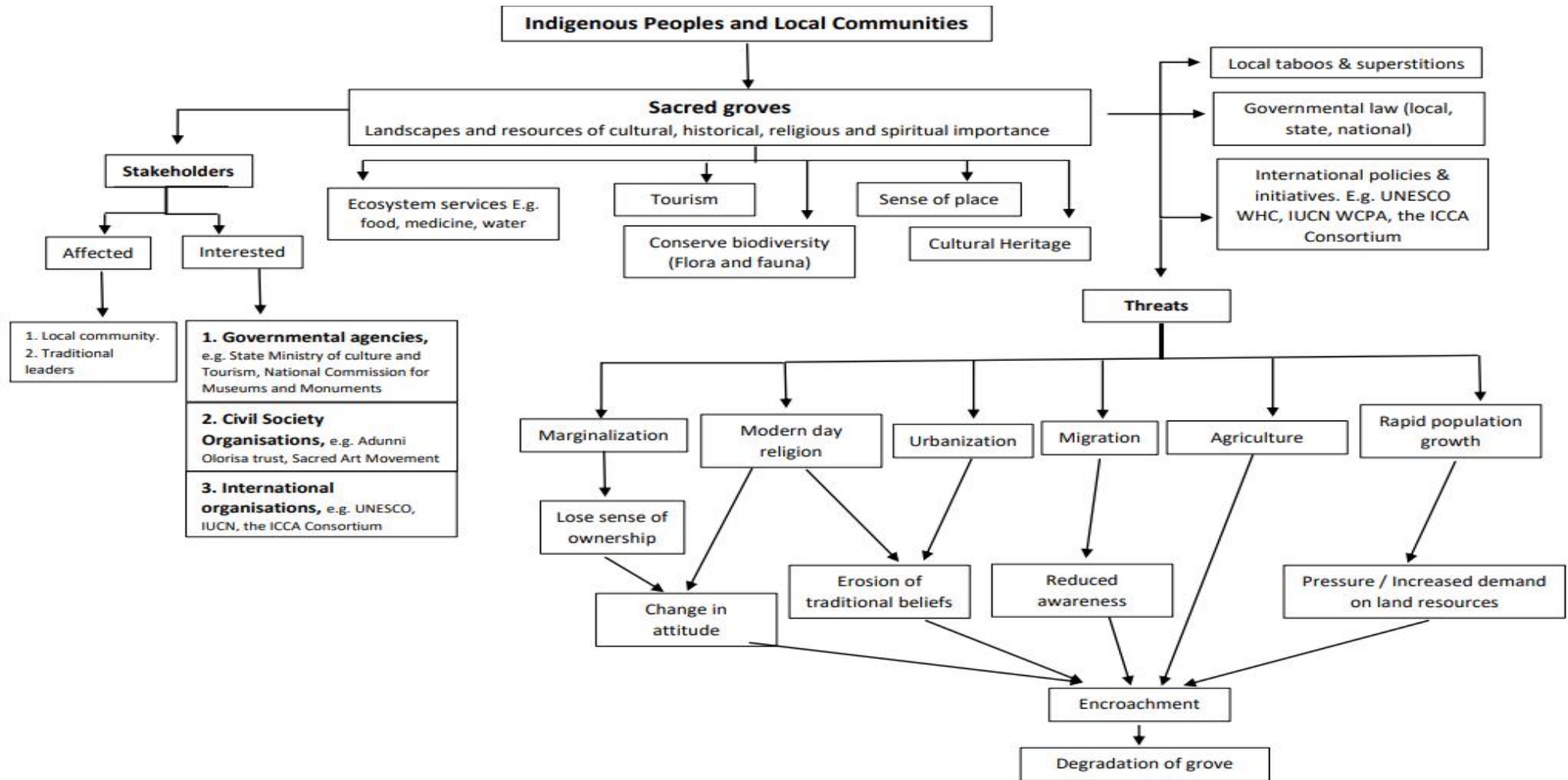
- **Category Ia:** Strict nature reserve/wilderness protection area set aside primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring is a region of land or water with certain remarkable or exemplary ecosystems, geological or physiological features and/or species.
- **Category Ib:** A wilderness area is a protected area that is primarily managed for wilderness protection. It is a sizable region of unaltered or lightly altered land or water that has been preserved in its natural state and is managed and protected to maintain that state.
- **Category II:** National park is a protected area and a natural region of land or water that is managed primarily for ecosystem conservation and enjoyment, designated to:
  - a) keep one or more ecosystems ecologically sound for the benefit of present and future generations.,
  - b) exclude any exploitation or activity at odds with the area's designation goals and
  - c) lay the foundation for opportunities in spirituality, science, education, leisure, and tourism, all of which must be in harmony with local culture and the environment.
- **Category III:** Natural monument: protected area with distinct natural or natural/cultural feature(s) of outstanding or unique worth due of its inherent rarity, representativeness, aesthetic qualities, or cultural significance. Protected area managed primarily for conservation of certain natural features.
- **Category IV:** Habitat/Species Management Area: Protected area managed primarily for conservation through management intervention is a land or water

area that is actively managed for conservation in order to maintain ecosystems that match the needs of particular species.

- **Category V: Protected Landscape/Seascape:** protected area of land, with suitable access to the coast or the sea, that is managed primarily for landscape/seascape conservation or enjoyment. Through time, human contact with nature has created this specific character, which has substantial aesthetic, ecological, and cultural value. To guarantee the preservation and development of a region, safeguarding this customary interaction becomes crucial.
- **Category VI: Managed Resource Protected Area:** A protected area that is mostly composed of unaltered natural systems and is maintained to ensure the long-term preservation and maintenance of biological variety as well as the sustainable provision of natural goods and services to meet community needs.

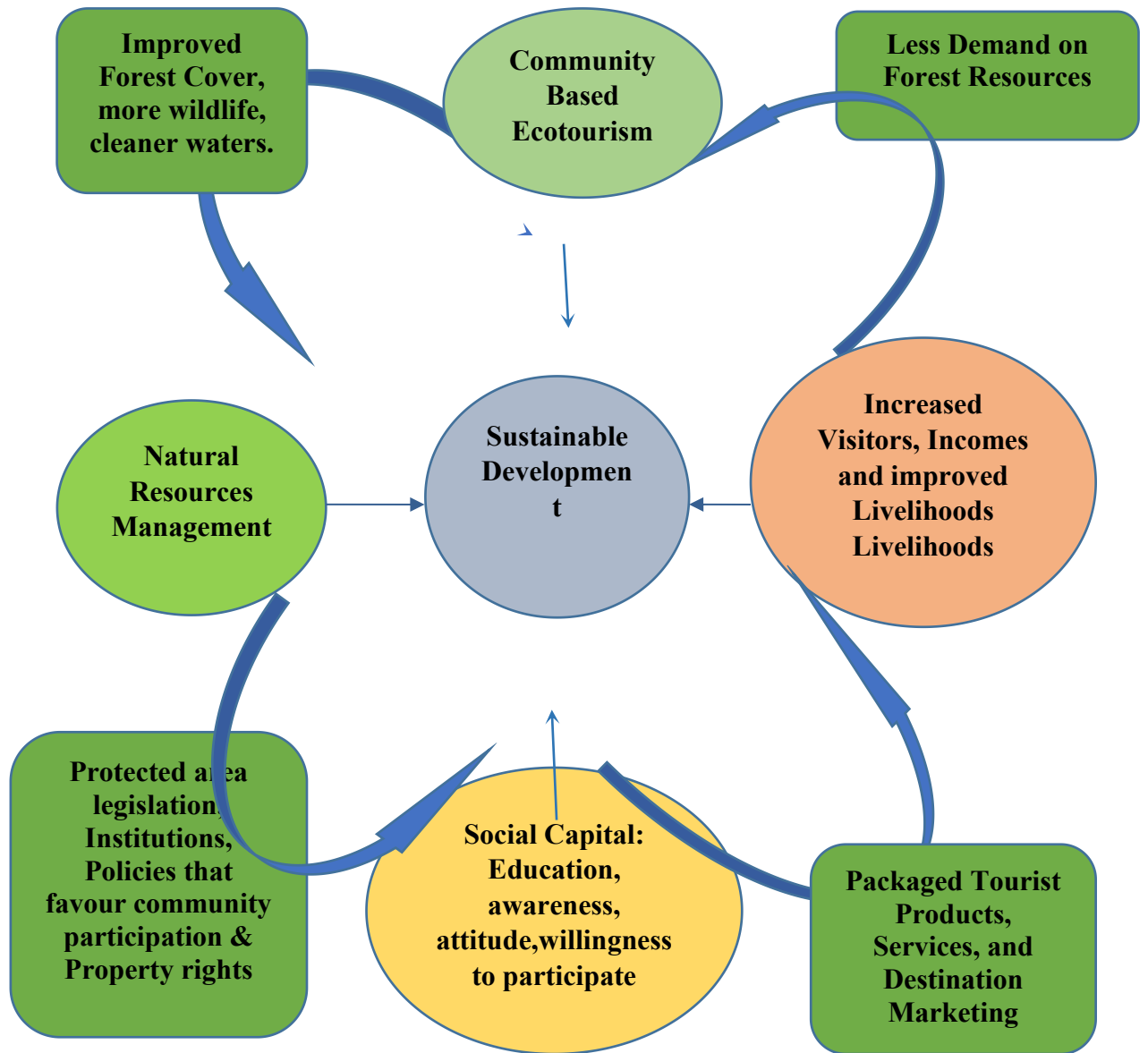
#### **2.1.21 Negotiating stakeholders competing interests.**

Successful CBE programs typically have the support of, and partnership between communities, government, non-government and private sectors being variously linked with the tourism destination and affected and /or interested in different ways (Fig 2.5). Therefore, these various groups often have conflicting interests that must be harmonized as much as possible, before a common developmental strategy can be agreed upon and thus, implemented. Even among governmental parastatals alone, multiple ministries with different mandates results in a lack of consensus on land use for wildlife (Manwa, 2003).



**Fig 2.5: Model showing the robust linkages of stakeholders, benefits, and threats associated with sacred groves.**  
 (Source: Adeyanju S. O. 2020. Drivers of biodiversity conservation in sacred groves: a comparative study of three sacred groves in south-west Nigeria. Masters thesis, University of British Columbia.)

When all stakeholders work together, they can drive towards the common goal of sustainable development through the various linkages between ecotourism, natural resources management and livelihoods in poor rural communities (fig. 2.6). One of the critical impediments to local community stakeholders working together with non-community stakeholders is the poor level of required communication skills and capacity. This might even include things like basic literacy skills, language skills as well as digital literacy to use modern communication tools that may be required in modern, social media marketing. Hence the need for capacity-building initiatives in local communities.



**Fig 2.6 :** Linkages between Sustainable Development, Ecotourism, Natural Resources Management and Livelihoods. Source: Author's Expression

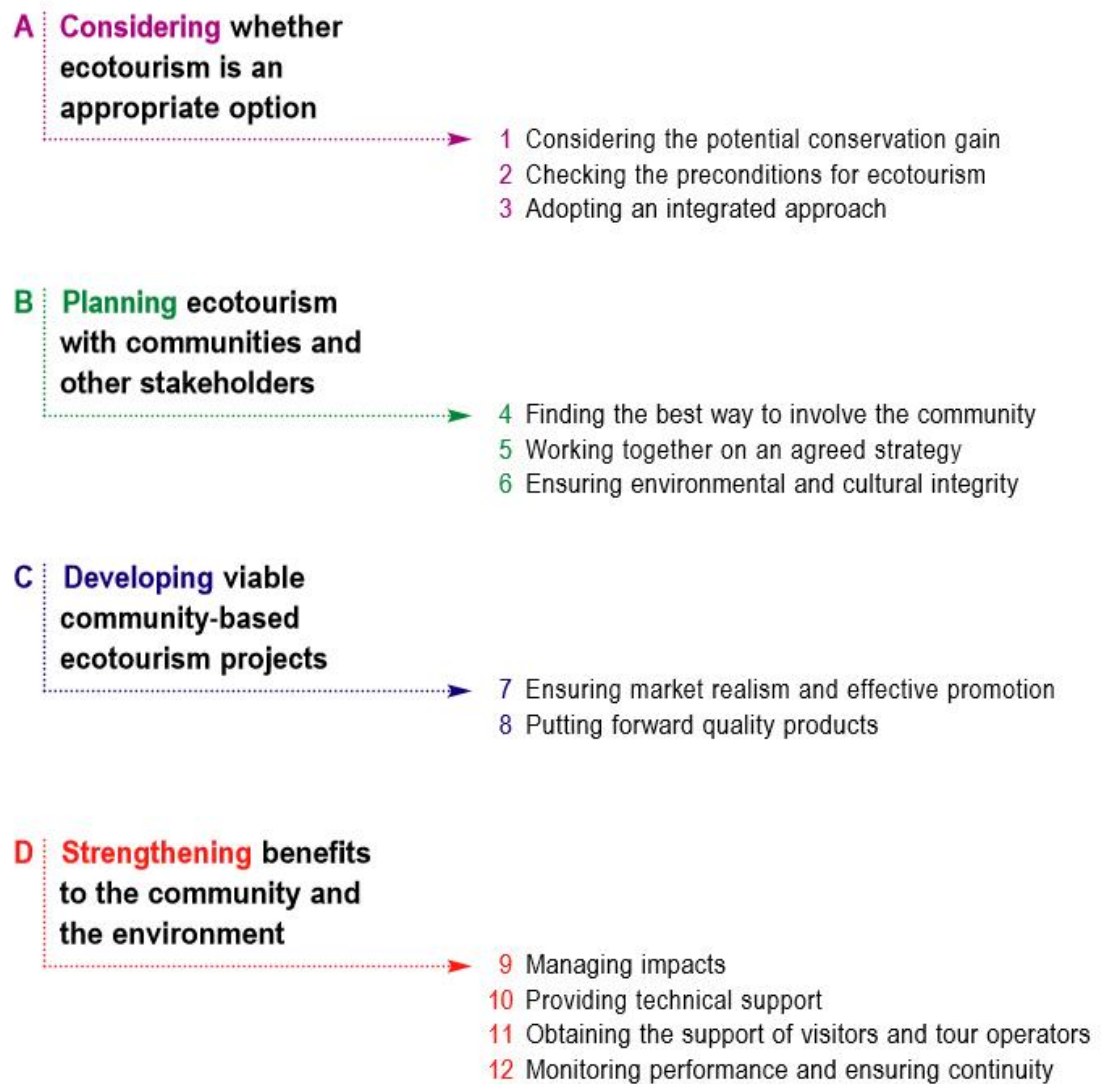


Capacity building refers to investments in social, human, physical, and financial capital which are the results of interactions between interested individuals, enterprises, networks, organizations, and policy institutions at both the national and supranational levels. The concept of capital is typically used to assess the state of community and ecotourism development. Social capital is the glue that holds together, the innate networks found in institutions, the norms and trusts that support group activity for mutual benefit and encourage cooperation and coordination between individuals. (Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 2001).

### **2.1.22 Guidelines for community-based ecotourism**

Perhaps one of the most compelling reasons for the necessity of Community Capacity Building is the need to raise community standards in order to meet up with the guidelines for Community Based Ecotourism as recommended by the World Wildlife Foundation (Denman, 2001). It's crucial to refrain from investing time in ecotourism and developing hopes in situations when failure is almost certain. Therefore, before launching a community-based strategy, a preliminary feasibility analysis should be conducted. Some prerequisites are based on the state of affairs on a national level, while others are related to local circumstances. (Denman, 2001). As part of overall guidelines for Community Based Ecotourism (Fig 2.7), basic preconditions identified by WWF, for community-based ecotourism are:

- Landscapes or plants and animals that are naturally beautiful or interesting enough to draw both specialized visitors and more casual tourists.
- ecosystems that can at least take a controlled amount of visitors without getting harmed as a result.
- a community that is interested in welcoming visitors and is aware of the potential benefits, risks, and changes involved.
- systems that currently exist or can develop for efficient decision-making by the community.
- There are no obvious dangers to indigenous cultures and traditions..
- a preliminary market analysis indicating a possible demand, a practical way to provide it, and that the area is not overly saturated with ecotourism options.



**Fig 2.7: Guidelines for community based ecotourism development (Source: Denman, R. 2001. *Guidelines for community-based ecotourism development*. Ledbury: The Tourism Company.)**

Clearly, these basic pre-conditions require local community interest in receiving visitors and awareness of risks and benefits. This criteria requires a certain level of Environmental Education to foster Awareness, Knowledge, Attitude, Skills and willingness to Participate (AKASP) which collectively refers to Community Capacity. According to Tang (2019), Community capacity as a prerequisite for all other tourism operations is rarely considered in Chinese tourism planning and evaluation. CBE is an effective type of ecotourism while capacity building is an effective means to develop this activity. However, the development of ecotourism using a community-based approach is still in its early stages. The idea of CBE and its variety of effects on community development are not fully and consistently understood by developers yet. Even though community capacity is a crucial factor in effective ecotourism development, it has not gotten enough attention. Finding literature on capacity building is quite challenging (Tang, 2019).

### **2.1.23 Community based ecotourism development in Igbo Olodumare**

Igbo Olodumare is a community that comprise of a grove, protected by unique rock formations and surrounded by extensive farmlands and villages such as is reminiscent of a miniature park. The first literature on Igbo Olodumare was written by D.O Fagunwa (Coker, 2021). Though his writings were of a fictional nature, they nevertheless project the natural and ecological endowments of the area remarkably. Since then however, various studies have been carried out in the grove ( Onyekwelu and Olusola, 2014; Borokini, 2016; Adeyanju, 2020).

A study of in-situ biodiversity conservation in the rainforest zone of South-Western Nigeria (Onyekwelu and Olusola, 2014) submitted that Igbo-Olodumare is regarded as a historical and cultural place by 50% of the local population, and this has resulted in extensive conservation. According to Onyekwelu and Olusola (2014), the top five most dominant tree species in Igbo Olodumare includes *Hildegardia barteri*, *Ricinodendron heudelotii* (Endangered), *Sterculia rhinopetala* (Endangered), *Cola hirsuta* and *Bridelia micrantha* ( Table 2.3).

**Table 2.3: Top five most dominant tree species in Igbo Olodumare**

S/N	Botanical Name	English Name	Local Name
1	<i>Hildegardia barteri</i>	Hildegardia	Okurugbedu
2	<i>Ricinodendron heudolotii</i> (Endangered)	Corkwood tree	Erimado
3	<i>Sterculia rhinopetala</i> (Endangered)	Brown Sterculia	Kokoigbo
4	<i>Cola hipsida</i>	-	Ikpa Obuko
5	<i>Bridelia micrantha</i>	Yoruba ironwood	Edede, Asa

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**Source: Onyekwelu and Olusola (2012)**

This study (Onyekwelu and Olusola, 2014) suggested that further promoting this site as an historical and cultural heritage site may enhance biodiversity conservation in the area. This may also lead to increased tourist patronage especially with the development of appropriate infrastructure. In Ondo State, Igbo Olodumare is one of the main tourist destinations that can be developed as a community development initiative. Specifically, in Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo Local Government Area of Ondo State, Igbo Olodumare is by far the most prominent tourist destination in the locality.

## **2.2 Review of theoretical issues**

A review of theoretical issues showed that previous studies had applied various theories and models to studies related to community-based ecotourism and sustainable development. This section discusses some of such theories and models that have been found in literature, including the free market theory, Butlers Model, Stakeholders Theory and Community Readiness and Awareness theory, participation theory and so on were all discussed as part of the review of theoretical issues.

### **2.2.1 The free-market theory and tourism as a capitalist venture**

Critics of Capitalism may not appreciate the pro-poor tendency of community-based ecotourism and the capacity for equitable benefits sharing. The nature of capitalism can take on various forms, and there are a few alternatives to consider, including classical capitalism, corporate capitalism, state capitalism, entrepreneurial capitalism and so on. However, a review of development theory and research on tourism in developing nations, capitalism and international travel are here to stay. Regardless of our personal ideals, we must acknowledge that almost all forms of tourism will be pushed through capitalism (Harrison, 2015).

A review of tourism policy suggested that engaging private and social stakeholders in the decision-making process is critical. An assessment of tourism policy could be approached from an economic standpoint, but it is important to consider other perspectives such as culture, environment, and social dynamics to gain a comprehensive understanding of the potential impacts of tourism (Velasco, 2017).

The free-market theory which underpins capitalism, predicts that successful tourism development, requires the voluntary cooperation of all stakeholders rather than

coercion by government, through legislation or other means. Whereas legislation may be required to set aside protected areas, this should be done only with the active consent of stakeholders, especially landowners in the host community. Similarly, the free market and the capitalist nature of tourism development, requires the accumulation of territorial and social capital to create an attractive destination, capable of pulling tourists with disposable income, who come to dispense with some financial capital.

### **2.2.2 Butler's theory: Tourism area life cycle (TALC)**

Butler presented a Tourist area life cycle (TALC) model to describe the various stages of the tourism life cycle of a destination, from destination exploration to decline. (Ekwale, 2014; Kruczek *et al.*, 2018). Butler's tourist area life cycle shows that tourism development goes through five stages starting with the exploration stage, followed by the Involvement stage then progressing on to the development stage, followed by the consolidation stage, and then the stagnation stage which may lead to decline, unless there is a rejuvenation (fig 2.8). Igbo Olodumare presents ample opportunity to observe this progression from exploration or discovery stage through involvement to development stage and so on.

### A TOURISM AREA CYCLE OF EVOLUTION

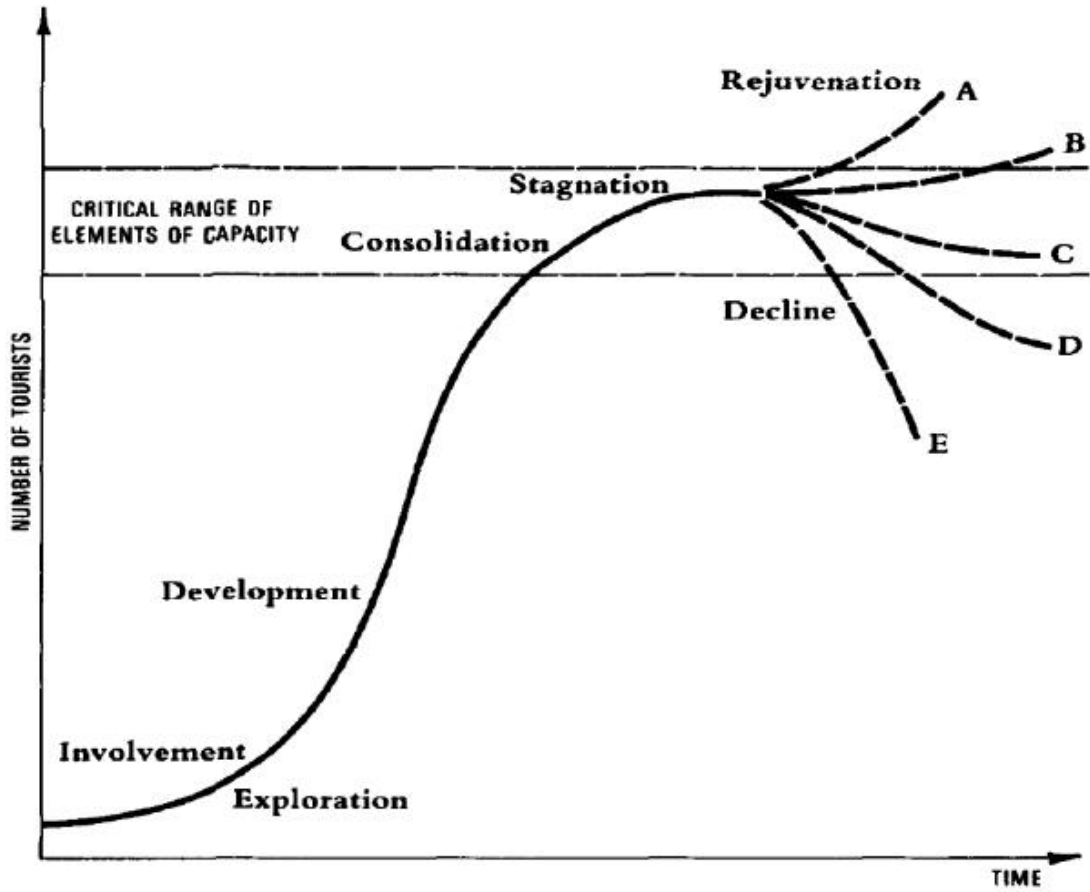


Fig 2.8: Tourism Area Life Cycle (Source: Butler, R.W. 1980. The concept of a tourism areas cycle of evaluation: Implementations for management of resources. *Canadian Geographer* 24.1: 5-12.)

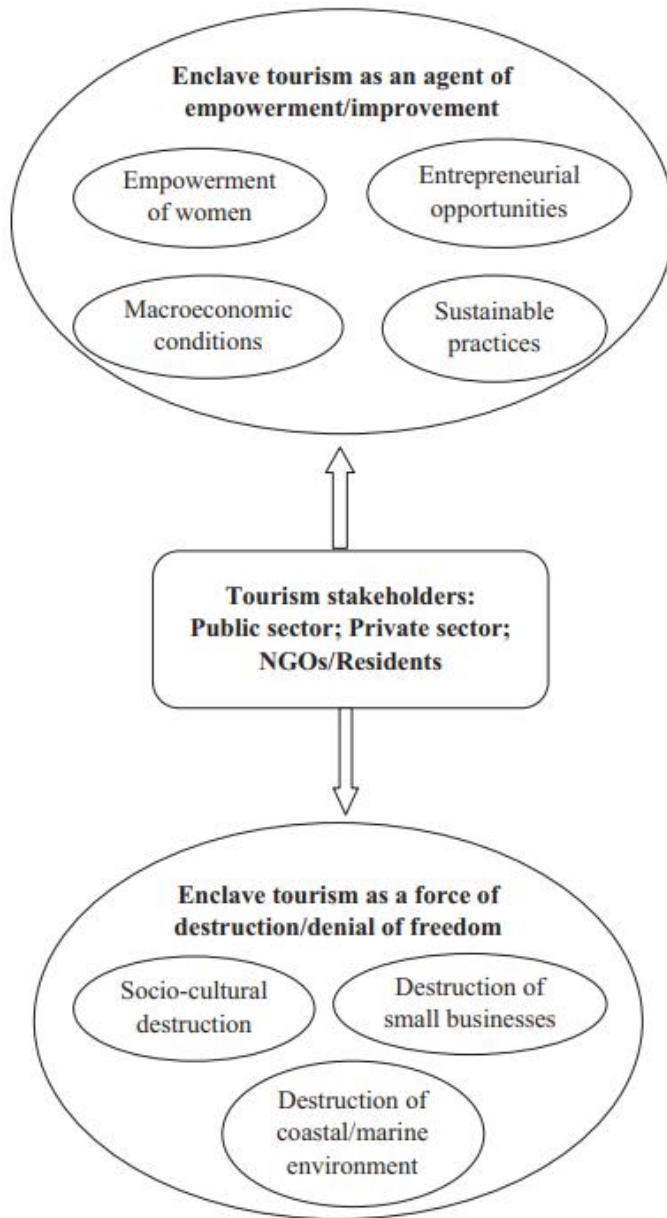
### 2.2.3 Stakeholders theory

The Stakeholders theory was developed by Freeman (1984). Stakeholders are any groups or individuals that have the potential to influence or who are impacted by an organization's mission. The concept has become very popular across disciplines, but stakeholders' theory was originally introduced and deployed mainly in business management (Moswete, 2009). Stakeholders have also been described as groups of individuals, whether organized or not, with a stake in a certain circumstance or system (Grimble and Wellard, 1997). Stakeholders are entities, organizations, or groups of various sizes and scope that operate on various levels (including domestic, local, regional, national, and international, private, and public), have a clear and significant interest in a particular set of resources, and have the power to influence or be impacted by resource management decisions or interventions (Mulale, 2005).

Stakeholder theory is frequently employed as a technique to pinpoint and weigh the significance of significant individuals, organizations, and groups that could have an impact on the successful implementation of a business initiative. (Byrd *et al.*, 2008). Byrd (2007) used stakeholder theory to identify stakeholders, their participation and function in sustainable tourism development. He stated that all stakeholder groups are within the purview of destination management organizations and community planners, with local inhabitants receiving special consideration. Stakeholder analysis helps create balance between numerous goals and interests, such as the quest for environmentally sustainable, equitable, and effective strategies for development (Moswete, 2009).

The various stakeholder studies suggest that community residents should not only be consulted and involved in the planning and development of ecotourism destinations, their attitudes, fears and perceptions should be understood and considered. Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2013) aptly captured the conflicting interests between host communities and tourism entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations and public sector regulators, ranging from being considered an agent of empowerment and improvement to being considered a force for denial of freedom and destruction of the local environment, culture and even and even small businesses, especially when big investors swoop in (fig 2.9).





**Fig 2.9: Stakeholders' views on enclave tourism (Source: Nunkoo, R., and Ramkissoon, H. 2013. Stakeholders' views of enclave tourism: A grounded theory approach. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research* 40.1: 557-558.)**

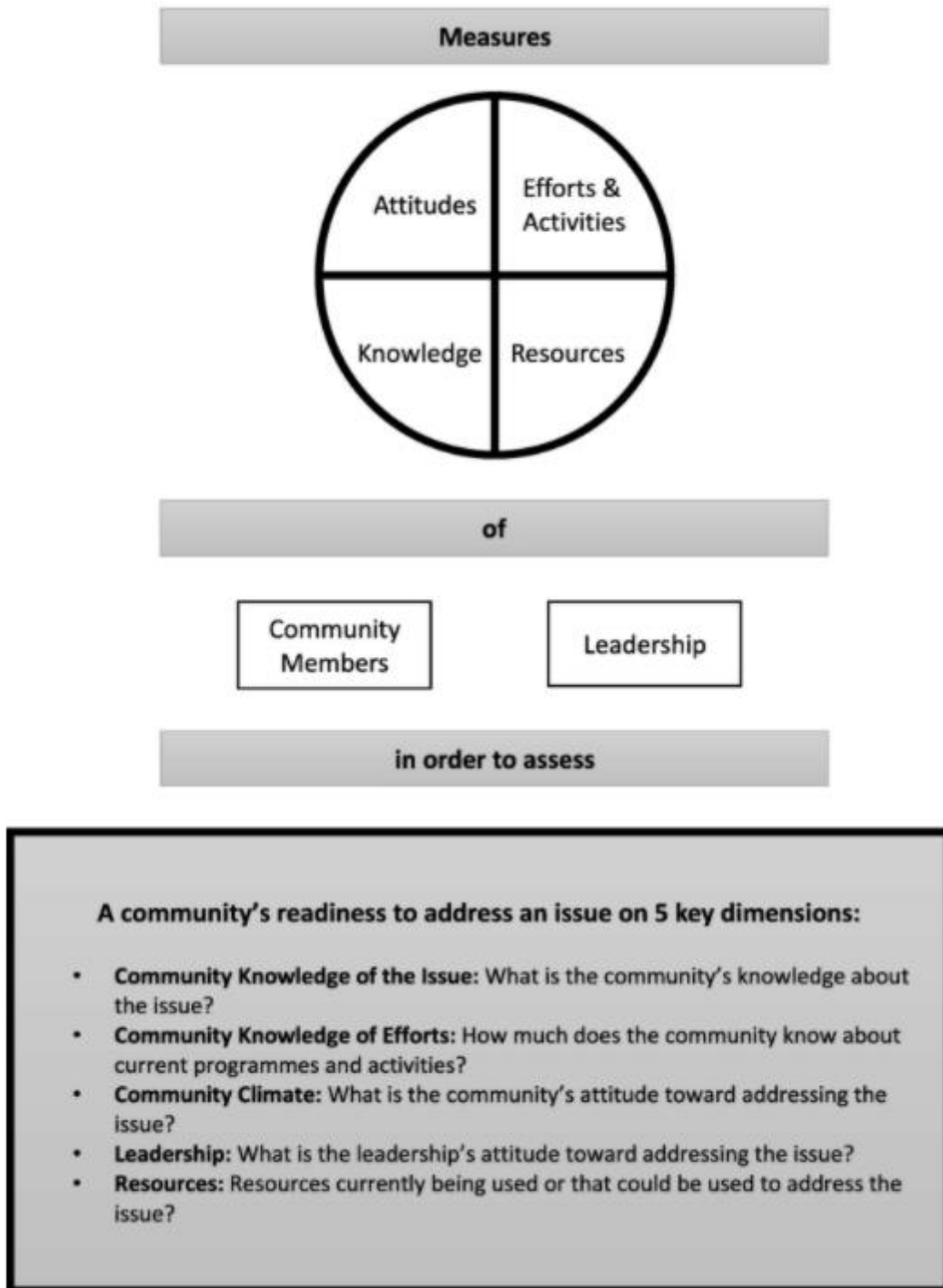
#### **2.2.4 Community readiness and awareness theory**

The Community readiness model (CRM) is a model for community change that integrates the culture of a community, its resource and readiness level, for improved effectiveness, in addressing situations (Plested *et al.*, 2009). According to the theory of community readiness, by using a structured method, communities can advance through various stages to develop and carry out effective programs (Khatun *et al.*, 2016; Abdullah and Halim, 2018). This can be accomplished in various stages in preparing a community for community-based ecotourism development (Abdullah and Halim, 2018).

The first step required is the formation of a responsible local team and their preparation for the use of the readiness model. Once that has been accomplished, the subsequent phase for the team is to ascertain the level of readiness of their community concerning the related issue (Thurman *et al.*, 2000; Abdullah and Halim, 2018). The level of readiness is important because specific interventions are required for each stage of readiness. Higher-level initiatives are more likely to fail if a community is not fully ready for them (Oetting *et al.*, 2001). There are four factors that should be considered when determining if a community is prepared for a program. These factors are: core preparedness; technological preparedness; human resources; and motivational preparedness (Khatun *et al.*, 2016).

The Community Readiness Model (Fig. 2.10) assesses the leadership, knowledge, attitudes, actions, and resources of the community to determine how prepared it is to confront a problem on five important fronts:

1. Community knowledge of the issue: To what extent and how much do they know about the topic at hand?
2. Community knowledge of efforts: To what extent and how much does members of the community know about current programs or activities aimed at resolving the problem?
3. Community climate: What is the general attitude and level of interest towards addressing the issue?
4. Leadership: How do local authorities feel about addressing the issue?
5. Resources: What resources are now currently being utilized or might utilized for solving the problem.



**Fig 2.10: Community readiness Model (Source: Oetting, E. R., Jumper-Thurman, P., Plested, B., and Edwards, R. W. 2001. Community readiness and health services. *Substance Use and Misuse* 36.6: 825-843.)**

### **2.2.5 Participation theory**

Numerous theories of participation have been propounded by various authors such as Richard Tarnas, John Turner among others. Participation theory represents a move from the global, aspatial, top-down strategies that dominated early development initiatives to more locally sensitive methodologies (Storey, 1999). There are diverse opinions on the roots of the theory. According to Tarnas, participatory epistemology is rooted in the thought of Goethe, Schiller, Schelling, Hegel, Coleridge, Emerson, and Rudolf Steiner (Nura, 2014). Tarnas believes that, understanding and owning projections through awareness of what archetypal influences are at work, or awareness of personal or collective shadow, radically increases the potential for autonomous co-creative participation.

Therefore, the human psyche participates in and reflects the archetypal patterns and structures of the cosmos, and this participation plays a significant role in shaping individual and collective experiences, as well as cultural and historical developments. Tarnas' participation theory draws from Carl Jung's work on archetypes and the collective unconscious, as well as philosophy, history, and spirituality, and offers a holistic and integrative perspective on the human experience and cultural evolution. The participatory theory of consciousness, as developed by Richard Tarnas, can be related to community-based ecotourism development in several ways.

Firstly, the theory suggests that by involving communities in planning activities and implementation of initiatives, their awareness and understanding of the environment can be heightened, and they can actively participate in preserving and conserving it.

Secondly, Tarnas' emphasis on the interconnections between individuals, the environment, and the cosmos can inform the development of sustainable and holistic ecotourism practices. By recognizing the interconnectedness of all things, community-based ecotourism initiatives can strive to minimize their impact on the environment and promote the well-being of both local communities and the ecosystem.

Finally, Tarnas' holistic perspective on consciousness can inspire a more integrated approach to ecotourism development, considering not only the environmental and economic factors, but also the cultural and psychological factors that shape the relationship between communities and their environment. By considering the participatory theory of consciousness, community-based ecotourism initiatives can

strive to create more conscious and sustainable relationships between people, communities, and the natural world. Community participation has been on the spotlight in tourism academia as a tool to induce sustainable tourism development (Wondirad and Ewnetu, 2019).

On his part, John Turner in his participation theory, emphasizes the formation of local organizations by local communities. Such non-governmental, community-based organizations actively participate in the planning and administration of local issues (Ahmadi, 2008; Khoshdel and Bakhshan, 2015). John Turner has developed important theories as a specialist in public participation with the United Nations. He categorized various forms of participation in a methodical manner. He has made participation ideas the most plausible and understandable. Turner and other academic studies demonstrate that central control of local matters obscures the concerns of the local communities but also leads to loss of facilities and resources by ignoring the people. His main contribution to the growth of participation theory comprises of carefully categorizing various forms of participation. Initially, governments tend to act centrally and perceives no need for public participation. Arab states governments will be an instance of this. Then comes a phase where government is both authoritative and centralized but lacking in affluence. While the government is carrying out construction plans, it either forces or encourages people to work for free under its supervision and/or donate money. In the next phase, government pays the costs of construction out of the riches of the country while abiding by popular decisions in all public areas. Governments that prioritize democracy and involvement, like those in Scandinavia, are examples. Then comes the phase where local concerns are not meddled with by the government. Individuals create public associations, provide federal funding for international development, and decide all local concerns. The U.S. and European nations are two examples. Latest theories propose that government and people are partners that share their works, hence the advancement of a new theory, a partnership theory.

Thus, researchers have developed a partnership theory after years of interrogating the participation theory. Partnership theory requires that the people and government should cooperate in the development and management of local affairs as partners. (Ahmadi, 2008; Khoshdel and Bakhshan, 2015).

### **2.3 Review of methodological issues**

A review of literature showed that various methods have been used to study community-based ecotourism. While qualitative evaluation primarily focuses on non-numerical data such as opinions, experiences, and perceptions, it may also incorporate quantitative aspects to complement its findings. In tourism, this may involve using a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques such as visitor surveys, case studies, peer reviews, cost-benefit analysis, and public participation and feedback on policies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impacts and outcomes of tourism programs and policies (OECD, 2012)

Using the principles of grounded theory, a study investigated Stakeholders' views of enclave tourism in the island of Mauritius, the researcher conducted In-depth interviews (IDI) with tourism stakeholders and analysed data accordingly (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2013). Another study that looked into the barriers to residents' participation used a qualitative exploratory study method, adopting in-depth interviews (Kim *et al.*, 2014)

A study of Community-based Ecotourism Development in Ethiopia used a qualitative research approach which employed 40 key informants from 6 different target groups alongside photography and a structured observation check list (Fiseha, 2014). A study of the drivers of biodiversity conservation in sacred groves used mixed methods research and case study approach to compare Igbo Olodumare with Idanre Hills and Osun Osogbo sacred grove, surveying only two communities (Igbo Olodunmare and Oke Alaafia) in the Igbo Olodumare axis (Adeyanju, 2020).

The study excluded forestry officials because sacred groves are under the management control of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as well as the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) depending on the status of the grove (Adeyanju, 2020).

#### **2.3.1 Observation method and diagramming**

Observatory walks guided by locals and accompanied with photography are used to study the natural resources, topography, indigenous technology, vegetation, farming practices, problems and opportunities in the area leading to documentation of calendar of seasonal patterns, Venn diagram of the traditional/key formal/informal institutions

in the area, daily routine charts, tourist flow diagrams, mapping of of key tourist resources and so on.

A study of CBE development in Ethiopia used photography and a structured observation check list alongside other qualitative research design tools (Fiseha, 2014).

### **2.3.2 Interview method**

Interview according to Asika (2006) is a research method that involves an interviewer meeting face-to-face with a respondent to gather information. The interviewer uses an interview schedule to ask questions and record the respondent's answers. The interviewer typically completes the interview schedule themselves during the interview. This method can be used to gather qualitative or quantitative data and can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. It allows for more in-depth responses from the respondent and can provide valuable insights into their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

The greatest advantage of this form of survey research is that it eliminates some of the problems encountered in questionnaire based recordings, ill-defined categories and inadequate measuring instruments, in line with the above, an interview schedule tagged in depth interview checklist was designed for this study. In essence, interview method will be used to get information from the respondents on their perception about Igbo Olodumare, their benefits from the ecotourism project in Igbo Olodumare and their level of satisfaction with the project.

## **2.4 Review of empirical issues**

A survey of literature showed that Community based eco-tourism is one of the major ways by which problems of sustainable natural resources management and community development have been addressed in different parts of the world. Various studies have established a positive relationship between Community Based Ecotourism and local revenue profiles (Moswete, 2009, Pichdara, 2013, Manu and Kruuder, 2012, Ekwale, 2014). In Sirigu, Ghana, a study of Community Based Ecotourism and Livelihood enhancement analysed data from 440 respondents and concluded that the revenue profile was impressive (Manu and Kruuder, 2012).

A comparative analysis of CBE households and non CBE households between 2002 and 2010, before and after the establishment of CBE enterprises in Chambok community in Southwest Cambodia found that ecotourism had brought money into the

local economy through the generation of new income sources and opportunities such as entry charges, vehicle parking charges, ox-cart rides, bicycle rentals, sales of bamboo souvenirs and so on (Pichdara, 2013). Thus tourism demonstrably has the prospects of a positive economic influence, yet results are not always encouraging. When it comes to its effects on culture, society, and the environment, tourism can have negative effects and it can fall short of the expected economic boost. (Sharpley, 2002).

A research on ecotourism sites and community participation in Sabah, identified 21 success indicators for ecotourism sites, affirming that community involvement is essential to tourism development (Bagul and Bahar, 2009). A study of Sacred Natural Sites, identified Igbo Olodumare sacred grove as one of the Sacred Natural Sites in Southern Nigeria (Borokini, 2016). In a study which compared the biodiversity of Osun Osogbo sacred and Igbo Olodumare, the researchers reported that the Igbo-Olodumare grove's low diversity indices are due to its rockiness and low sacredness, which has led to encroachment. (Onyekwelu and Olusola, 2014)

Though not explicitly highlighted by Onyekwelu and Olusola, the small size of the sacred grove may have been a major factor contributing to the lower diversity indices reported. Whereas the Osun Osogbo sacred grove, a 75 ha national monument of Nigeria that has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2005 is surrounded by a 47 ha buffer zone, the Igbo-Olodumare sacred grove covers an area of 7 ha only (Onyekwelu and Olusola, 2014). According to a study of ground species in traditional forests in south-west Nigeria, anthropogenic disturbances like farming and religious activities may have caused the low diversity index around Igbo-Olua (Igara Oke, Ifedore Local Government, Ondo State) and Igbo-Gbopo (Ejigbo, Local Government, Osun State) as opposed to Igbo-Ile (Ogo-Oluwa Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria), Igbo-Oba (Olorunda Local Government, Osun State), and Igbo-Olodumare, where high diversity index was recorded. The study proposed that to maintain high variety index in the terrified groves, buffer zones should be constructed around the sacred groves (Oyelowo *et al.*, 2020).

A study found that stakeholders' views are nuanced and often contradictory in the Island of Mauritius. It also found that enclave tourism development has some positive effects on the environment and the economy, particularly in terms of eco-friendly hotel operations, the empowerment of the community and women, and business prospects



(Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2013). Another study found that despite strong willingness to participate, local residents in Houay Kaeng Village in Sayabouly Province in Malaysia, are hindered from participating in community-based tourism planning and development by barriers such as low education levels, lack of knowledge about tourism, poor living conditions, power disparities, institutional disincentives, local's distrust in authorities and so on (Kim *et al.*, 2014).

Another study indicated that residents are interested in participating and getting involved in the planning and development of community based ecotourism in Cameroon, given certain conditions. The said conditions require an approach that will not jeopardize community access to resources that are essentially the sources of their livelihood (Ekwale, 2014). According to the study's findings, Communities would prefer to work with NGOs to establish a collaborative form of management in order to achieve their CBET objectives. (Ekwale, 2014). Another study indicated that communities could contribute to the development of CBET by offering lodging services, putting on cultural performances, providing agricultural products, offering tour services, and selling mementos, and that CBET is a tool for local development that is sustainable (Aseres, 2015).

In Malaysia, a study indicated that environmental knowledge, perceived economic, social, and cultural impact have a great influence on residents' intention to participate in community-based ecotourism management (Masud *et al.*, 2017).

A study of biodiversity conservation that compared Igbo Olodumare with Idanre Hills and Osun Osogbo concluded that the long-term conservation of sacred groves is ensured by the coexistence of community-based conservation strategy through a system of accepted customary rules, restrictions, and official government management (Adeyanju, 2020). The researcher also reported that he was perceived as someone who could influence their living conditions or take their concerns to government. Some respondents were requesting for government intervention in the provision of social amenities such as good access roads to the community, electric power, installation of a telecommunication mast and building a lodge or hotel facility to aid tourism (Adeyanju, 2020). In Ethiopia, a study found that while the area is rich in natural and cultural tourism resources, conflicts between people and nature, lack of capacity for stakeholders to participate and cooperate with one another, lack of infrastructures, and

the promotion of forests are some problems militating against CBE development in the area (Fiseha, 2014).

According to a study conducted in India, the Dhwaj Sacred Grove serves as an excellent illustration of the locals' strong traditional beliefs and taboos regarding biodiversity preservation. The study also found that the management of the country's existing village and community forests could be improved by the government providing adequate funding to village durbars and by using participatory management approach (Singh and Kumar, 2020). Some of the opportunities identified include enhancing accessibility and properly demarcating the forest, engaging microfinance (credit and saving) institutions in CBET, engaging cooperative institutions to participate in CBET activities, and having access to local tourism policies and ecotourism guidelines (Fiseha, 2014).

Previous studies indicate that there are few attitudinal research on communities that are either in the planning stages or before any growth of tourism (Harill, 2004; Lepp, 2008; Claiborne, 2010). Findings show a significant level of opposition, suspicion, anxiety and fears that residents sometimes harbour, towards proposed plans for tourism development at an early stage, hence the need to study the feelings, hope, expectations and concerns of residents that have little or no prior experience with or knowledge of tourism (Claiborne, 2010).

## **2.5 Summary of the literature and identified gaps.**

The literature showed that tourism development requires a free market environment, characterized by the voluntary cooperation of stakeholders in the local community. Having accumulated territorial and social capital on the CBE project, they are able to contribute to its sustainable development. Most of the studies reviewed agreed that Community-based ecotourism has a positive relationship with sustainable development in rural communities (Moswete, 2009; Manu and Kruder, 2012; Pichdara, 2013; Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2013; Ekwale, 2014)). Yet a few studies highlighted the negative impacts of CBE in the form of sociocultural challenges, increasing wealth disparities, inflation, cultural erosion, ecological resource depletion and so on (Sharpley, 2002). The review of empirical issues showed that research findings are inconclusive on a number of issues which need to be addressed in order to come to a better conceptual understanding of the underlying conditions that lead to successful Community Based Ecotourism projects.

For instance, as suggested by a study in Mauritius, there is a need for further analysis of key Stakeholders' views of Community Based Ecotourism to see if they are significantly contradictory (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2013). Using in-depth interviews just like Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2013), there is a need to examine potential contradictions among the views of different stakeholders. Following the findings of another study on barriers to participation in community-based ecotourism projects which identified low education level as a barrier (Kim *et al.*, 2014), this study reviewed the relationship between education levels and inclination towards participation. This study similarly investigated the influence of socio-demographic variables on willingness to participate. Oladeji (2015) examined the roles of Kpatawee Citizen Community Organisation (KCOO), is playing in the management of Kpatawee waterfall in Liberia and found that Community Based Ecotourism Management Practice had brought changes in land use patterns and management of the waterfall. Hence, this study investigated the contributions of various local community associations to the development of Igbo Olodumare. Also, taking a cue from a Cameroonian study which suggested a preference for collaborations with NGOs over government (Ekwale, 2014), this study looked into the experiences and preferences of community residents in terms of collaboration with NGOs or with the government for the development of a CBE project.

Finally, a study of Capacity Building of Community-based Ecotourism in Developing Nations: A Case of Mei Zhou, China, found that due to the government-dominated development paradigm and the gap between theoretical and actual community-based ecotourism in this area, the local community has limited access to decision-making (Tang, 2019). This study examined the extent of community involvement in decision-making in Igbo-Olodumare.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research design

A mixed methods design that included surveys and ethnographic methods was used to collect qualitative as well as quantitative data. This design was chosen because it is appropriate for gathering data on the behaviours, attitudes, preferences, and inclinations of people within a certain community. This method is appropriate for finding meaning and obtaining an understanding of the present conditions, beliefs, and attitudes after a careful study and methodological observation of the phenomenon. The mixed method approach for data collection was adopted as they tend to present a more nuanced and balanced understanding of the various dynamics related to the study (Aseres, 2015; Adeyanju, 2020).

Reaching every resident in Oke-Igbo is a herculean task that involves a lot of movement throughout the town, soliciting for responses and attention from random people who may not be directly impacted by nor interested in the subject of the study. In any case, it is not quite feasible to reach everyone. Therefore, purposive and convenience sampling methods were adopted to collect data from the study population. This allowed the researcher to overcome the difficulties of the large, dispersed population by collecting data from a sample of the larger population which allow inferences to be made, that can be applied to the entire population. A mixed-method research approach combines both qualitative and quantitative methods.

In-depth interviewing helps us to explore a topic in detail and is considered useful for interpretive inquiry (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, this research made use of data collected from in-depth interviews conducted with residents. As recommended by Charmaz (2006), the interview schedule consisted of semi-structured and open-ended questions. The quantitative survey methods was used to collect data on objectives one two and three while qualitative methods was used to collect additional data on objectives one, two and three as well as exclusively for data on objective four.

On the other hand, the qualitative methods of interviews and focus group discussions provided an opportunity to get an in-depth understanding of stakeholder's attitudes beyond what was captured in the quantitative methods, thereby leading to the discovery of new insights and emergent themes that further enrich the work, beyond the initial limits set by research objectives. This is in line with the suggestions of Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009).

### **3.2 The study area**

Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove is located in Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo Local Government Area of Ondo State of Nigeria bordering Osun State to the North and Ondo West and Ondo East Local Government Areas of Ondo State to the South. It also borders Ifedore Local Government Area also of Ondo State to the Northeast. Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo Local Government Area has a population of 171,876,000 people according to the National Population Commission Census of 2006. Ondo State was created on 3rd February 1976 during the military rule of General Murtala Ramat Mohammed. Ondo State initially included what is now referred to as Ekiti State, which was split off in 1996 also by military fiat during the military rule of General Sani Abacha. The state comprises eighteen Local Government Areas with a population of 3.5 million people according to the 2006 population census. Ondo State's population is primarily made up of the Yoruba subgroups Akoko, Akure, Ikale, Ilaje, Ondo, and Owo. The coastal regions are home to Ijaw minority groups including the Apoi, Arogbo, and Ilaje populations, whereas Oke Igbo is home to a substantial community of Ondo State residents who speak a Yoruba dialect resembling the Ife dialect (Ondo State Ministry of Information, 2013). Oke-Igbo being an ancient Yoruba town is dominated by native Yoruba indigenes who speak Yoruba language, the Oke-Igbo dialect of Yoruba and exhibit typical Yoruba cultural values such as respect for elders, hospitality to visitors and so on. Oke-Igbo therefore hosts non indigenes in its communities, especially farmers from other parts of Nigeria. The main traditional festival celebrated in Oke-Igbo is the Egungun festival which usually comes up in August every year.

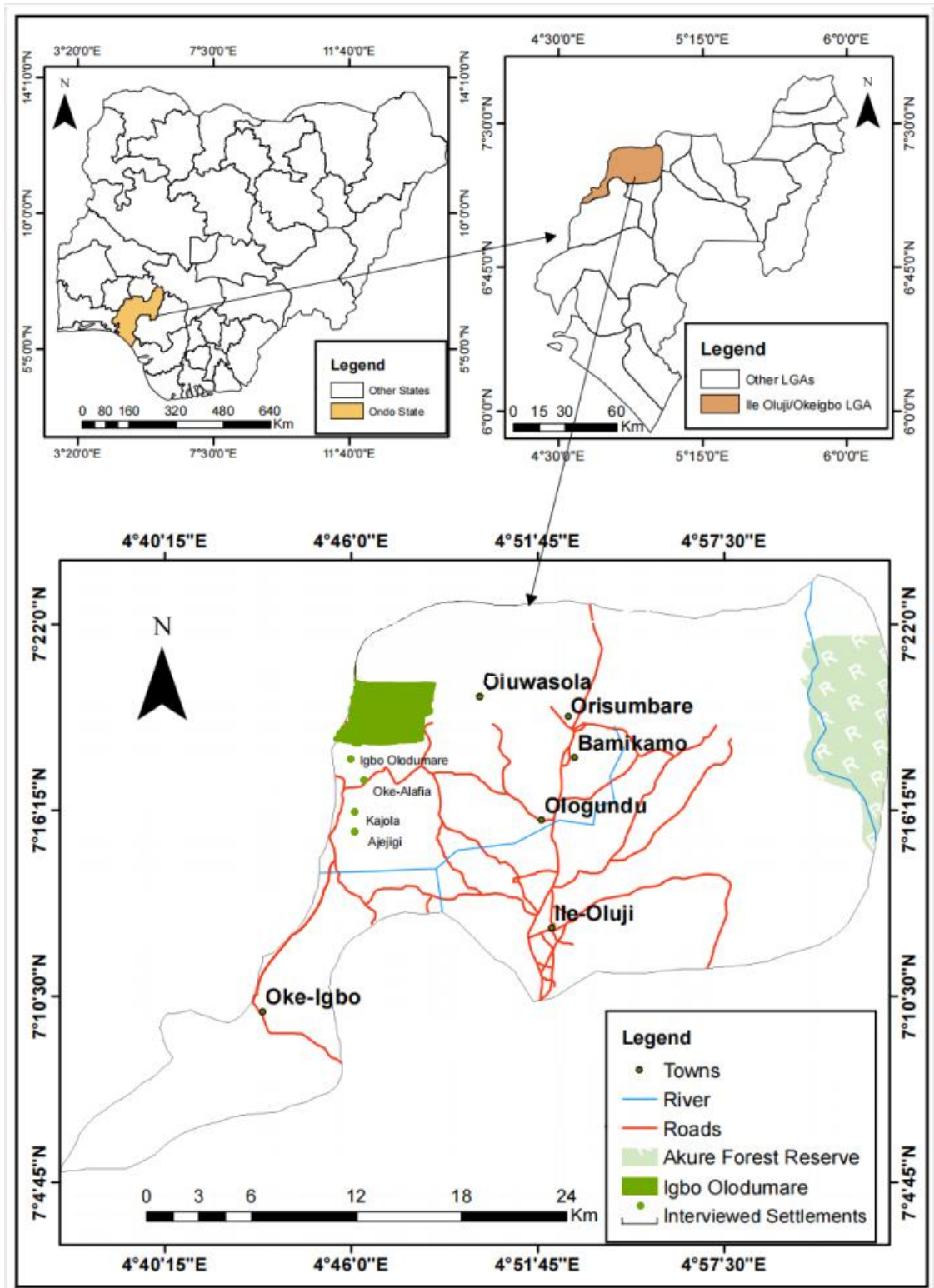
Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove experiences two distinct seasons: the wet season (April to October) and the dry season (November to March). The humidity is pretty high and the temperature swings from 21 to 29 degrees Celsius throughout the year. Figure 3.1 locates the grove in Oke-Igbo district of Ile-Oluji Oke-Igbo LGA of Ondo State.

The dominant occupation of the people in the area is agriculture. Around 75% of the population is employed and supported by agriculture. Most of the remaining 25% are business owners or government workers. Nigeria's largest cocoa producer is Ondo State. Cocoa is the principal crop that generates income, but kola nut, oil palm, plantain, and banana are frequently interplanted. Moreover, food crops such as yams, cassava, maize, and vegetables are grown. Ile-Oluji Okeigbo Local Government Area has a total land mass of 698km<sup>2</sup>.

The only state designated tourism attraction in Ile-Oluji Okeigbo Local Government Area is the Igbo Olodumare Grove. However, the Local Government Area comprise of an enchanting range of hills typically covered in lush green forests. The name Okeigbo itself is a Yoruba word which literally means “Forested Hills”.

Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo LGA comprise of five districts namely:

1. Agunla
2. Oke-Igbo
3. Bankemo
4. Ile Oluji
5. Temidire



**Figure 3.1: Map of Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo Local Government Area, showing Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove.**

*(Source: Field Survey 2018. Created by Cartographer, African Regional Institute for Geospatial Information Science and Technology, Ife)*



### **3.3 Study population and sampling**

The study population is limited to residents of local communities around Igbo Olodumare, community leaders, local entrepreneurs and policymakers from the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments.

Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove is situated in Okeigbo District of Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo Local Government Area of Ondo State of which four rural communities were selected for detailed field study based on community leaders' recommendations, considering proximity within 20 km to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, geographical distribution along the way to Igbo Olodumare and perceived impact of Igbo Olodumare on the communities. There is an estimated 5,550 residents in these 4 communities. These communities are partly dependent upon access to the resources of the area constituting Igbo Olodumare for their livelihoods. The economy of the area is largely agrarian and of great importance are hunting, trapping and collection of non-timber forest products by households.

While the study focused mainly on residents, other stakeholders interviewed include officials of Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism and National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Traditional Ruling Council of Oke-Igbo, Local Entrepreneurs such as Hoteliers, and Transport service providers (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: Summary of research sampling method adopted.**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Target Population</b>	<b>Instrument</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Sampling Method</b>
1	Local Residents	Questionnaire	361	Purposive Sampling Method
2	Policy Makers	Key Informant Interview	2	Purposive Sampling Method
3	Traditional Chiefs	Key Informant Interview	4	Purposive Sampling Method
4	Local community councils	Focus Group Decisions	16	Purposive Sampling Method
5	Oke-Igbo Tourism Committee	Key Informant Interview	2	Purposive Sampling Method
6	Non-Governmental Organisations	Focus Group Discussion	12	Convenience Sampling Method
7	Local Entrepreneurs	Key Informant Interview	6	Convenience Sampling Method

**Source: Field Survey (2019)**

In selecting communities along the route to the grove from Oke-Igbo, a purposive sampling approach was employed. All the communities within Oke-Igbo district were initially selected to form the sampling frame after which four communities were eventually selected for detailed study. Three main selection criteria were used for this section namely:

1. Proximity to Igbo Olodumare
2. Geographical Distribution along the way to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove
3. Recommendations of experts from the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism as well as Community Leaders in Oke-Igbo based on perceived impact of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Groves on these communities.

The adoption of the criteria yielded a sample that included four communities; Igbo Olodumare, Oke Alafia, Ajejigi and Kajola. based on the recommendations of community leaders and perceived impact of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Groves on these communities. For the Focus Group Discussions and Interviews, the purposive sampling method was used to select village chiefs and community leaders in the sampled communities. Village chiefs and community leaders are considered to have intimate knowledge or judgment of their local environment. Besides, the decisions affecting the environment must be taken by the adults so as to protect and preserve the environment for use by the younger generation. In many areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, the traditional social systems involving village chiefs and elders (and often a hierarchy of chiefs) is prevalent, with chiefs functioning in parallel to local government authorities. Also in many areas, religion plays an important role in people's lives and local religious leaders are respected and influential persons.

Similarly, purposive sampling technique was used to select two key informants from Ondo State ministry of Culture and Tourism as well as from the National Commission for Museum and Monuments. Purposive sampling is the deliberate choice of respondents who are sought out due to the quality of information they possess (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, the respondents who were top ministry officials who are partly responsible for the management of the grove, were purposively selected due to their significant contribution and importance to the grove.

Finally, convenience sampling technique was used to select six local entrepreneurs and twelve members of Non-Governmental Organisations from Egbe Akomolede Yoruba, Teaching Entrepreneurship and Mentoring Centre as well as Igbo Olodumare Development Association. Convenience sampling refers to the choice of respondents who happen to be readily available to the researcher during the survey (Etikan *et al.*, 2016).

### 3.3.1 Sample size determination

For the administration of questionnaires, since the target population is finite, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method was used to determine the sample size.

$$S = \frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2P(1-P)}$$

Where:

S = Required Sample Size

X= Z value (1.96 for 95% confidence level)

N= Population Size

P= Population proportion

D= Degree of accuracy/margin of error (0.5)

Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula (Appendix 2), 361 community residents were sampled for this study given an estimated total population of 5,550 residents at an estimated average of 6 persons per household, based on the community leader's suggestion which correlated with observation (Table 3.2). The final 361 community residents were chosen by purposive sampling of respondents who agreed to be interviewed during a door-to-door survey. This sample size gives us a confidence level of 95% within a 5% margin of error.

**Table 3.2: Sample size selected using purposive sampling technique**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Estimated Household Population</b>	<b>Estimated Residents Population</b>	<b>Sampled Population</b>
1	Kajola	340	2,040	114
2	Ajejigi	130	780	73
3	Igbo Olodumare	90	540	53
4	Oke Alafia	365	2,190	121
	Total	925	5,550	361

**Source:** Field Survey, 2019.

### **3.4 Methods of data collection**

Data for this study was collected both from primary and secondary sources. Observations and Photography were used to collect data on the visible features of the site, Questionnaires were used to collect survey responses, while Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were used to elicit responses that could generate further insights on the research questions. Data collected via secondary sources include policy statements, maps from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as well as the National Commission for Museums and Monuments.

#### **3.4.1 Sources of data collected for this study.**

From government/official sources:

1. Development plans and maps for Igbo Olodumare for textual/content analysis
2. Relevant policy statements for textual/content analysis

From NGOs and CBOs:

1. Development/activity plans for Igbo Olodumare for textual/content analysis
2. Information on planned/executed trips to Igbo Olodumare for textual/content analysis
3. Level of use/participation in Igbo Olodumare either as a tourist or as part of management for textual/content analysis.

From Community residents:

1. Community perception about Igbo Olodumare
2. Level of community residents' knowledge of the ecotourism potential of Igbo Olodumare.
3. Community participation in the management and planning of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove.
4. Local community's benefits and benefits sharing from the project
5. Current use of resources in the area
6. Level of community residents' willingness to participate in the project.

### **3.5 Description and preparation of Instrument**

The instrument for this study was adopted from a study of capacity building of Community-based Ecotourism (Tang, 2019) and a study of stakeholder perspectives on the potential for Community-based Ecotourism Development (Moswete, 2009) and modified to suit the present study. The Instrument comprises of interviews and questionnaires.

#### **Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions:**

Following Asika's approach (2006), the study carried out key informant interviews and focus group discussions with various community stakeholders as summarised in Table 3.2. The interviewees and focus group discussants included village heads, tourism committee members and palace chiefs in Oke-Igbo, officials of the State Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism and the National Museums and Monuments commission and so on. An interview guide was developed to guide the discussions with the discussants and interviewees (appendix A).

#### ***Questionnaire:***

In addition to the interview guide, a questionnaire was designed for collecting information from community residents. The structured questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part 1 consists of the demographic information of respondents. Part II consists of questions on knowledge of ecotourism potentials, and willingness to participate, among others (appendix A).

#### **3.5.1 Administration of research instrument**

The initial visit and reconnaissance survey took place between 15 and 17 February, 2018 while the interviews and focus group discussion in Igbo Olodumare were conducted and the Questionnaires were administered between 12 April and 24 May 2019 with the kind assistance of Mr. Lanre Okeaje who works as a tour guide for Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, under the employment of Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism. His presence made things easier as the communities were very familiar with him. Sola Okeaje and Victor Okeaje also assisted with the distribution of questionnaires. Since some of the community residents are not literate, we translated the questions into Yoruba and also guided them in filling the questionnaires. Adult



residents of the communities were purposively selected since they are more likely to be able to answer the questions better. The focus group discussions and interviews took place in the respective communities in Oke-Igbo and were mostly conducted in the Yoruba language with a few exceptions.

The interview of Ondo State Ministry of Culture as well as the National Museum and Monuments Key Informant took place at the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Akure, the capital of Ondo State. Casual interactions on trending local issues were used to prepare community residents for the focus group discussions and interviews in order to extract their honest views. Overall, the interviews were conducted under a relaxed atmosphere.

### **3.5.2 Validity and reliability of research instrument**

The instrument was adopted from a study of ecotourism sites by Bagul and Bahar (2009), a study of ecotourism capacity building Tang(2019) alongside a study of stakeholders perspectives by Moswete (2009) and modified to suit the present study. The instrument was also compared with that used by Tijani (2007) in a study of the effectiveness of community-based ecotourism.

In addition, the indicators used for this study were assessed, using the five indicators rating criteria recommended as part of selection procedure by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO, 2004). The indicators rating criteria are:

1. **Relevance:** The indicator should be relevant to the issue or problem being addressed and should accurately reflect the specific aspect of the issue that is being measured.
2. **Feasibility:** The indicator should be feasible to obtain and analyse, with the necessary data being readily available or obtainable through practical means.
3. **Credibility:** The information used for the indicator should be credible and reliable, with sources that are trusted and validated by users of the data.
4. **Clarity:** The indicator should be clear and understandable to users, with a clear definition and explanation of how it is calculated and what it represents.
5. **Comparability:** The indicator should be comparable over time and across jurisdictions or regions, to enable meaningful comparisons and identify trends and patterns over time.

Face validity and content validity were carried out by sharing the proposed research instrument with experienced stakeholders and academics in tourism and hospitality at the department of tourism and hospitality management, Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin, Ondo State. The willingness to participate in community-based ecotourism scale consisting of ten items was subjected to Cronbach's Alpha test using fifty sample respondents in Oke-Igbo by test and re-test method. The results showed a high reliability score of  $r = 0.73$  while the knowledge of ecotourism potentials scale was also subjected to Cronbach's Alpha test and the results showed a high reliability score of  $r = 0.84$ .

### **3.6 Description and measurement of variables**

The Independent variable in this study includes sociodemographic factors such as level of education, religion, length of stay in the community, gender and knowledge of ecotourism potentials while the dependent variable is willingness to participate.

The socio-demographic factors were measured using a respondents survey instrument while the knowledge of ecotourism potentials was measured using the knowledge of ecotourism potentials scale. The dependent variable measured in this study is the willingness to participate which was measured using the willingness to participate in Community Based Ecotourism Development Scale.

This study used observation, questionnaires and interviews to measure selected indicators of willingness to participate which were built into the Research Instrument. This was done by developing an instrument that put the WTO (2004) indicators selection procedure into consideration while adopting instruments earlier used by Tang (2019), Moswete (2009), Bagul and Bahar (2009) and Tijani (2007).

In so doing, Likert-type scale response anchors developed by Vagias (2006) were adopted as seen in Appendix 1.

### **3.7 Methods of data analysis**

The respective objectives were analysed as described below:

**Objective One:** To assess the level of ecotourism knowledge among residents of communities around Igbo Olodumare.

To assess this objective, the responses of the residents of Igbo-Olodumare were subjected to descriptive analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software for statistical analysis.

**Objective Two:** To assess community resident's willingness to participate in Igbo Olodumare Ecotourism project.

To assess this objective, the responses of the residents of Igbo-Olodumare were analysed descriptively, using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software for statistical analysis. Also, responses to Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions were subjected to content analysis using the Nvivo software and presented using the narrative approach.

**Objective Three:** To determine the contributions of socio-demographic factors, and knowledge of ecotourism potentials in predicting willingness to participate in CbED.

To assess this objective, the data collected from the demographic section of the questionnaire was subjected to Multiple Regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance, using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software for statistical analysis.

**Objective Four:** To identify the barriers to residents' participation in the development of Igbo Olodumare as a Community-based ecotourism destination.

To assess this objective, the responses of the residents were subjected to content analysis using the Nvivo software and presented using the narrative approach.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

This study was carried out by making sure that respondents gave their consent before conducting interviews and that confidentiality was carefully considered throughout the data collection, result analysis, and interpretation phases. For this study to adhere to ethical norms, approval was sought before showing people's faces in this work and only those who gave consent have their faces appearing in the study photographs. Where images have been used without approval, the faces have been blurred. This study is not designed to damage anyone or group's reputation or to produce incorrect information in any way. Also, this research is mindful of reducing potential risks to people and/or their reputations. Therefore, this research aimed to be impartial in the design, execution, and reportage of the investigation.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents**

The analysis of sociodemographic characteristics plays a crucial role in understanding the respondents' profiles and their potential influence on the attitudes and behaviours towards the IOSG ecotourism project. This section presents the analyses of the findings and discussion of the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, gender, marital status, educational status, occupation, religion and length of stay in the community. The analysis of sociodemographic characteristics helps to provide insights into the nature of the respondents as essential factors that may shape individuals' perspectives and responses to the survey questions. They were also used as independent variables for the multiple linear regression analysis to determine the influence of sociodemographic variables on willingness to participate in the IOSG ecotourism development project.

#### **Age**

Table 4.0a presents the distribution of respondents' ages in the study, providing valuable insights into the age demographics of participants. The results indicate that all respondents are adults, as they are above the age of 18, which is crucial for ensuring their maturity and capacity to engage with the research questions and provide relevant responses.

The data reveals that 7.2% of respondents fall within the age range of 18-20, 26.6% are aged between 21-39, 32.7% are between 40-59, and 25.8% are in the age group of 60-79. This distribution signifies that the study successfully targeted a diverse range of adult participants, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives and opinions of individuals across various life stages.

**Table 4.0a: Age of the respondents**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Age</b>		
18 - 20 years	26	7.2
21-39 years	96	26.6
40-59 years	118	32.7
60-79 years	93	25.8
80 and above	28	7.7
Total	361	100

**Source: Field survey, 2019**

Interestingly, the modal age category of respondents was found to be between 40 and 59 years, with 32.7% of respondents falling within this age range. This means that most participants were not only adults but were also middle-aged individuals. Middle-aged adults often possess a wealth of life experience, which can provide valuable insights into the community's attitudes and perceptions towards community-based ecotourism development.

It is worth noting that a similar study conducted on sacred groves in Nigeria, utilized a different categorization of age groups but similarly limited responses to adult participants. The findings from that study showed a modal category of ages between 36 and 60 years, accounting for 45% of the results (Adeyanju, 2020). This similarity in modal age category between the two studies may indicate a trend towards middle-aged individuals being more actively engaged in matters related to sacred groves and ecotourism development.

The predominance of middle-aged participants in both studies can have significant implications for community-based ecotourism development. Middle-aged individuals often hold influential positions in their communities, possess experience and knowledge about local traditions and practices, and have a vested interest in the long-term well-being of the community and its natural resources.

In conclusion, Table 4.0a provides a comprehensive overview of the age distribution of respondents in the study. Most participants were middle-aged adults, indicating that the research captured the perspectives of individuals who are likely to be influential in the community. These findings align with a similar study in Nigeria and underscore the importance of engaging middle-aged individuals in community-based ecotourism development initiatives, as they can contribute valuable insights and play a significant role in shaping the project's success and sustainability.



### **Gender and marital status**

Table 4.0b presents the distribution of respondents' gender and marital status, providing valuable insights into the gender demographics and marital status of participants in the study. The data indicates that 60% of respondents are male, while 40% are female. In terms of marital status, 67% of respondents are married, 8.6% are single, 2.5% are divorced, 9.4% are widowed, 7.8% are engaged and 4.7% are separated.

Understanding gender distribution is crucial because men and women may have different roles, responsibilities, and access to resources within the community, which can influence their willingness and ability to participate in ecotourism development initiatives. Studies like Adeyanju (2020) have also recognized the significance of measuring respondents' gender in ecotourism research. Gender plays a critical role in shaping perceptions, behaviours, and decision-making processes, making it essential to consider gender dynamics in the planning and implementation of community-based ecotourism projects. By identifying potential gender-related barriers or preferences for participation, practitioners can design strategies to ensure equal opportunities and representation for both men and women in the ecotourism development process.

Regarding marital status, the modal category of respondents' marital status is "married" (67%) further emphasising the importance of engaging married individuals in the ecotourism project. Married respondents may have distinct priorities and considerations, including concerns about their families' well-being and the community's long-term prosperity. Engaging married individuals in decision-making can foster a sense of shared responsibility and ensure that the project aligns with the community's social and economic needs.

Furthermore, understanding the distribution of respondents' marital status can help identify potential barriers or incentives related to participation. For instance, divorced, widowed, or separated individuals may have different levels of time availability or responsibilities compared to married individuals. Recognizing these differences can aid in tailoring outreach and engagement strategies to ensure inclusivity and meaningful participation for all community members.

**Table 4.0b: Gender and Marital Status of the respondents**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	218	60
Female	143	40
Total	361	100
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	31	8.6
Married	242	67
Divorced	9	2,5
Separated	17	4.7
Engaged	28	7.8
Widowed	34	9.4
Total	361	100

**Source: Field survey, 2019**

### **Educational status**

The analysis of respondents' educational status, as presented in Table 4.0c, provides valuable insights into the level of education within the surveyed community. The data indicates that 28.5% of respondents have primary education as their highest level of education, 22.7% have completed secondary school, 35.5% have attained tertiary education, 8.9% have some form of vocational education and 4.4% have no formal education. Importantly, this signifies that 58.2% of respondents possess post-primary education (secondary and/or tertiary), while a substantial 86.7% have attained at least some level of education, demonstrating a high overall level of literacy among residents. The prevalence of respondents with post-primary education, representing a combined percentage of those with secondary and tertiary education, suggests that a significant portion of the community has attained a certain level of knowledge and skills beyond basic education. This finding has implications for their potential engagement in the ecotourism project, as individuals with higher education levels may possess a better understanding of the project's objectives, benefits, and potential impacts.

The substantial percentage (95.6%) of respondents with at least some level of education (primary and above) is indicative of a community with a generally high level of literacy among adult residents. This high literacy level is an encouraging factor for community-based ecotourism development initiatives, as it suggests that the community possesses the cognitive capacity to understand and actively engage in discussions and decision-making processes related to the project.

Like Khosdel and Bakhstan (2015), who investigated the influence of educational status on willingness to participate, the educational status of respondents in this study is also likely to play a pivotal role in shaping their attitudes towards the ecotourism development project. Those with higher educational attainment may be more inclined to critically assess the benefits and potential drawbacks of the project, resulting in more informed and thoughtful contributions to the decision-making process.

**Table 4.0c: Educational qualifications of the respondents**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Educational qualification</b>		
None	16	4.4
Primary	103	28.5
Secondary	82	22.7
Vocational	32	8.9
Tertiary	128	35.5
Total	361	100

**Source: Field survey, 2019**

However, it is important to consider the potential implications of educational disparities within the community. The presence of individuals with no formal education (4.4%) underscores the need for effective communication strategies that ensure inclusivity and understanding across all educational levels. Overcoming potential barriers related to educational differences can be achieved through community workshops, informative materials, and interactive sessions that cater to varying levels of literacy.

### **Occupation**

Table 4.0d provides a comprehensive breakdown of respondents' occupations, shedding light on the diverse employment profiles within the surveyed community. The data reveals that 60.1% of respondents are engaged in farming, followed by 8% who are teachers, 6.9% in trading, 3.6% in the medical field, 6.7% as artisans, 0.8% in transportation, 8.1% are retired with no definite source of income and 5.8% are below retirement age but unemployed. Notably, farming emerges as the modal occupational category among respondents, with trading closely following at 6.9%. This occupational distribution is consistent with the agrarian nature of the communities surrounding the IOSG.

The prominence of farming as the dominant occupation aligns with the traditionally agrarian landscape of the area. The high percentage of respondents engaged in farming underscores the deep connection between the community and the local environment. This connection can be leveraged when involving farmers in the ecotourism project, as they possess first-hand knowledge of the land, its resources, and potential conservation challenges.

The presence of teachers (8%) and individuals in the medical field (3.6%) suggests a diversity of expertise within the community. Teachers and medical professionals often have well-rounded insights and a broader understanding of social and developmental issues, which can contribute to a more holistic approach to ecotourism development that encompasses both economic and social dimensions.

The significant representation of traders (6.9%) signifies a segment of the population engaged in commercial activities, which can influence their perceptions of the potential economic benefits of ecotourism.

#### **Table 4.0d: Occupation of the respondents**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farming	217	60.1
Transport	3	0.8
Teaching	29	8
Medicals	13	3.6
Trading	25	6.9
Artisans	24	6.7
Retired	29	8.1
Unemployed	21	5.8
Total		

**Source: Field survey, 2019**

Engaging traders in the project planning process can help ensure that their business interests align with the objectives of ecotourism development and that the benefits are widely distributed within the community.

The modal occupation of farming and the relatively high percentage of respondents engaged in trading reflect the socio-cultural and economic dynamics of the community. This distribution underscores the importance of considering residents' occupational backgrounds when designing and implementing ecotourism initiatives. Each occupation brings unique perspectives, needs, and concerns to the table, and understanding these can help tailor the project to cater to the diverse interests of the community. Similar to Adeyanju (2020), which also examined the occupation of respondents, this study recognizes that occupation is a significant sociodemographic factor that can influence residents' inclinations to participate in the ecotourism project. Farmers, traders, teachers, and other professionals may have varying levels of familiarity with ecotourism concepts and different expectations for the project's outcomes. By accounting for these variations, practitioners can ensure that the project resonates with a wide range of community members and addresses their specific needs and aspirations.

### **Religion**

Table 4.0e presents a breakdown of respondents' religious affiliations, shedding light on the religious diversity within the surveyed community. The data indicates that 92.5% of respondents identify as Christians, 5.3% are Muslims, and 2.2% adhere to traditional religious beliefs. These findings demonstrate a predominance of Christian respondents, with smaller percentages representing the Muslim and Traditionalist communities.

The high proportion of Christian respondents (92.5%) underscores the significance of Christianity as a prominent religious affiliation within the community. This religious dynamic can shape individuals' values, beliefs, and attitudes towards community-based ecotourism development. The recognition of Christianity as the dominant religious group within the community also has implications for how ecotourism initiatives are framed and communicated, as they may need to resonate with Christian values and ethics.

**Table 4.0e: Religion of the respondents**

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<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	334	92.5
Muslim	19	5.3
Traditional	8	2.2
Total	361	100

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**Source: Field survey, 2019**



The presence of Muslim respondents (5.3%) and traditionalists (2.2%) highlights the importance of religious inclusivity in ecotourism development projects. Recognizing and respecting the diversity of religious beliefs fosters an environment of acceptance and understanding, which is vital for successful community engagement. This religious diversity also offers an opportunity to incorporate a range of perspectives and ethical considerations when designing ecotourism initiatives that align with the community's values and cultural identity.

Like the findings of Adeyanju (2020), this study also acknowledges the majority presence of Christians among respondents. This consistency suggests that Christianity plays a pivotal role in shaping the values and social fabric of the community, further emphasizing the importance of understanding its influence on residents' perceptions and attitudes towards ecotourism development.

Considering the religious landscape is essential for effective project planning and implementation. Religious beliefs can influence perceptions of the environment, the significance of cultural heritage sites like the IOSG, and the perceived appropriateness of certain ecotourism activities. Addressing these influences ensures that ecotourism projects are culturally sensitive and resonate with the diverse beliefs of the community.

### **Length of stay in the community**

Table 4.0f provides a comprehensive analysis of the length of stay of respondents in the communities surrounding the IOSG. The data has been categorized into ten-year intervals for clarity in presentation, offering insights into the tenure of residents within the community. This information is critical for understanding the community's historical connection to the area and its potential implications for their perspectives and engagement in the ecotourism development project.

The data shows a varied distribution of respondents' length of stay, reflecting the community's diverse experiences and attachments to the area. The breakdown reveals that 23.8% of respondents have resided in the communities for one to ten years, 17.7% for eleven to twenty years, 10.5% for twenty-one to thirty years, 8.0% for thirty-one to forty years, 20.3% for forty-one to fifty years, and 19.7% for over fifty years.

The mean length of stay of respondents, calculated to be 29.08 years with a standard deviation of 21.45 ( $\bar{x} = 29.08 \pm 21.45$ ), provides an understanding of the average tenure of the surveyed individuals.

**Table 4.0f: Length of stay of the respondents in the communities.**

<b>Length of Stay (in years)</b>	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
1-10	86	23.8
11-20	64	17.7
21-30	38	10.5
31-40	29	8.0
41-50	73	20.3
Over 50 years	71	19.7
Total		
Weighted Mean	$\bar{x} = 29.08 \pm 21.45$	

**Source: Field survey, 2019**

The relatively high standard deviation indicates a wide range of lengths of stay, suggesting a rich mix of residents who have either recently settled in the communities or have deep historical roots.

The finding that responses were mostly collected from household heads, who are typically older and more established in the community, reinforces the significance of understanding the length of stay. Longer tenures may imply a stronger connection to the land, cultural heritage, and traditional practices, while shorter stays may indicate newer residents with potentially different perspectives and priorities. Comparably, studies like Moswete (2009) have also examined the length of stay of respondents in the study area. This consistency in approach indicates the importance of capturing this data point to gain insights into residents' historical ties to the community and their potential influence on community-based ecotourism development.

Incorporating the length of stay data into the study's analysis enriches the understanding of the community's attachment to the land and its potential impact on the ecotourism project. Longer tenures may signify a deeper appreciation for local culture and environment, offering a valuable perspective on the conservation goals of ecotourism. Conversely, newer residents may bring fresh ideas and viewpoints that can contribute to the project's innovation and adaptability.

#### **4.2 The nature of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove**

Inspired by the writings of famous Yoruba novelist, D.O Fagunwa, the Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove is a section of the Oke-Igbo forest landscape with unique rock formations, which have led to equally unique biodiversity. This forest landscape is being preserved mainly through indigenous conservation methods, based on the belief of the locals that the forest is inhabited by gods, thereby making it a sacred grove. Although the National Commission for Museum and Monuments (NCMM) as well as the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism are currently working toward the designation of Igbo Olodumare as a Natural Monument, which is in the Category III of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, there has not yet been a formal declaration of a protected area status by law.

A government official from the National Commission for Museums and Monuments stated that:

Efforts are being made to declare Igbo Olodumare as a National Monument and possibly a United Nations World Heritage site just like Osun-Osogbo Grove, to further its preservation and bring it to national and international limelight. A bill has been submitted to the national assembly to make Igbo Olodumare a National Monument, alongside over one hundred other sites across the country. We are waiting for the national assembly to pass it to law **(KII, Deputy Director, NCMM, 2019)**.

In the meantime, however, it is currently recognized as a tourist destination on the state website, in various marketing materials, and reports (Plate 4.1).

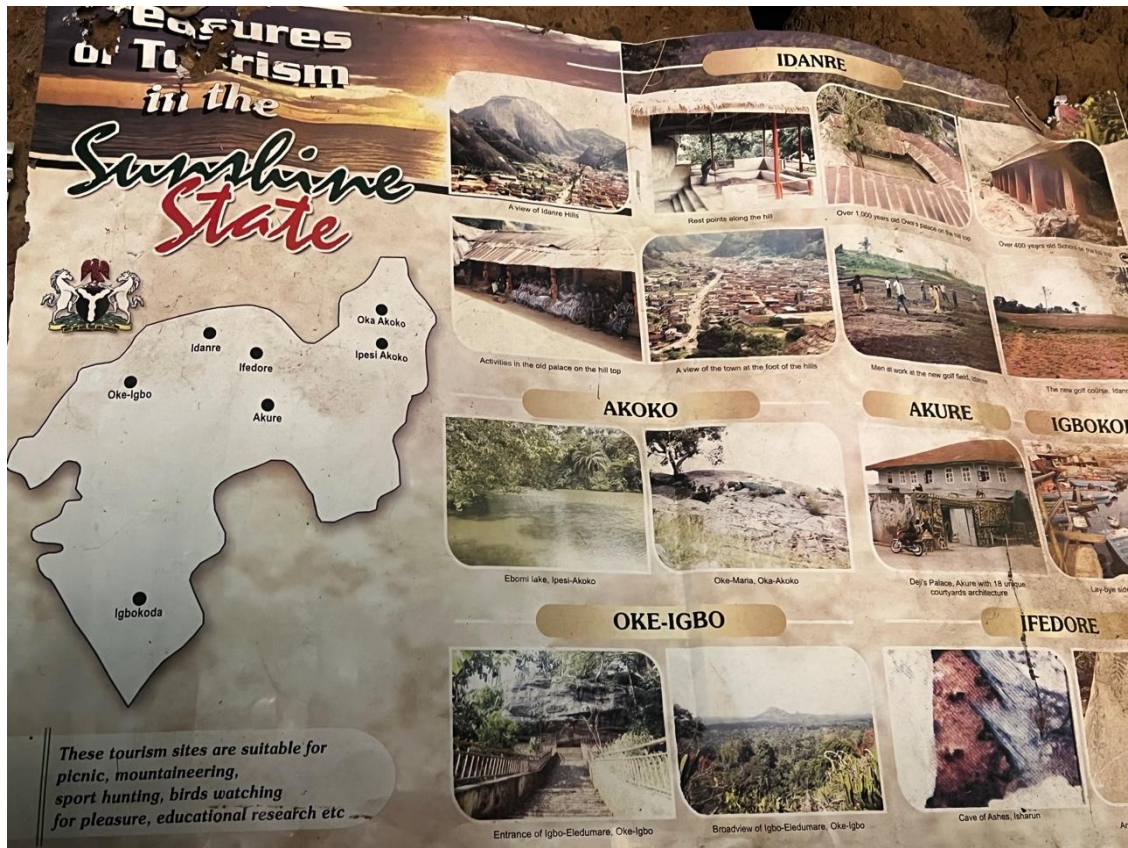


Plate 4.1: An Ondo State Government poster, displaying the main tourist attractions in Ondo State, with Igbo Olodumare listed under Oke-Igbo. Source: Field survey, 2019.

As a sacred grove, Igbo Olodumare has a local, traditional priest, called Olu-Ode, who oversees rituals in Igbo Olodumare. Rituals are carried out from time to time, with animal sacrifices and food items for the peace and development of the Igbo Olodumare Community. According to a community leader in Igbo Olodumare, the last Olu-Ode is yet to be replaced since his demise:

The Olu-Ode is the high priest of Igbo Olodumare, he is responsible for carrying out sacrifices to the gods, to ensure that the spirits in Igbo Olodumare and the human beings in the communities around it, live in harmony. Also, human beings are not supposed to enter Igbo Olodumare Sacred grove just anyhow and anytime, without the appropriate sacrifices by the Olu-Ode. However, the Olu-Ode has passed on and is yet to be replaced (**KII, Community leader, Igbo Olodumare, 2019**).

As a tourist destination, Igbo-Olodumare leaves much to be desired in terms of accessibility, accommodations, attractions, amenities, and activities which are the 5 As of a successful tourist destination.

### **Accessibility**

Even though it was once a tarred road, tarred by the western region government in the 1960's, the road to Igbo Olodumare from Oke-Igbo has since become mainly earthen road with all the tar completely gone in most parts. Therefore, the road to Igbo Olodumare is normally plied using a four-wheel drive especially during the rainy season when it becomes slippery.

In the 1960's, the road to Igbo Olodumare was tarred from Oke-Igbo to Igbo Olodumare and beyond all the way to Alarere at the border of Ondo state with Osun state. This was done by Chief Mrs Felicia Akintunde Ighodalo who is the first female permanent secretary in Nigeria, under the western region government at the time. She is also my cousin, an indigene of Oke-Igbo (**KII, Community leader, Igbo Olodumare, 2019**).

The accessibility of Igbo Olodumare is so poor, that visitor turn out is low. Unfortunately, there are no proper records of tourist visits as documentation is poor. It is evident that not all tourists who visit end up filling any form of visitor's records book. Even though the tour guide claimed that some tourists had visited earlier in the year, there were no records of such visits as of March 2019. The record book suggests very few and far between visits to Igbo Olodumare. This can be attributed to several

factors ranging from bad roads (Plate 4.2) to poor publicity/marketing to fear of insecurity, fear of the gods and even absence of a proper management structure/functional office in charge and so on. It is clear, that Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove has been low on accessibility, and it reflects in the poor visitor turnout.

The villages between Oke-Igbo and Igbo Olodumare have developed essentially through spontaneous order around farm clusters along the road that leads from Oke-Igbo to Igbo Olodumare but they all look forwards to the development of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove being the main attraction in that area.



**Plate 4.2: The best section of the road to Igbo Olodumare from Oke-Igbo, showing remnants of the old tar which has completely washed off in most other parts. Source: Field survey, 2019.**



## **Accommodation**

Nearly all the houses in Igbo Olodumare and surrounding communities are mud houses (Plate 4.3). Construction of mud houses usually happen through communal efforts and can be completed within a week. These houses are eco-friendly and can easily fit into an eco-village framework which can readily lead to further attraction of tourists. When asked about interest in building more modern versions of such mud-houses as eco-lodges for visitors, focus group discussants and key informants expressed eagerness to support such developments in every way they can. According to one of the local chiefs:

Of course, we will be more than happy to have such developments if there is funding, we have lands that are suitable and mud in abundance. We also have youths that can do the work, so tell your people that we are ready, if you know anyone that wants to come and build such, let them come. If they want to stay with us in our present mud houses too, we are ready to host them, but I know they will prefer more modern ones. **(KII, Community leader, Igbo Olodumare, 2019).**

Despite the absence of public power supply, such eco-lodges, if constructed can become a solar powered, off-grid eco-village community, which can therefore benefit from international support of eco-village networks such as the Global Eco-Village Network (GEN). It can also double as a literary village, a film village and so on while offering decent homestay accommodation services which community residents expressed willingness to offer. Constructing eco-lodges, using locally sourced materials will be consistent with the local architecture and culture of the people while building more decent accommodation and improving livelihoods. With such developments, Igbo Olodumare can easily become an eco-village, officially recognised, and supported by the global eco-village network. It can also be further on its way to becoming a national monument and then a world heritage site just like the Bafut world heritage site in Cameroon. Bafut world heritage site was built from local architecture based on locally sourced building materials like those available in Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove.



**Plate 4.3: A mud house under construction in Igbo Olodumare. Source: Field survey, 2019.**

### **Amenities**

A school, a basic health centre and mobile phone network are perhaps the only public amenities that are truly functional in any of the communities around Igbo Olodumare. While a tarred road once led to Igbo Olodumare from Oke-Igbo, it is now reduced to an earthen road with just a few and far between traces of tar left. The villages around Igbo Olodumare have never been electrified even though electric poles and power cables were once installed from Oke-Igbo, all the way to Igbo Olodumare in 2003, it was never completed, never connected to the actual power grid and now, most of the power cables and poles have fallen apart. Residents must rely solely on individual power generators. Similarly, the water supply in Igbo Olodumare and environs is mainly from streams, springs and sometimes boreholes. There is no library, no hotels, no guesthouses, and the space that serves as “tourism office” is a mud house, belonging to one of the locals. Just as applies with the eco-lodges discussed earlier, locally sourced materials can be used to build a much more decent and tourist-friendly environment with relaxation centres, lecture halls and meeting rooms, outdoor and indoor sports facilities, and perhaps even a film studio can be provided alongside a library, museum, or an art gallery and so on.

### **Attractions**

The Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove stands as an unparalleled attraction not only within Oke-Igbo town but also within the larger Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo Local Government Area. It also holds a significant position as one of the primary attractions in the broader region of Ondo State, showcasing its cultural and ecological significance.

This sacred grove draws visitors with its rich natural beauty, cultural heritage, and captivating tales inspired by the writings of D.O Fagunwa. While Fagunwa's narratives have served as an inspiration, the attractions within the grove are intricately woven from the very fabric of its biological and geological diversity. This approach ensures an authentic representation of the grove's true essence, aligning it with the natural world while also celebrating its cultural importance.

Among the numerous attractions within the sacred grove are notable sites that beckon visitors to explore its secrets and beauty. These sites, deeply rooted in Fagunwa's literary world and founded upon the grove's actual biological and geological diversity, offer a unique blend of mythology and reality. Among them are Oke-langbodo, Ogbun Ainisale, Oja Awon Iwin, Aginju Idakeroro and so on.

These attractions, though inspired by Fagunwa's imaginative tales, are grounded in the grove's actual ecological richness. Their incorporation into the ecotourism experience allows visitors to engage with both the cultural heritage and the natural wonders that the sacred grove embodies.

A subsequent section of this study delves deeper into the individual sites within the Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, providing an in-depth exploration of their significance, ecological characteristics, and cultural importance. By understanding these attractions on a granular level, stakeholders can create meaningful ecotourism experiences that simultaneously celebrate the grove's biodiversity and honour its cultural heritage.

### **Activities**

Due to its unique ecological and geological features, the Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove offers the possibility of a diverse range of activities that can captivate the interest of visitors. These activities include hiking, bird-viewing, tree climbing, cycling, farm tours, and more. Each of these activities provides an immersive experience, allowing visitors to engage with the grove's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and ecological diversity. The availability of these activities creates a well-rounded ecotourism experience that caters to various interests and preferences.

However, despite the popularity of the sacred grove and its range of activities, the deplorable state of accommodations, accessibility, amenities, and attractions within the area means that not many of the activities get to be carried out either. This underscores the infancy of Igbo Olodumare's tourism growth, despite having been promoted by Fagunwa for over half a century. Considering Butler's model of tourism development, this suggests that while the destination may have passed the discovery stage, it lingers at the involvement stage. Stakeholders are yet to fully get involved in developing the site's potential.

Addressing the infrastructural challenges is essential not only for boosting visitor turnover and tourism growth but also for enhancing the overall quality of life for community residents. By improving the accessibility, accommodations, amenities, activities, and attractions, the local community can benefit from increased economic opportunities and an enhanced standard of living. The interplay between tourism development and community well-being highlights the symbiotic relationship that exists between these aspects.

Efforts to upgrade the sacred grove's tourism offerings and infrastructure hold the potential to create a positive feedback loop. As the destination becomes more attractive to visitors, it can generate increased revenue and investments, leading to the improvement of accommodations, amenities, and accessibility. This, in turn, will further enhance the visitors' experience and encourage repeat visits, contributing to sustainable tourism growth and community prosperity.

In summary, the Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove offers a variety of engaging activities to its visitors. However, despite its popularity, the destination's tourism infrastructure remains underdeveloped, placing it in the involvement stage of Butler's model. The community's willingness to participate in tourism-related activities highlights its potential for growth. By addressing key challenges and improving the 5 A's, the sacred grove can transition to the development stage, enhancing both tourism and community well-being.

#### **4.2.1 D.O Fagunwa's writings and his conservation agenda**

The grove at Igbo Olodumare was first promoted by D. O Fagunwa who brought fame to the grove through his writings, attracting local and global attention to the destination, which thereby got its name from Fagunwa. The interviews and Focus Group Discussions established the fact that D. O Fagunwa, an illustrious son of Oke-Igbo, is recognised as the founder of Igbo Olodumare.

The story of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove started essentially with the discovery of the grove, by D. O Fagunwa. Fágunwà is most known for his novels, but he was also an accomplished travel writer, with a two-volume travel memoir, *Ìrinàjò, Apá Kinní* (1949) and *Ìrinàjò, Apá Keji* (1951). Even though his five novels are fictional, the inspiration has come partly from his sojourn as a nature explorer into the forests around Oke-Igbo of which the forest patch which became Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove is the most famous.

Following the writings of D.O Fagunwa, the grove was set aside by the community as a sacred grove thereby giving the grove the status of a community-protected area. Despite the state government's takeover of Igbo Olodumare as a tourist destination, government presence and activities in these parts have been very limited. There are no facilities for tourists, the destination scores very low on accessibility, amenities, attractions, accommodation, and activities.

In his writings, Fagunwa pushed a conservation agenda when he wrote for instance to prohibit killing of birds for no just reason (Badejo, 2012). He wrote about the territory of birds, which brave warriors must pass through before they can reach Òkè Lángbòdó. This territory he describes as having a pro-conservation notice at its entrance, which indicates Fagunwa's inclination towards wildlife conservation which is also reflective of traditional and indigenous African methods of conservation. The notice as translated to English by Soyinka (2010), states that "The Creator does not mind that birds be killed for a good purpose, but whosoever has at any time wantonly killed a bird, to him this town is forbidden" (Badejo, 2012).

In Ireke Onibudo (Fagunwa, 2005), Badejo's translation of Àrògìdìgbà's commentary on the wickedness perpetrated by humans, against aquatic life, reads, "We suffer a great deal in your hands before you kill us in gross abuse of the advantage God gave you over us" (Fagunwa, 2005 in Badejo, 2012).

#### **4.2.2 Biodiversity in the Grove**

During field tours of the Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, a noticeable absence of significant wildlife species was observed. Curious about this apparent paucity of wildlife, the tour guide was interviewed to gain insight into the matter. The guide provided reassurances that the grove indeed harboured a diverse range of wildlife, but that these creatures tend to remain hidden during daylight hours. However, on probing further, it became increasingly evident that the grove was indeed experiencing a shortage of wildlife. Upon consulting secondary sources, studies confirmed the presence of rare tree species, unique flora diversity and density of Igbo Olodumare, compared to other Sacred Groves in Southwest Nigeria (Olusola and Onyekwelu 2014; Oyelowo *et.al.*, 2020) but none of the studies available indicated notable fauna species in the grove. This suggests that the grove may have suffered a decline in its once-abundant wildlife populations. Despite the tour guide's claims of wildlife's nocturnal habits, the evidence suggested that the grove was indeed facing a scarcity of diverse and significant wildlife species.

Nevertheless, amid this concern, there emerged a glimmer of hope in the form of rare tree species that persisted within the grove. Some of these trees, including the endangered *Ricinodendron heudolotii* and *Sterculia rhinopetala*, serve as valuable

indicators of the grove's ecological importance and its potential to support diverse forms of life. The top five dominant tree species identified in Igbo Olodumare, as documented by Onyekwelu and Olusola (2014), include *Hildegardia barteri*, *Ricinodendron heudelotii*, *Sterculia rhinopetala*, *Cola hipsida*, and *Bridelia micrantha* with *Hildegardia barteri* being identified as endemic to Igbo Olodumare. A study that compared ground flora species richness and diversity in five traditional forests (Igbo-Ile, Igbo-Oba, Igbo-Olua, Igbo-Olodumare Igbo-Gbopo) in Southwest Nigeria, found that Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove had the highest ground flora density (6,860 plants/ha) of the five traditional forests (Oyelowo *et.al.*, 2020).

According to Onyekwelu and Olusola (2014), 32% of the tree species found in the sacred groves of Osun-Osogbo and Igbo-Olodumare are endangered. Another study of sacred groves in Southwest Nigeria found *Hildegardia barterii*, *Piptadeniastrum africanum* and *Irvingia smithii* to be present only in Igbo-Olodumare (Onyekwelu *et.al.*, 2020).

Plate 4.4 visually captures the lush green expanse of Igbo Olodumare, hinting at the potential for the grove to serve as a haven for wildlife. However, addressing the current dearth of wildlife will require a comprehensive and collaborative effort towards biodiversity conservation. While the grove's verdant beauty is evident, the absence of significant wildlife species underscores the need for a more concerted approach that encompasses habitat restoration, species reintroduction, and sustainable management practices.



**Plate 4.4: A section of Igbo Olodumare valley, showing a dense vegetation cover, as seen from the top of Oke-Langbodo. Source: Field Survey, 2018**



The grove's potential as a wildlife sanctuary is palpable but harnessing it will necessitate intentional and dedicated measures. Reintroducing diverse wildlife species will require careful planning and the consideration of ecological dynamics. Initiatives aimed at bolstering biodiversity can lead to a more resilient and thriving ecosystem, aligning with the overarching goal of preserving the grove's natural heritage for future generations. The grove's potential as a sanctuary for wildlife is underscored by its lush green environment and the presence of rare tree species. Addressing the dearth of wildlife will necessitate focused efforts towards biodiversity conservation and species reintroduction, ultimately contributing to the grove's ecological vitality and the enrichment of its ecotourism experience. Since most hunting occurs near human settlements and key access points to forests, such as roads or rivers (Lameed *et.al.*, 2015), given the proximity of human settlements to Igbo Olodumare, it is important to further sensitise residents about the need for conservation.

An official of the NCMM expressed concerns about the preservation of the grove in its pristine, natural state since locals have apparently been engaged in hunting and tree-felling in the area:

The only problem is the cutting down of trees by the community. If the community leaders can work together to prevent the cutting of trees and killing of animals, it will make it easier for the site to become acceptable as a National Monument and/or a United Nations World Heritage Site which is the dream of everyone here. We will all like to help make it possible for this dream to come true (**KII, Deputy Director, NCMM, 2019**).

One of the community leaders countered the issue of tree-felling when he suggested that old trees need to be felled because they harbour spirits that need to be released. According to him, trees also grow old as human beings grow old:

Trees grow old, just like human beings grow old. When a tree gets old to a certain stage, it begins to harbour spirits and so it must be felled in order to release the spirits. However, we will continue to do our best to reduce tree-felling to improve the chances of making Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove a National Monument and World Heritage Site (**KII, Community leader, Oke-Alafia, 2019**).

This response suggests that the tree felling was a sort of ritual that needed to be performed to release spirits that are trapped within the trees.

Observation however shows that there is an economic aspect to the tree-felling as one could see several instances of harvested lumber, by the roadside, close to the grove, waiting to be transported (Plate 4.5). This might also mean that despite the traditional beliefs that aid conservation efforts, locals do not have sufficient incentives to completely desist from tree-felling activities.



**Plate 4.5: Lumber in Igbo Olodumare, freshly sliced into planks, ready for transportation to the city. Source: Field Survey, 2019**

### 4.2.3 Traditional beliefs

Even though D. O Fagunwa was himself a Christian who taught Christian morals, his writings have nevertheless gotten mixed up with indigenous Yoruba traditional belief systems such that his writings about various spiritual beings in Igbo Olodumare has become the basis on which Igbo Olodumare is now revered as a Sacred Grove with D. O Fagunwa, considered as its founder. The locals believe that spirit beings trade in Oja awon iwin till this date and even claim that one can see them if he does the appropriate rituals to open his eyes to the metaphysical. According to Mr Lanre:

There is no rearing of goats in Igbo Olodumare because the spirits at Oke Langbodo have goats who also come to the community. It is therefore a taboo to rear goats in Igbo Olodumare, to avoid killing the goats of the gods (wild goats). At the entrance gate, students are warned never to say negative words in the grove, because it comes to pass. There is a god statue in Igbo Olodumare, where people go to pray, and the prayers come to pass. Also, it is a taboo to cut trees or hunt in the grove (**KII, Tour Guide, Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, 2019**).

However, it is noteworthy that being farmers, if free range goats are allowed, they may also destroy some of the farmers produce. This might also be a reason to discourage the rearing of goats. The locals believe also that in Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, snails grow literally bigger than tortoises (Plate 4.6). This is a claim that has come from the writings of Fagunwa but cannot be ascertained on the ground as the tour guide was unable to show any example of such. When pressed further on it, he claimed that they are hard to come by:

It was a common sight in the olden days but nowadays they are hard to come by, but they are still there in the grove. Some of the snails truly get bigger than the tortoise but they are not readily available. If you want to see the various animals and beings in the forest, you will come for a ritual that will make them reveal themselves to you. (**KII, Tour Guide, Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, 2019**).



**Plate 4.6: A signpost in Yoruba language, welcoming visitors to Igbo Olodumare, Oke-Igbo, where “snails are bigger than tortoise”. Source: Field Survey, 2019**

#### **4.2.4 Key places/attractions in Oke-Igbo town, connected with Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove.**

Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove is the main attraction not just in Oke-Igbo town but in the entire Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo Local Government Area of Ondo State. On approaching Oke-Igbo from Ondo Town, one is first welcome by a sign which welcomes visitors to Oke-Igbo, the home of Igbo Olodumare Tourist Centre. While this may not always be feasible, visitors to Igbo-Olodumare are expected to visit the Oba's palace in Oke-Igbo on a courtesy visit before proceeding to Igbo-Olodumare. The tour guide from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism often begins his job from the Oba's palace, where he and other elders share the history of Oke-Igbo and of Igbo-Olodumare. At the palace, the visitors can sometimes be given an official welcome with cultural troupes and the like. Other notable places within Oke-Igbo that relate to Fagunwa includes his house in Oduduwa Street, Oke-Igbo, St. Luke Anglican Church in Wasimi Street, which he attended when he was alive and where he was eventually buried.

### **The signpost welcoming visitors to Oke-Igbo**

The desire of Oke-Igbo residents to welcome visitors to Oke-Igbo as tourists is evident in various ways, one of which, is the signage that welcomes travellers to Oke-Igbo, put up by the Oke-Igbo Economic Development Initiative (plate 4.7). The signpost is a major landmark along the Ondo – Ife Road, just before Oke-Igbo Juncture where it can be seen by the roadside. It is made of concrete and tiles and clearly states the intention to welcome visitors to Oke-Igbo, being the home of Igbo Olodumare Tourist Centre. While it is not uncommon for towns to have a welcome signage along the road approaching their respective towns, the additional statement about Oke-Igbo being the home of Igbo Olodumare Tourist Centre shows the intent to call attention to this destination in Oke-Igbo. It also suggests that Igbo Olodumare is the most significant destination in Oke-Igbo, for it to be so mentioned in a signage that welcomes visitors to the town itself. While the signage itself is beautiful and informative, a little gardening around this signage, to keep away the tall weeds may help make it more attractive and encourage visitors to stop by and pose for a picture beside the signage, which will further help to market the destination.



**Plate 4.7: A signpost, welcoming visitors to Oke-Igbo, the home of Igbo Olodumare. Source: Field Survey, 2019**



## **The Oke-Igbo Palace**

As visitors arrive in Oke-Igbo with the intent of visiting Igbo Olodumare, one of the places where they often stop over, especially when they have come in large numbers, is the Oke-Igbo palace where they are received by palace chiefs and members of the Oke-Igbo Tourism Committee. There, visitors are formally welcome and told the history of Oke-Igbo, about D.O Fagunwa and about Igbo Olodumare before they depart to the destination proper. Such visits to the palace are not mandatory. However, palace representatives expressed their expectations for such visits to take place before visitors proceed to Igbo Olodumare. However, such palace visits need to be carefully planned and managed to avoid misunderstanding such as once led to a crisis in the past, when Oke-Igbo youths imagined that visitors made huge payments to the palace before proceeding to Oke-Igbo, and thus blocked the way, demanding their share.

The Oke-Igbo palace is built on a hilltop at the heart of Oke-Igbo town (Plate 4.8). As part of projects that can have an impact on tourism development in the area, a new and bigger palace is under construction right in front of the current palace, which will have a bigger capacity to accommodate even more visitors, have a museum within it where visitors can see relics of Oke-Igbo history, it will have halls where events can be hosted and so on, when complete. With the construction of the new palace, Oke-Igbo will be better positioned to receive visitors in the future.



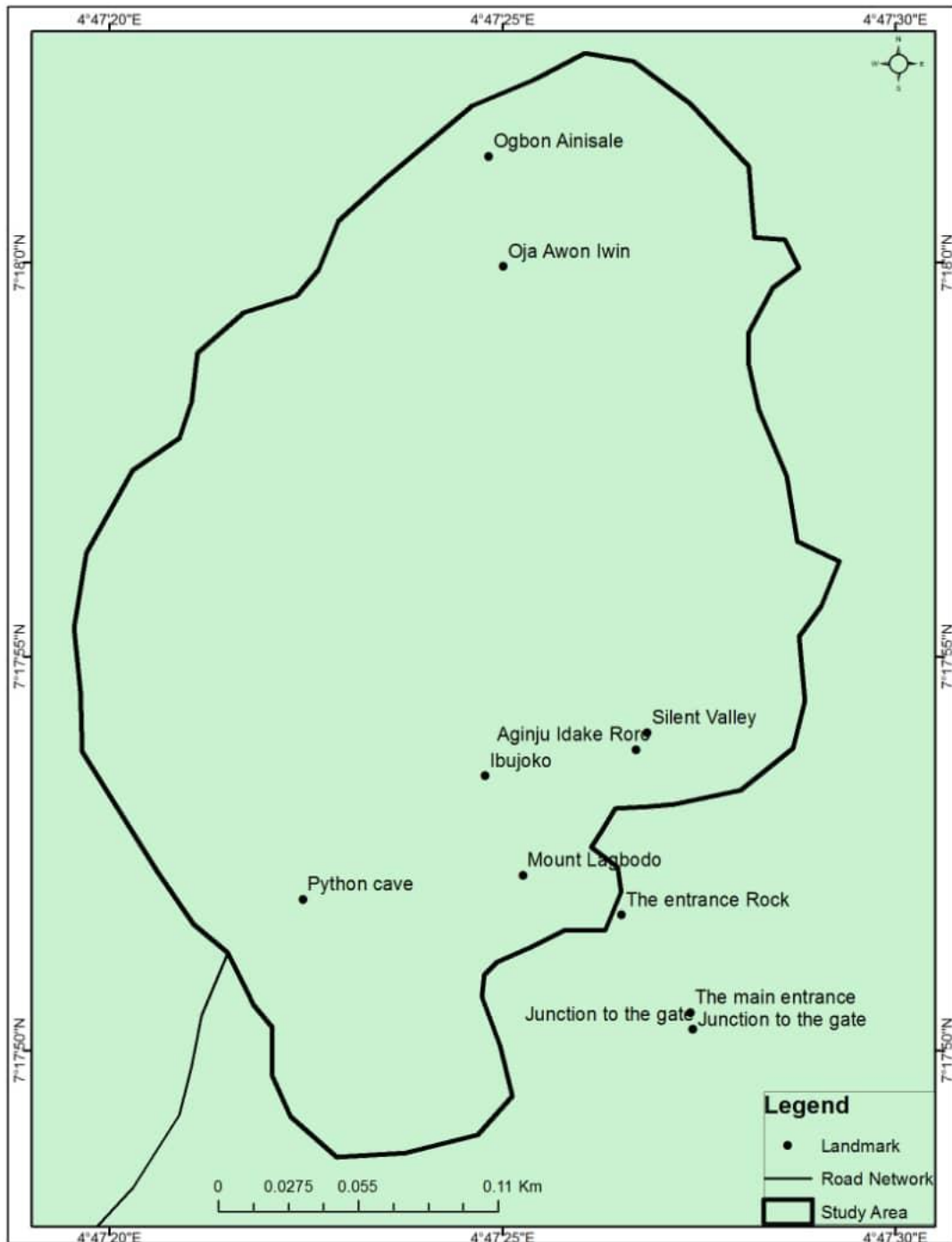
**Plate 4.8: Outside the Oke-Igbo palace. Source: Field Survey, 2019**

#### **4.2.5 Key attractions within the Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, inspired by the writings of D.O Fagunwa**

The Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove boasts a collection of key attractions (Figure 4.1) that have been meticulously crafted to echo the vivid landscapes depicted in the writings of D.O Fagunwa. Those who have immersed themselves in Fagunwa's novels will find a sense of familiarity as they traverse the grove, encountering sites that seem to have sprung from the very pages of his books. These attractions form an integral part of the ecotourism experience, bridging the gap between Fagunwa's imaginative narratives and the tangible natural beauty of the grove itself.

For readers who have journeyed through Fagunwa's novels, a visit to the Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove can evoke a profound sense of connection. As they step into the grove, they would recognize sites that mirror the enchanting places they have encountered in Fagunwa's literary world. This convergence of imagination and reality creates a deeply immersive experience, where visitors can physically explore the places that once existed only within the confines of their imagination.

Figure 4.1 shows some of the popular attractions within Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove which are based on the locations highlighted in the writings of Fagunwa. Visitors to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove are taken on a tour to these locations, entering through the entrance rock, climbing through a flight of stairs before crawling up Oke-Langbodo with their bare hands and feet, over such a very clumsy and dangerous inclination that not everyone is able to make the climb and there are no alternatives to this route yet. For now, this climbing ritual is celebrated as the passage of warriors. In the future, an alternative route to climb through a flight of stairs will be beneficial to tourists and improve the overall impression of tourists.



**Figure 4.1: Map of attractions within Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove. Source: NCMM, 2019.**

### **Entrance to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove**

The main entrance to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove is secured with a gate that is always locked and the keys kept with the curator of the grove who is a staff of Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Plate 4.9). On opening the gate, a flight of stairs come to view. This flight of stairs leads up to Oke-langbodo which is a rock formation, prominent in the writings of Fagunwa. Sometimes, when tourists come to Igbo Olodumare by themselves, without informing the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism or the Oke-Igbo palace ahead, they may end up arriving at the entrance gate and meet it locked and inaccessible. This has led some tourists to return without being able to accomplish their mission of visiting the sacred grove. It can be argued that even though this arrangement reduces accessibility, it is however consistent with the sacredness of the grove. The entrance gate and flight of stair is not part of the original writings of Fagunwa but serves the purpose of marking a boundary and protecting the main site.



**Plate 4.9: Entrance to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove showing the gate and parts of the concrete stairway that leads up to Oke-Langbodo. Source: Field Survey, 2018.**

### **Stairways to Oke-langbodo**

While Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove is generally being kept as pristine as possible, there are a few notable man-made features. According to the tour guide who also doubles as the curator, care is being taken to avoid concrete construction that will impact the naturalness of the site. However, there are a few concrete works such as the Baba Onirungbon Yeuke statue and the stairways to Oke-Langbodo with the latter being the most prominent construction work within the grove (Plate 4.10). Touristic stairs are quite a common feature of many tourist attractions around the world and in Nigeria. Places like Olumo Rock in Abeokuta, Ogun State as well as Idanre Hills in Ondo State also boast of such stairs. Tourist sites such as the Selaron in Brazil, Generalife in Barcelona and so on, are world renown for their distinctive stairs. While the stairs at Oke-Langbodo may not look so impressive, the story about the much greater difficulty with which adventurers clambered up hill before even reaching the Oke-Langbodo Rock, can give it more meaning. Cleaning the stairs, clearing the bush around it, planting flowers and so on can also greatly enhance its aesthetic appeal.



**Plate 4.10: Stairways to Oke-langbodo. Source: Field Survey, 2019**



### **Oke-Langbodo**

The main entry point to Igbo Olodumare from the perspective of Fagunwa's actual writings is Oke-Langbodo (Plate 4.11). This is the hill that can only be climbed by the bravest explorers due to its steep inclination. Tourists typically hike up the hill to access the other parts of the grove such as Oja Awon Iwin, Ogbun Ainisale, Ibujoko Olowo Aiye, and so on. The steep inclination poses a major challenge to tourists and deters many from accessing the sites that are only accessible uphill. There is a need to provide some form of aid to hikers so that they can more easily access the hilltop. This can be in the form of a canopy walkway or a wooden bridge or any other form of natural support that can aid climbing without disturbing the natural environment as brick and mortar might do. Minimizing the use of unnatural materials is very important to preserve the natural ambience of the grove.



**Plate 4.11: Oke-langbodo. Source: Field Survey, 2018.**

### **Oja-Awon Iwin (Market of the Ghommids)**

One of the most scenic places in the grove is called Oja-Awon Iwin (plate 4.12), which is right on top of Oke-Langbodo. In Fagunwa's writings, Oja Awon Iwin was a market where various nature beings, gnomes, ghommids, spirits, and so on come to trade. The locals around the grove believe this to be literally true to date. However, the market of ghommids is actually a field of cactus, growing on a rock. The cactus field covers an expanse that could be about a plot of land that is big enough to be a market in village settings. In addition, the cactus plants are indeed shaped in such a manner that be figuratively taken for people in a market. Therefore, one may conclude that Fagunwa rendered this rare sight of cactus, thriving on the rock surface as a market of ghommids but then, the locals have interpreted it as a literal market where invisible beings come to trade. Moreover, they insist that this trade goes on and can be seen by anyone who carries out the right rituals to open his or her inner eyes. According to one of the informants:

If you want to see the spirits in Igbo Olodumare, there are rituals that will be performed to open your eyes. Once you are ready for the rituals to be performed, you can come and will do it, then you too will be able to see the spirits. You will see them as they trade in Oja-Awon Iwin. You will see Baba Onirugbon Yeuke and Ojola Iberu too (**KII, Community leader, Igbo Olodumare, 2019**).



**Plate 4.12: Oja Awon Iwin Source: Field Survey, 2018**

### **Baba Onirugbon Yeuke**

One of the main characters is Baba Onirugbon Yeuke (Plate 4.13), whose life-size sculpture has been erected near Oke-langbodo in Igbo Olodumare. The sculpture may have been over six feet tall had it been standing in an upright position, but it is about three feet as it was erected in a sitting position, playing a traditional flute and with a calabash and a traditional divination tablet, by his feet. The statue is made of concrete, despite the tendency to avoid concrete structures in such natural settings. However, concrete makes for more durability especially considering that it is exposed to weathering. However, other materials such as wood, iron and mud can also be used to create more of such sculptures as is the case in Osun-Osogbo Grove, which has attained global recognition as a United Nations World Heritage Centre. Tourists often pose with Baba Onirugbon Yeuke to take pictures when they visit Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove. It is also one of the key points, where the tour guide stops over to tell stories about the character of Baba Onirugbon Yeuke, inspired by the writings of Fagunwa.



**Plate 4.13: Statue of Baba Onirugbon Yeuke in the grove. Source: Field Survey, 2019**

### **Ibujoko-Olowo Aye, Omo Akowediran**

The bent trunk of a large tree in the grove has been branded as Ibujoko-Olowo Aye, that is “the seat of the wealthy writer” (plate 4.14), inspired by a corresponding character, from Fagunwa’s writings. This site can be a major attraction for creative writers and others in the literary space who can get inspired by it. A literary village in Igbo Olodumare can provide much-needed infrastructure to support writers who come to Igbo Olodumare in search of inspiration. For a sacred grove, it is only fitting to have a few specific trees that are given a special renown based on some narrative and this writer’s seat fits into such a narrative even though it is not yet fully explored and remains largely unknown to people who have not visited the grove.



**Plate 4.14: The wealthy writer's seat; Ibujoko-Olowo Aye, Omo Akowedirán.**  
**Source: Field Survey, 2019**



### **Ireke onibudo**

In the writings of Fagunwa, Ireke Onibudo is another prominent feature which loosely translated means Sugar Cane habitat. This might suggest a sugar cane plantation. The place that is identified as Ireke Onibudo in Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove however is neither a river nor does it have any traces of Sugar cane plantation (plate 4.15). The place is some kind of wetland, but it is now basically populated by grasses. This is one place where a sugar cane plantation would make a lot of sense in keeping with the themes from Fagunwa.

Even though it was cut down many years ago due to the presence of snakes that were attracted to the sugarcane plantation, there are efforts to replant sugarcane at Ireke Onibudo so that visitors can get the sugar cane from there whenever they come for their visits. The committee at the palace is in charge, I will let you know when they are ready to do it (**KII, Community leader, Igbo Olodumare, 2019**).



**Plate 4.15: An image of Ireke Onibudo which has been reduced to an unremarkable grassland with no sugar cane in sight. Source: Field Survey, 2019**

#### 4.2.6 Benefits to local communities

Igbo Olodumare sacred grove has no doubt, brought fame to the entirety of Oke-Igbo town but especially to the Igbo Olodumare community, which is named after the grove. Beyond the fame, however, the grove also attracts tourists, however few and far between, whose visits bring means of earning alternative income to the locals. Unfortunately, this is not fully maximized, due to the absence of enabling facilities as earlier discussed. However, visitors still buy food items, snacks, and farm produce as well as patronize local motorbike riders for transportation, whenever they visit. Benefits to local communities were measured using the communities' benefits from visits to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove scale (Table 4.1) which comprises of five items that were used to test residents' perception of benefits from visits to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove with each item having a yes or no answer. 53.5% of respondents believe that visitors to Igbo Olodumare sacred grove spend money in their community by buying things from them. Furthermore, 51.5% of respondents believe that Igbo Olodumare tourist site is contributing to community development programs/projects/activities. Also, 44% of respondents believe that visitors spend the night within Oke-Igbo. Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews further indicated that the visitors who spend the night in Oke-Igbo usually go to hotels in town, but some go as far away as Ondo and Akure for accommodation. According to one of the community leaders:

Visitors don't usually stay within Igbo Olodumare village or any of the nearby rural communities since there are no hotels there. They usually come to Oke-Igbo or even go as far as Akure for accommodation, but we are willing to offer them accommodation in our homes, if they will not mind staying with us. If they don't mind our mud houses (**KII, Community leader, Igbo Olodumare, 2019**).

**Table 4.1: Local communities' benefits from visits to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove**

S/N	Questions	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Visitors usually go to see the tourist sites in Igbo Olodumare for cultural festivals and traditional practices	161(44.6)	200(55.4)
2	Visitors to Igbo Olodumare, usually spend the night, within Oke-Igbo	159(44.0)	202(56.0)
3	People visit Igbo Olodumare to see natural attractions and enjoy the scenic environment	235(65.1)	126(34.9)
4	Igbo Olodumare visitors spend money in my community by buying things from us.	193(53.5)	168(46.5)
5	Igbo Olodumare tourist site is contributing to community development programs/projects/activities	186(51.5)	175(48.5)

Source: Field survey, 2019

### **4.3 Assessing residents' knowledge of ecotourism potentials in IOSG.**

Residents' knowledge of ecotourism potentials was measured using the Residents knowledge of ecotourism potentials scale (Table 4.2a) which comprised of five items that were used to test residents knowledge of ecotourism potentials with each item having a yes or no answer, that corresponds to two possible scores of 1 or 0 respectively. Therefore, for all five items, the Residents knowledge of ecotourism potentials scale has a maximum obtainable score of 5, representing high knowledge of ecotourism potentials and a minimum obtainable score of 0, representing low knowledge of ecotourism potentials. The scores obtained from respondents were then subjected to descriptive analysis to determine the aggregate scores of respondents on a scale of 0 – 5. (4.2b). Respondents who scored between 0 - 2 were rated low. Respondents who scored 3 were rated as moderate while respondents who scored between 4 and 5 were rated as high. The mean score obtained by respondents was  $\bar{x} = 3.3$  with a standard deviation of 1.86 ( $\bar{x} = 3.3 \pm 1.86$ ) which also indicates a high level of knowledge of ecotourism potential. The implication is that respondents have a high level of knowledge of ecotourism potentials. The result is presented in Table 4.2c.

**Table 4.2a Respondents responses to survey on knowledge of ecotourism potential**

S/N	Questions	Score= 1 (%)	Score= 0(%)
1	Ecotourism encourages conservation of the forest and wildlife	255(70.6)	106(29.4)
2	Ecotourism encourages the preservation of cultural heritage	263(72.9)	98(27.1)
3	Ecotourism encourages participation of the community residents in planning and decision making	200(55.4)	161(44.6)
4	Ecotourism leads to economic benefits for community residents	243(67.3)	118(32.7)
5	Ecotourism encourages sustainable use of vegetation, wildlife, and landscapes	233(64.5)	128(35.5)
Weighted Mean of scores		$\bar{x}=3.3 \pm 1.86$	

**Source: Field survey, 2019**

**Table 4.2b: Aggregated scores of responses to residents' knowledge of ecotourism potential scale**

Agg. Score	Frequency	Percent
0	68	18.8
1	0	0
2	43	11.9
3	25	6.9
4	92	25.5
5	133	36.8
Total	361	100

**Source: Field survey, 2019**

**Table 4.2c: Residents knowledge of ecotourism potentials in IOSG**

Rating	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Low	111	30.7
Moderate	25	6.9
High	225	62.3
Total	361	100

**Source: Field survey, 2019**



Table 4.2c presents the results of resident's knowledge of ecotourism potentials in IOSG, showing that 62.3% of residents have high level of knowledge of ecotourism potentials while 6.9% of residents have moderate level of knowledge of ecotourism potentials and 30.7% of residents have low level of knowledge of ecotourism potentials. Observations and discussions indicated that the high knowledge of ecotourism potentials among residents is due to the work of Fagunwa who used his writings to push a conservation agenda and also due to the community-protected area status of Igbo Olodumare sacred grove as well as its status as a tourist attraction.

#### **4.4 Determinining the extent to which community residents are willing to provide support services for Cb-ED.**

Residents' willingness to participate, was measured using the Residents willingness to participate in Community-based ecotourism development scale, subsequently described as the Residents willingness scale (Table 4.3) which comprises of eight items that were used to test residents' willingness to participate with each item having five possible Likert-scale type responses, Very Unwilling, Unwilling, Neutral, Willing, Very Willing with respective scores from 0 – 4. For each item on the scale, there is a maximum obtainable score of 4, representing high level of willingness to participate by providing the service tested by that item and a minimum obtainable score of 0, representing low level of willingness to participate by providing the service tested by that particular item. Therefore, for all eight items, the Residents willingness scale has a maximum obtainable score of 40, representing high willingness to participate in by providing all listed services and a minimum obtainable score of 0, representing low interest participate in Community-based ecotourism development as a result of being “very unwilling” to provide any of the services tested in the eight items. The scores obtained from respondents were then subjected to descriptive analysis. The mean score obtained by respondents was  $\bar{x} = 21.08$  with a standard deviation of 6.75 ( $\bar{x} = 21.08 \pm 6.75$ ) indicating a moderate level of willingness to participate across the various services tested in the resident's willingness scale. The result is presented in Table 4.3

**Table 4.3(a): Residents willingness to participate in CbED in IOSG.**

*VU=Very Unwilling (0), U=Unwilling (1), N=Neutral (2), W=Willing (3), VW=Very Willing (4).*

Items	Rank	VU (%)	U (%)	N (%)	W (%)	VW (%)	Mean of Scores	Std. Dev.
Homestay accommodation services	1 <sup>st</sup>	19 (5.3)	58(16.1)	43(11.9)	53(14.7)	188(52.1)	2.92	1.325
Tour guiding services	5 <sup>th</sup>	44(12.2)	54(15)	43(11.9)	57(15.8)	163(45.2)	2.67	1.47
Craft making	4 <sup>th</sup>	71(19.7)	14(3.9)	19(5.3)	112(31)	145(40.2)	2.68	1.511
Food and beverage services	6 <sup>th</sup>	45(12.5)	26(7.2)	53(14.7)	127(35.2)	110(30.5)	2.64	1.318
Transportation services	7 <sup>th</sup>	84(23.3)	36(10)	31(8.6)	97(26,9)	113(31.3)	2.33	1.565
Cultural Story Telling	3 <sup>rd</sup>	45(12.5)	38(10.5)	12(3.3)	144(39.9)	122(33.8)	2.72	1.357
Dance, drama and musical performances	2 <sup>nd</sup>	46(12.7)	21(5.8)	14(3.9)	153(42.4)	127(35.2)	2.81	1.319
Planning	8 <sup>th</sup>	75(20.8)	46(12.7)	57(15.8)	60(16.6)	123(34.1)	2.3	1.55
Weighted Mean of scores			$\bar{x} = 21.08 \pm 6.75$					

**Source: Field survey, 2019**

Table 4.3(a) shows the results of respondent's willingness to provide various services to support IOSG. The results show that 52.1% of residents are very willing to share their homes with visitors and another 14.7% are willing to share their homes with visitors with a mean ( $\pm$ SD) score of (2.92  $\pm$  1.325) , making accommodation by home hospitality, the most popular service that community residents are willing to provide, ahead of tour guiding service, craft making, food and beverage service, transportation service, storytelling, dance/drama and planning. This means that residents are happy to welcome tourists which is very crucial for community-based tourism development. As stated by Tang (2019), if the local community does not welcome tourists, tourism development would be an impossible project.

The results also showed that 35.2% of residents are very willing to provide dance, drama and musical performances and another 42.4% are willing to provide dance, drama and musical performances, making dance, drama and musical performances with a mean ( $\pm$ SD) score of 2.81 ( $\pm$  1.319) making it the second most popular service that community residents are willing to provide, ahead of tour guiding service, craft making, food and beverage service, transportation service, storytelling and planning. On cultural storytelling, the results showed that 33.8% of residents are very willing to participate in planning IOSG and another 39.9% are willing to participate in cultural storytelling with a mean ( $\pm$ SD) score of 2.72 ( $\pm$  1.357), making cultural storytelling, the third most popular service that community residents are willing to provide, ahead of tour guiding service, craft making, food and beverage service, transportation service and planning.

The results also show that 40.2% of residents are very willing to provide craft-making services and another 31% are willing to provide craft-making services with a mean ( $\pm$ SD) score of 2.68 ( $\pm$  1.511), making craft-making services, the fourth most popular service that community residents are willing to provide, ahead of tour guiding service, food and beverage service, transportation service and planning. The results also show that 45.2% of residents are very willing to provide tour guiding services while 15.8% are willing to provide tour guiding services with a mean ( $\pm$ SD) score of 2.67 ( $\pm$  1.47), making it the fifth most popular service that residents are willing to provide, ahead of food and beverage service, transportation service and planning. Alongside accommodation service, tour guiding service is a very critical service that is crucial for any tourism destination to be successful.

The results also showed that 30.5% of residents are very willing to participate in providing food and beverage services and another 35.2.9% are willing to participate by providing food and beverage services with a mean ( $\pm$ SD) score of 2.64 ( $\pm$  1.318), making food and beverage services, the sixth most popular service that community residents are willing to provide, ahead of transportation service and planning. The results also showed that 31.3% of residents are very willing to participate in transportation services and another 26.9% are willing to participate in transportation services with a mean ( $\pm$ SD) score of 2.33 ( $\pm$  1.565), making transportation services, the seventh most popular service that community residents are willing to provide, behind home hospitality, dance/drama, storytelling, craft making , tour guiding service, food and beverage service, and ahead of planning.

Finally, the results showed that 34.1% of residents are very willing to participate in planning IOSG and another 16.6% are willing to participate in planning with a mean ( $\pm$ SD) score of 2.3 ( $\pm$  1.55), making planning, the least most popular service that community residents are willing to provide, behind home hospitality, dance/drama, storytelling, craft making, tour guiding service, food and beverage service and transportation service. This result shows that most of the community residents around Igbo Olodumare are willing to participate in ecotourism development by providing various services to support community based ecotourism development around Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove.

This result is similar to those of Abdullah and Halim (2018) which found that community residents are willing to participate. In addition to the quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis of the key interviews, focus group discussions and observations showed that community residents, as well as other stakeholders in the industry including Non-Governmental Organisations such as Egbe Akomolede Yoruba, Igbo Olodumare Youths Association, Teaching Entrepreneurship and Mentoring (TEAM) Centre, the State Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the National Commission for Museum and Monuments, are all willing to participate in ecotourism by protecting Igbo Olodumare. The community helps to protect Igbo Olodumare which they view as their heritage. However, the level of willingness to participate expressed across all levels has not translated to corresponding levels of actual participation. As seen in Table 4.3(b) as much as 43.8% of community residents surveyed were yet to even visit the destination.

**Table 4.3(b): Community residents' participation by visiting Igbo Olodumare destination.**

S/N	Community Residents Visit to Igbo Olodumare Destination	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	203	56.2
2	No	158	43.8
	Total	361	100

**Source: Field survey, 2019**

Based on observation, Focus Group Discussions and Key Interviews, active participation in planning is limited to a small Oke-Igbo palace committee of four, community heads and staff of the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism and of the National Commission for Museum and Monuments. This non-involvement of actual community residents in planning might affect community buy-in to the project and it may also limit their access to benefits sharing especially when the project is well developed and the destination begins to have tourist traffic. This was already a problem on one occasion in 2017 when over a hundred Egbe Akomolede Yoruba members attempted to visit the destination only to be turned back by youths.

Outside of planning, some of the Non-Governmental Organizations that showed willingness to participate in the development of Igbo Olodumare have made efforts to explore Igbo-Olodumare, some successfully, other times not so successfully.

A discussant who is also a member of Egbe Akomolede Yoruba, narrated a bitter experience whereby members who came from all over Nigeria in 2017 for a conference and planned to visit Igbo Olodumare, were turned back, and prevented from visiting the destination, by irate youths. A member of the Association of Nigerian Theatre Practitioners, however, spoke of successful attempts to re-enact Igbo Olodumare on stage as well as in movies and documentaries which were shot on site and expressed hope that a film village will eventually be situated at Igbo Olodumare. In his words:

Members of our theatre group and different filmmakers have come to shoot movies in Igbo Olodumare. We also organize stage plays that are based on Fagunwa's writings. If we get government support, especially if they build the film village they have promised, we will be able to do more films, animation videos and documentaries that can create more awareness (**FGD, Member, Association of Nigerian Theatre Practitioners, 2019**).

However, the role of the community as the protector of the Igbo Olodumare sacred grove is recognized by the government as the government representative listed this as one of the core functions the community performs in the collaboration between the community and the state government. According to the director of tourism;

The community helps us to protect the place, as a ministry we only have one staff in Igbo Olodumare even though

that is not enough, it is because we are yet to fully develop the place. We are working on doing more to develop Igbo Olodumare, then we will be able to increase the staff strength and also train the locals there to provide tourism services since they don't have the expertise. In the meantime, with the support of the community, we can manage with one staff for now (**KII, Director, Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2019**).

#### **4.5 Determining the contributions of socio-demographic factors, and knowledge of ecotourism potentials in predicting willingness to participate in CbED.**

To determine the relative contribution of socio-demographic factors and knowledge of ecotourism potentials in predicting willingness to participate in CbED, data on residents' gender, level of education, religion and length of stay, obtained from the demographic survey ( Table 4.0b, 4.0c, 4.0c, 4.0e, 4.0f) was computed alongside residents knowledge of ecotourism potentials ( Table 4.2a) and compared to the willingness to participate (Table 4.3a) using multiple linear regression. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews were then used to get a deeper understanding of the results from the questionnaire. The results of the multiple linear regression analysis are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 presents the relative contributions of socio-demographic factors and knowledge of ecotourism potentials in predicting willingness to participate. The table shows that level of education significantly predicted willingness to participate ( $\beta = -0.145$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Considering the level of significance, together with the standardised coefficient Beta and t-Stat, it can be predicted that the level of education had a significant relationship with willingness to participate and that the less educated residents were, the more willing they were to participate in CbED.

Analysis of focus group discussions, interviews and observations indicated that this is because the less educated residents have limited options in terms of alternative job opportunities which made them more pre-disposed to express greater willingness than the more educated people who by virtue of their higher educational qualifications have more opportunities to seek alternatives outside the community. In addition, more educated people are more specialised and tend to seek opportunities that are more in alignment with their specialisations. If government officials, educators, NGOs or tourism enterprises wish to engage Igbo Olodumare community residents to promote Community-based ecotourism, they should keep their program open to residents across all levels of education but pay special attention to the less educated.



**Table 4.4: Relative contributions of socio-demographic factors and knowledge of ecotourism potentials in predicting willingness to participate in Cb-ED.**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	17.959	1.434		12.52	0.000
Level of Education	-1.078	0.389	-0.145	-2.769	0.006
Length of Stay (in years)	0.138	0.018	0.412	7.871	0.000
Knowledge of eco pot	-0.095	0.232	-0.021	-0.411	0.681
Gender	4.244	0.757	0.291	5.604	0.000
Religion	4.397	1.488	0.145	2.956	0.003

**Source: Field survey, 2019**

As seen in Table 4.4, it was found that length of stay significantly predicted willingness to participate ( $\beta = 0.412, p < 0.05$ ). Considering the level of significance, together with the standardised coefficient Beta and t-Stat, it can be predicted that the longer residents stay in the communities, the more willing they were to participate in CbED. Analysis of focus group discussions, interviews and observations indicated that this is because staying longer in the communities predisposed residents to show greater commitment towards community development than residents who moved to the community more recently. In addition, as seen in Table 4.4, it was found that Gender significantly predicted willingness to participate ( $\beta = 0.291, p < 0.05$ ). Considering the level of significance, together with the standardised coefficient Beta and t-Stat it can be predicted that women were more willing to participate in CbED. Analysis of focus group discussions, interviews and observations indicated that this is because the women in the communities were more inclined to provide hospitality services. These results are contrary to the suggestions of Khoshdel & Bakhshan (2015) that willingness to participate was more prevalent among men and among the more educated.

Also, as seen in Table 4.4, it was found that Religion significantly predicted willingness to participate ( $\beta = 0.145, p < 0.05$ ). Considering the level of significance, together with the standardised coefficient Beta and t-Stat it can be predicted that Christians were more willing to participate in CbED. Analysis of focus group discussions, interviews and observations indicated that this is because the Christians believed they have powers over all forces of nature and are interested in the economic benefits that can come to them from such participation while traditional worshippers feel that opening such a grove to visitors is a form of desecration.

Finally, as seen in Table 4.4, it was found that Knowledge of ecotourism potentials did not significantly predict willingness to participate ( $\beta = -0.021, p > 0.05$ ). Considering the level of significance, together with the standardised coefficient Beta and t-Stat, it was seen that knowledge of ecotourism potentials did not significantly impact willingness to participate in CbED. Analysis of focus group discussions, interviews and observations suggests that this is because despite residents knowledge of the ecotourism potentials, they have mixed-feelings on the government's commitment to delivering on critical infrastructures needed for the project.

#### 4.5.1 Regression model determination

The fitted regression model was  $y = b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + \dots + b_nx_n + c$ .

Where  $y =$  Level of Education (-0.145) + Length of Stay (0.412) + Knowledge of ecotourism potentials (-0.021) + Gender (0.291) + Religion (0.145) + 17.959. The results are presented in Table 4.5

Table 4.5 presents the composite contribution of gender, level of education, religion, length of stay and knowledge of ecotourism potentials in predicting willingness to participate.

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test if gender, level of education, length of stay and knowledge of ecotourism potentials significantly predicted willingness to participate.

The overall regression was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.284$ ,  $F(5, 297) = 23.505$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

The table shows that gender, level of education, religion, length of stay and knowledge of ecotourism potentials, jointly predicts willingness to participate in CbED, significantly ( $F(5, 297) = 23.505$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

The table also shows that gender, level of education, length of stay and knowledge of ecotourism potentials, jointly predicts willingness to participate in CbED with Adjusted R Square = 0.284 meaning that 28.4% of the results are jointly predicted by gender, level of education, religion, length of stay and knowledge of ecotourism potentials.

**Table 4.5: Model summary, showing composite contributions of gender, level of education, religion, length of stay and knowledge of ecotourism potentials in predicting willingness to participate.**

R	0.532				
R Square	0.284				
Adjusted R Square	0.271				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	4392.483	5	878.497	23.505	0.000
Residual	11100.455	297	37.375		
Total	15492.937	302			

**Source: Field survey, 2019**

#### **4.6 Identifying barriers to residents' participation in the development of Igbo Olodumare as a community-based ecotourism destination.**

To identify the barriers to residents' participation in the development of Igbo Olodumare as a Community-based ecotourism destination, four Key Informant Interview sessions were conducted with one community leader from each of the four communities. In addition, a focus group discussion (plate 4.16) was held with representatives of each of the four communities. Also, two key informant interviews were held with one management staff of the Ondo State Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, two chiefs who are also members of the tourism committee at the Oke-Igbo palace and a management staff in the Akure office of the NCMM.

The result of the KIIs and FGDs revealed the attitude of key stakeholders towards the CbED in Igbo Olodumare and led to the identification of the main barriers to community participation.

In all, there were sixteen discussants who participated in the focus group discussions comprising of ten men and six women. Of the men, 3 were youths while one of the women was a youth as well. The eight key informant interviewees were all middle-aged or elderly men. The four community leaders also joined the Focus Group Discussions. Participants in the FGDs and Interviewees were able to identify barriers to residents' participation in the development of Igbo Olodumare as a CBE Destination and what needs to be done to make Igbo Olodumare a CBE top destination.



**Plate 4.16: Researcher during a Focus Group Discussion with community leaders from Igbo-Olodumare and Oke-Alafia, near the sacred grove. Source: Field Survey, 2019**

### **Marketing, branding and publicity.**

Being a good destination and having great potential for tourism is not enough, visibility is needed. One of the focus group discussion participants stated that:

Igbo Olodumare is really good and more people need to come and see it but we don't have good advertisement for people to hear more about it in big towns like Lagos and Ibadan. You people should help us beg government to remember us and do all the things they promised to do for us and put this place on television for the world to see **(FGD, Community Council Member, Oke-Alafia, 2019)**.

Several focus group discussion participants mentioned the need for more awareness to be created. Clearly, awareness is very important for tourism. Also, one of the chiefs identified the need for advertisement which he viewed as the role of the government, alongside fixing of infrastructure. In his words;

Government should help us to tar the road and carry out advertisements so that more people will know about it on radio, television and internet. You people should help us to tell government. We are waiting for them, they keep promising us during campaign and after that we don't hear from them again **(FGD, Community Council Member, Kajola, 2019)**.

The government seems to recognize the need for awareness as the director for tourism, in the ministry of culture and tourism stated that there are plans to build a website to promote tourism destination in Ondo State. The execution of this plan is dependent on the availability of funds. In his words;

We are working on it. If we get more funding, we will be able to do more, have more staff on ground and so on. We are also working on building a website to promote tourism destinations in Ondo state but funding is our main challenge for now. Once the funding is available, we can make progress very quickly **(KII, Director, Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2019)**.

### **Poor state of infrastructures**

In spite of its great potentials, there a lot of barriers to the suitability of the Igbo Olodumare as a CBE destination. Several key informants and focus group discussants identified the bad roads as a major barrier. A discussant viewed the road (Plate 4.17) as an obstruction to getting more visitors and visibility. He stated that.

The main problem we have is the road. If government can do the road and other facilities, more people will come. They want to come but the road discourages them from coming. Some people even turn back on their way here, as a result of the bad condition of the road **(FGD, Community Council Member, Oke-Alafia, 2019)**.

One of the community leaders believed that government plans to fix the roads. In his words:

We hear that the government is planning to tar the road all the way to Osun state. We will be happy if they can do it soon. We are tired of empty promises. Sometimes people contribute money to grade the roads but after the next rainy season, it washes off again. We need a permanent solution, the road needs to be tarred once and for all **(FGD, Community Council Member, Kajola, 2019)**.

Discussants were generally optimistic that Igbo Olodumare will become a much more popular and successful destination when the roads are fixed. Clearly, fixing the roads will also improve the livelihoods of the residents.

Plate 4.17 shows the poor state of a section of the road leading to Igbo Olodumare from Oke-Igbo town. One of the youths believes that the infrastructural deficit is beyond just road. The discussant emphasized the general lack of infrastructure stating that:

There is no road, no water, no jobs. If not for Okada, nobody can go to Igbo Olodumare during the raining season. Even with Okada, sometimes, you get stuck on the way. Some of us riding Okada here are graduates but this is what we do so that we can eat. We also don't have electricity, we fetch water from the streams so we don't have any facilities at all, we are on our own here **(FGD, Communiity Council Member, Kajola, 2019)**.





**Plate 4.17:** A section of the road leading to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove.  
**Source:** Field Survey, 2019

Similarly, the tour guide also complained about the state of the hut (Plate 4.18), that served as his administrative office. In his words:

We will be glad if government can build a proper office for us, just like the healthcare centre which they built. This will make it easier for us and visitors will have a more comfortable place to relax for a while when they arrive in Igbo Olodumare. Especially when they come back from Oke-langbodo, it will be nice to have a better place to relax before returning to town. **(KII, tour guide, Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, 2019).**

Plate 4.18 shows the front view, outside the hut that serves as administrative office where visiting tourists are registered before proceeding to the main grove.



**Plate 4.18: Front view of the hut that serves as administrative office for Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove. Source: Field survey, 2019.**

A quick comparison of the hut that served as the administrative office for the tourist attraction with other local buildings such as the Health Care Centre (Plate 4.19), suggests that despite being listed as a top tourist destination by the state government, the tourist attraction is really neglected. Plate 4.19 shows the front view of the Basic Health Care Centre, closest to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove showing that residents and tourists have access to a good healthcare facility at least for basic illnesses and minor emergencies. The same cannot be said, however, about facilities for tourists in the immediate community, closest to the sacred grove. Tourists will have to return to Oke-Igbo for the closest hotel unless they choose to sleep over either in outdoor camps in the village or in the residents of some of the villagers who showed willingness to offer home hospitality.



**Plate 4.19: Front view of the Basic Health Centre in Igbo Olodumare Source: Field survey, 2018.**

Homestays in Igbo Olodumare remains very unattractive, however. The homes are mostly mud houses (Plate 4.20), lacking in modern amenities and may only be attractive to rugged tourists who are looking for rural or slum tourism experiences. Plate 4.20 shows the typical houses of Igbo Olodumare community residents. Most people in Igbo Olodumare and surrounding villages live under very difficult conditions in mud houses like these. Even the administrative building for tourist visits is a mud house just like these. However, there are also a few modern houses such as the basic health centre and the school. There are no modern facilities for visiting tourists within Igbo Olodumare yet, but tourists stay in hotels in Oke-Igbo, being the closest town, or also in Ondo town or even Akure.



**Plate 4.20: Row of houses in Igbo Olodumare, the village closest to Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove. Source: Field Survey, 2019**

### **Poor management, bad attitude, and insecurity**

One of the focus group discussants indicated that the management of the grove leaves little to be desired. In his words:

They lock the grove up and sometimes visitors come and go back from the gate, without being able to access the grove anytime the official is not available but the locals who are available have no access. In some other tourist centres, youths normally take charge of the place, therefore someone is always available. Also, there are also no efforts to advertise the place (**KII, Local Entrepreneur, Igbo Olodumare, 2019**).

Another discussant believed security challenges, dirty environment and bad attitude of transporters are barriers to the development of Igbo Olodumare as a tourist destination.

In her words:

Security challenges, Okada harassment, negative comments by Okada riders, dirty environment, the work is not for one person, it's collaborative. Our elders relaxed under the tree, now we have no trees, in our homes. We were one another's brothers and keepers. Security challenges makes tourism difficult (**FGD, NGO member, Teaching Entrepreneurship and Mentoring, Oke-Igbo, 2019**).

The founder of a non-governmental organisation in Oke-Igbo spoke on the need for directional maps and a change of attitude as regards environmental cleanliness. He believes that working together or collaborating with all stakeholders can help overcome the barriers. In his words:

We need directional maps that can guide tourists to the various attractions around Oke-Igbo. We also need to improve our productivity as a people, environmental cleanliness is important in tourism, planting trees, flowers, gardening and so on. We must work together to make it work (**FGD, NGO founder, Teaching Entrepreneurship and Mentoring, Oke-Igbo, 2019**).

A member of Egbe Akomolede Yoruba, lamented about the rate of depletion of the Yoruba language and expressed his wish that the language be restored to its pride of place, indicating that Fagunwa's work will always be at the forefront when it comes to the Yoruba language. She opined that if more people spoke Yoruba and if it was a



formal language of instruction in schools, more people will visit Igbo Olodumare. She expressed hope that Ondo State Government will do right with Igbo Olodumare, citing the Igbo Olodumare stage play, which was staged at the opening of Ondo States biggest auditorium, the Dome in Akure.

We need to find a way to revive the speaking of Yoruba language in Yoruba land. Before, students used to read the books of Fagunwa in Yoruba, but they don't read it anymore. Many young people can't even speak it, let alone read it. If Yoruba is the language of instruction in schools, more people will come to Igbo Olodumare because Fagunwa is like the Shakespeare of Yoruba. I hope the government do something to develop Igbo Olodumare apart from stage plays in Akure (**FGD, NGO member, Egbe Akomolede Yoruba, Oke-Igbo, 2019**).

In all, focus group discussants and informants, identified the poor state of the access road as the main barrier to the success of the ecotourism project.

### **Non-involvement of residents in planning**

This non-involvement of actual community residents in planning might affect community buy-in to the project and it may also limit their access to benefits sharing especially when the project is well developed and the destination begins to have tourist traffic. This was already a problem on one occasion in 2017, when over a hundred Egbe Akomolede Yoruba members attempted to visit the destination only to be turned back by youths.

Outside of planning, some of the Non-Governmental Organizations that showed willingness to participate in the development of Igbo Olodumare have made efforts to explore Igbo-Olodumare, some successfully, other times not so successfully.

A discussant, who is also a member of Egbe Akomolede Yoruba and Igbo Olodumare Development Association. She narrated a bitter experience whereby members who came from all over Nigeria in 2017 for a conference and planned to visit Igbo Olodumare, were turned back, and prevented from visiting the destination, by irate youths. In her words:

We had a conference in 2017 where members came from all over the country in their hundreds and were planning to visit Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove to honour D.O Fagunwa but the youths blocked the road, protesting for their share of tourist fees.

They assumed that the palace collected a lot of money because of the unusual crowd of tourists they saw. Unfortunately, the visitors had to turn back (FGD, Vice-President, Igbo Olodumare Development Association, 2019).

However, the role of the community as the protector of Igbo Olodumare is recognized by the government as the government representative listed this as one of the core functions the community performs in the collaboration between the community and the state government. He also hinted at plans to train community residents. According to the director of tourism:

The community helps us to protect the place but they don't have capacity to do much else. However, we have plans to train them to build their capacity. We will be organizing a workshop for the community stakeholders very soon (KII, Director, Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2019).

Similarly, a deputy director from the National Commission of Museums and Monuments suggested efforts to train the locals and carry out proper mapping of the key attractions in the destination. In his words;

We have started but stopped due to lack of funding. We started by doing some mapping which we wanted to use to begin the process of training, branding and so on but it's on hold for now (KII, Deputy Director, National Commission for Museums and Monuments, 2019).

### **Mistrust and conflicts arising from poor community benefits sharing due to non-involvement in planning.**

On the few occasions when tourists, usually groups of students visit Igbo Olodumare, the community does enjoy economic benefits of ecotourism through transportation and increase in sales. However, very little actual development can be seen on ground, to suggest any reasonable level of employment due to tourism development.

According to the director of tourism at the Ondo state ministry of culture and tourism, one of the benefits that the community gains from being an ecotourism spot is employment.

He stated that:

Like Mr. Lanre Okeaje is a member of the community who has now been employed by the Ondo state government to take care of the place. Others also benefit when people visit and when tourism development projects are done around there. When we dehave funds to develop the place further, we will also employ more people **(KII, Director, Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2019)**.

This submission however suggests minimal benefits if only one person is directly employed to support the grove, even if there are indirect employments created in addition. It also suggests a government a government monopoly in practice despite the claim of a community-based management approach. This situation does not help the sense of belonging of residents and the one staff is grossly insufficient to cover the grounds, hence there are numerous reports of tourist visiting and not finding anyone to take them around. Yet residents are willing to support the project with tour guiding services. In similar destinations in Ondo State, such as Idanre Hills and Araromi Beach, residents who are not in the employ of government, do take tourists on tour of the destinations for a fee. In Igbo Olodumare, despite not taking any part in benefits sharing from tourists' fees, the residents, especially the youths continue to contribute to the development of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove as a tourist attraction as evidenced by one of the most substantial signages (Plate 4.21) welcoming visitors to Igbo Olodumare.

Plate 4.21 shows a signage made of concrete blocks, welcoming visitors to Igbo Olodumare, put up by community youths as part of their 2019 Igbo Olodumare Youth Carnival activities and branding Igbo Olodumare as "Home of Tourism". This demonstrated the high level of willingness, commitment, eagerness, and aspirations for the Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove as a driver of local development through tourism despite the various challenges of infrastructure deficit, poor support from the government, non-sharing of tourist fees and general lack of involvement in the government led planning processes.



**Plate 4.21: A signage welcoming visitors to Igbo Olodumare in English language**  
**Source: Field Survey, 2019**

The concrete blocks signage erected in 2019, shows the consistency of communal efforts as it was essentially an update of the much older, now rusty metal signage which welcomed visitors to Igbo Olodumare in the indigenous language with a message that says, “Welcome to the path to Igbo Olodumare in Oke-Igbo, where snails are bigger than tortoises” (Plate 4.7).

A special class of people that do enjoy economic benefits according to their own claims are transporters. Taxis and “okadas” make more money by increasing transport rates for visitors that want to see Igbo Olodumare. In fact, some youths who identify themselves as graduates have turned to the transportation business for its lucrativeness. Speaking on the economic benefits of transportation. One of the commercial motorbike (Okada) riding youths stated that:

I’m a graduate riding Okada in this village. Most of these people you are seeing riding Okada here, we went to school. When tourists come, we usually take them on our bikes to Igbo Olodumare. Even those that come with their cars, ask us to guide them there on our bikes (**FGD, Commercial motor bike rider, Kajola, 2019**).

The desire for economic benefits sometimes leads to conflict. A discussant noted that a conflict ensued between the Palace and the union of road transport workers over the need for those who visit Igbo Olodumare to get permission from the palace. This conflict points to a lack of cohesion among stakeholders due largely due to the lack of involvement in planning. Apparently, the youths anticipated some benefits sharing from what they considered a largesse in tourist fees that must have been received by the palace.

While the permission is put in place to protect and preserve Igbo Olodumare, the road transporter took it as a money-making scheme that excludes by the road transport workers in benefits-sharing.

In the words of one of the chiefs:

Yes. Some people go without permission. People should always come to Oke-Igbo palace first. Last year, there was a misunderstanding with members of bike riders' association blocking the road because they thought the palace had received some money, but most people don't even stop at the palace, they just go straight and that is not right (FGD, Palace Chief, Oke-Igbo, 2019).

Other stakeholders including the tour guide, member of the Egbe Akomolede Yoruba and other community leaders all confirmed this unfortunate incident which they all agreed was a major missed opportunity that would have brought the sacred grove to limelight. In the words of one of the community leaders:

The last time we had a major visit was when the Yoruba teachers association came to Oke-Igbo, there were hundreds of them. They came for a conference and wanted to go to Igbo Olodumare as part of the conference, but the youth did not let them pass. We have however passed that stage and we will not allow such opportunity to be missed again (KII, Community leader, Igbo Olodumare, 2019).

### **Collaboration among stakeholders and joint management approach between community and government**

Most of the Focus Group Discussion participants and Key Interviewees, viewed the government as the most important partner in the development of Igbo Olodumare. Only two of the participants emphasized the need for public-private partnership for the development of Igbo Olodumare.

Igbo Olodumare is jointly managed by the state government and the community. There is even a joint committee for Igbo Olodumare which has four local chiefs as members. One of the chiefs speaking on the joint committee and joint management stated that "We are doing it together with the state government. We are members of the state government committee on Igbo Olodumare development" (KII, Palace Chief, Igbo Olodumare, 2019). Discussants believed that it is better for the community and state government to manage Igbo Olodumare together.

Some of the discussants spoke on the need for private-public partnership. One stated that “We need collaboration. Public Private Partnership is the way to go. Community has helped with the preservation/conservation of the area, using indigenous conservation methods but that is not enough. When people are hungry, they will not be interested in conservation” (**KII, Member, Oke-Igbo Tourism Committee, Oke-Igbo, 2019**).

Another discussant identified hotel owners and travel agents in Ondo State as private institutions that contribute to the success of Igbo Olodumare. The tour guide believed that private firms from Lagos can use internet to boost Igbo Olodumare. He stated that “If more people from Lagos and other places can come together to boost Igbo Olodumare, it can be international. Some white people come sometimes. They should put it on the internet and more people will come” (**FGD, Local Entrepreneur, Oke-Igbo, 2019**).

### **Lack of relevant skills**

Even though residents showed eagerness to participate in the local ecotourism initiative, when asked about the skills they possess which can be useful for the ecotourism destination, discussants could not boast of relevant skills. Most of them have not had any formal training in such skillsets that can help the local community develop its community-based ecotourism initiative.

To the founder of the Teaching Entrepreneurship and Mentoring (TEAM) Centre, the community members just need to take to entrepreneurship and find creative ways to boost the reputation of Igbo Olodumare as a CBE destination and make money from it. In his words,

The government cannot employ everyone; we individuals need to do something. There is need for local initiatives for development, local community development approaches. That is what we are trying to promote in our centre, but we only see few youths come to us for training. Even when it is free training, the turnout is not encouraging unless you pay them to come (**FGD, NGO Founder, Teaching Entrepreneurship and Mentoring, Oke-Igbo, 2019**).

When asked about the contributions of the government, discussants and interviewees talk about things like “signposts and statues” that were erected by the government. They also mention the fact that the government employed an indigene as a tour guide for Igbo Olodumare. The government has been able to do some mini projects to enhance Igbo Olodumare as a CBE destination and is working on the enactment of a law to make it a protected area. According to the director of tourism:

We have put a statue of Baba Onirungbon Yeuke there, we also have a gate and a signpost there, we have plans to do other things like a literary village, but we are handicapped by lack of funds. We are also working on the protected area legislation to further protect the place. Again, we are waiting for funding to help us do more but we have it in our plans **(KII, Director, Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2019)**.

One of the youths spoke on the need to create opportunities for youth participation in the preservation and development of Igbo Olodumare as CBE destination and that the youth are willing to take advantage of such opportunities if they will be remunerated. In his words:

The youths are ready to work, let them use it to create jobs for us and train us, we are ready. What are we doing that we will not take employment? The reason many youths are riding Okada is because there is no employment. We cannot also go for training on an empty stomach. So those of us who are riding Okada for instance, if you don't go to work in one day, you and your family may not be able to feed. That is why it is difficult to go for training unless they will pay **(FGD, Local entrepreneur, Oke-Igbo, 2019)**.

Though discussants were open to sale of land for the private development of hotels, resorts and the likes around the grove, they conceive of it as a government project. Responses were therefore characterized by a lot of pleas for government intervention. Market solutions did not occur naturally to respondents. This suggests a poor appreciation of the creative power of market forces despite the example of D.O Fagunwa himself. However, when suggested, respondents were open to market solutions as a complement to government efforts. All other stakeholders ultimately



pointed to the government as the stakeholder with the key role to play in making the ecotourism project work.

Discussants also implied a top-heavy management approach that comprise of government representatives and the tourism committee, excluding the residents from decision making processes and even prohibiting residents and sometimes even tourists, from accessing Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove

#### **4.7 Discussion**

Many previous studies of ecotourism focused on national parks, games reserves and wildlife sanctuaries with little attention paid to sacred groves. Also, residents' well-being, livelihoods and project impacts have been emphasised in previous studies with little attention paid to community readiness and residents' willingness to participate. This study explored the concept of community readiness and willingness to participate in community-based ecotourism development in Igbo Olodumare sacred grove which was identified as one of the sacred natural sites in southern Nigeria by Borokini (2016).

Igbo Olodumare sacred grove is a sacred grove in the Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo local government area of Ondo State that was first brought to the limelight through the fictional writings of D.O Fagunwa whose works were inspired by his visits to the forests in the area. The area has subsequently come to be revered by locals as a sacred grove, where various kinds of extra-terrestrial beings such as gnomes, fairies and so on can be seen till date by anyone who passes through the necessary rituals.

The analysis of demographic variables showed that the communities are populated mostly by farmers (60.1% of respondents). However, the population has other occupational demographics including teachers, traders, health workers commercial motorbike riders, artisans and so on. A good proportion of adult residents are educated with as much as 35.5% of respondents being educated up to tertiary level.

In Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove, there is a market of fairies (Oja Awon Iwin), where fairies come to trade. Tourists that go to Igbo Olodumare do not however encounter any such beings. Instead, what you see at the market of fairies (Oja Awon Iwin) is a bush of cactus plants, growing on a rock surface. Admittedly, the shapes of the cactus

plants actually presents an interesting scenery which gives credence to a figurative description as a market of fairies. Such is the fascinating nature of the Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove where the writings of D.O Fagunwa come alive in a multidisciplinary cross-breeding of biological diversity, geological diversity, indigenous culture, tradition, literature, cosmology, fiction and adventure.

Consequently, Igbo Olodumare sacred grove provides the various forms of alternative tourism identified by Mieczkowski (1995), including cultural tourism, educational tourism, scientific tourism, adventure tourism and agri-tourism which are collectively described as nature tourism or ecotourism.

However, despite many decades after discovery, Igbo Olodumare remains largely at the exploration stage of Butler's tourism area life cycle (Butler, 1980) with very few tourist visits and no proper official recording of visits. Only 56.2% of the respondents who are community residents, have visited Igbo Olodumare sacred grove. There is very little involvement of local community residents being the primary stakeholders in planning or decision making and also the non-community stakeholders especially NGOs and private businesses in the industry have little to no involvement in planning efforts aimed at developing Igbo Olodumare. Similarly, beyond the construction of a few signages and statues, there are no significant efforts at development yet. Therefore, the destination is still mainly a place of potential that is being explored.

All the same. Igbo Olodumare sacred grove represents an effort to implement the International Ecotourism Society's (TIES, 2015) principles of ecotourism by trying to reduce impact, increase respect for and awareness of cultures and the environment, create enjoyable experiences for guests and hosts alike, deliver immediate financial gains for conservation, deliver financial gains and community empowerment and increase awareness of political, environmental and social environments. In doing so, the Ondo state government, through its Ministry of Culture and Tourism endeavoured to use a community-based management approach to develop Igbo Olodumare sacred grove as a top tourist destination in Ondo state.

This study found that this effort has not lived up to its potential due to various hindrances. While the effort has reduced the impact of livelihood pressures on forest resources, it does not seem to have been particularly successful in protecting wildlife especially. Observations, interviews and discussions suggest that wildlife resources in Igbo Olodumare sacred grove are depleted to the point that the re-introduction of

wildlife species and the creation of buffer zones (Oyelowo *et al.*, 2020) may be necessary, for game viewing to be possible in Igbo Olodumare sacred grove.

Despite reports of an instance of conflict between community stakeholders, relating to benefits sharing, harmony with the local environment and the local culture is quite evident. This harmony manifests in the use of indigenous conservation methods for protecting the forests within the sacred grove by regulating entry into the sacred grove, use of taboos to prohibit the killing of wild goats from the grove, even when they come out to the villages, use of taboos to prohibit the villagers from rearing goats, to avoid mistakenly killing wild goats from the grove, carrying out of traditional rites and rituals in the grove, sustenance of beliefs about the presence of gnomes and such extra-terrestrial phenomena within the grove. All of these have helped to conserve the biological diversity within the grove even though threats persist and the level of sacredness remains low. Thus, there is an attempt to drive towards the triple bottom line of sustainability (Goodland, 1995), combining environmental, economic as well as social/cultural considerations and trying to ensure that all three aspects are kept in balance amidst threats posed by poachers and loggers who are seeking a means to support their livelihoods. The conservation of natural resources using indigenous conservation methods and setting aside the grove, promotes environmental sustainability, while the cultivation of local heritage assets both tangible and intangible, inspired by Fagunwa's writings drives towards economic sustainability. Otherwise, intangible assets such as the Baba Onirugbon Yeuke character in Fagunwa's fiction work has been tangibilised with the erection of a statue at the foot of Oke-Langbodo. Similarly, the cactus bush on top of the rock formations in the grove which was characterised as Oja-Awon Iwin in Fagunwa's writings has become a tangible heritage asset and one of the major landmarks in the grove. This tendency to preserve heritage also indicates socio-cultural sustainability. All of these add up towards the sustainable utilisation of resources, that is the sustainable development agenda, it also reflects the United Nations sustainable development goals.

As a pro-poor tourism strategy (Anwar, 2012), Igbo Olodumare sacred grove shows potential for increasing economic benefits with 53.5% of respondents reporting that visitors spend money by buying things from the community. Further, 51.5% of respondents believe that the tourist site is contributing to community development. So

far, only one person was identified as directly employed by the tourism destination and that is the tour guide. Since there are no hotels or guest houses near the destination, there are no hospitality jobs traceable to it either. There are no businesses close to the sacred grove that are specifically set up to cater to tourists. Hotels in Oke-Igbo, however, do get the occasional lodgings when visitors, usually students, visit Igbo Olodumare. Local businesses in the villages around the grove also sell refreshments, especially drinks to visitors and sometimes farm produce as well. There is no standard gate fee and no clear record of visitors, therefore it is difficult to assess fees and revenue sharing. However, there are indications that visitors in large groups may tend to make some payments at the Oke-Igbo palace which once led to a community crisis as youths blocked the road and turned visitors back, demanding their share. Thus, there is a potential for group income and revenue shares if well managed but this will require a more transparent fee schedule and revenue-sharing formula among community stakeholders. Unlike Manu and Kruder (2012), there is no indication of an impressive revenue profile. The local community development associations and non-governmental organisations active in the area do not have any notable fundraising initiatives that can target voluntary donations by tourists. They do not seem to have the expertise or sufficient exposure to organise such. For a pro-poor strategy, IOSG is rather weak on non-financial livelihood impacts such as training and capacity building, reducing environmental effects, taking divergent uses of natural resources into account and enhancing social and cultural effects. Interviewees and discussants expressed willingness to participate in training and capacity-building efforts towards ecotourism development or conservation which will further enhance other non-financial livelihood impacts. Tourist turnover is too low to have any significant environmental effects, however, IOSG is positioned to take into account divergent uses of natural resources in the area. Even though it is still very much undeveloped, it is already a significant social and cultural factor throughout Oke-Igbo where people consider it not just as a major heritage but also as a major underutilised cultural and natural resource.

The first objective assessed the level of respondents knowledge of ecotourism potential and found that it is high ( $\bar{x}=3.3 \pm 1.86$ ) with most respondents being aware of the role of ecotourism in biodiversity conservation and heritage preservation. The protection of Igbo Olodumare as a sacred grove therefore contributes to furthering environmental

education objectives such as residents' awareness, knowledge, attitudes and participation (UNESCO, 1978) but there is a lot more potential in this area. Community leaders and residents demonstrated a fair grasp of environmental issues as well as how tourism can help to strengthen conservation but their attitude suggests they are more interested in economic benefits. They showed enthusiasm and a high degree of willingness to participate in any activity that can promote community based ecotourism but seem especially motivated by their knowledge of the potential for economic gain. This seems to explain why they are willing to excuse tree-felling in the grove, using the excuse that the trees are old and may harbour some spirits that need to be freed. Considering that the felled trees are not left to rot, but sold, it seems that economic gain is a bigger motivation than preservation of heritage or conservation objectives itself. It also explains why the youths once protested being left out of benefits-sharing.

The second objective assessed residents willingness to participate in the ecotourism project and found a high level of willingness to participate ( $\bar{x} = 21.08 \pm 6.75$ ) in efforts to develop ecotourism in the community. This is like Abdullah and Halim (2018) who similarly found that community residents wish to be more involved. This is also in tandem with the findings of Bagul and Bahar (2009) who found that community involvement is essential to tourism development. The order of the activities or services that residents are willing to provide is indicated by their mean score and standard deviation values. Homestay accommodation services was ranked highest which means residents are most interested in providing homestay services ( $\bar{x} = 2.92 \pm 1.33$ ) followed by cultural performances ( $\bar{x} = 2.81 \pm 1.32$ ). The least ranked service that residents indicated willingness in offering was planning ( $\bar{x} = 2.3 \pm 1.55$ ) indicating that they are least interested in planning. Interviews, observation and focus group discussion sessions showed that this reluctance to participate in planning is due to lack of relevant skills, exposure and power distance between residents and community leaders. This result agrees with the findings of Aseres (2015), that communities could contribute by offering lodging, cultural performances and so on. Considering homestay services which is the main service most villagers were willing to offer, an eco-village strategy will be very suitable to actualise this. The village of Igbo Olodumare being the immediate host community, hosting the sacred grove is especially well situated to become the centrepiece of a community-based ecotourism approach and can itself

become an eco-village, a literary village, a film village e.t.c. Community leaders and residents are willing to provide land and other necessary support to host such developments in the village. Already, the majority of the houses in the village are mud houses which can easily be rebuilt using communal efforts but under the supervision of experts, to improve their standards while using the same culturally and ecologically compatible materials and adding other needed infrastructure such as museums, eco-lodges, events and relaxation centres e.t.c. The village setting has a linear setting on very plain land that will very much suit such developments. A strong local community organisation with local and international collaborations with non-governmental organisations and grant funding organisations can successfully fund such an initiative. With such developments, it will become much easier to have more visitors visit and stay within the eco-village for prolonged periods. Homestay programs will also become much more feasible as residents expressed willingness to provide home hospitality for visitors but the state of the residences are hardly hospitable and despite interest in cultural exchange and rural tourism, most visitors won't find them attractive as they are currently. Making Igbo Olodumare into an eco-village and joining organisations such as the global eco-village network will also strengthen the image and the identity of the destination and further build its social capital, hence making it even more attractive to tourists and thereby improving visitor turnover. This will also pave the way and enhance its chance of being formally recognised and gazetted as a natural monument in order to further protect its distinct natural/cultural features by federal legislation.

The third objective assessed the contributions of socio-demographic factors and knowledge of ecotourism potentials in predicting willingness to participate in community-based ecotourism development and found that sociodemographic factors such as level of education, length of stay, gender and religion significantly predicted willingness to participate. The less educated folks were more interested in participating, probably because they had less alternatives/options, tend to be out of formal employment, which makes them more readily available and therefore more eager. Similarly, those who had stayed in the community for longer were more eager to participate, women and christians also showed more eagerness than men and non-christians. This result is consistent with those of Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2013) who found that tourism development led to the empowerment of women. This result is

however unlike those of Khosdel and Bakhstan (2015) who found more willingness to participate among men and among the more educated. The study did not find a significant relationship between knowledge of ecotourism potentials and willingness to participate in community-based ecotourism, unlike previous studies that found that increase in environmental knowledge led to improvement in willingness to participate in community-based ecotourism (Masud *et al.*, 2017). It is important to note, however, that these findings should be interpreted with caution and further research is needed to fully understand the relationship between these sociodemographic factors and willingness to participate in community-based ecotourism projects. Other factors, such as socio-economic status and cultural values, may also play a role in shaping residents' attitudes and behaviours towards ecotourism.

The fourth and final objective probed the inhibiting factors to residents participation in the development of Igbo Olodumare as a community based ecotourism destination and identified non-involvement of local residents in planning, mistrust and conflicts over benefits-sharing, poor management, lack of relevant skills, poor state of infrastructures, marketing, branding and publicity were all identified as barriers to residents participation. The study found that participation in management and planning in Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove has been done mainly by community leaders with little or no involvement of residents. The absence of wider consultation and involvement may have been partly responsible for the benefits-sharing crisis which once led to youths protesting and turning visitors away, a situation which some informants and discussants blamed for the low visitor turnout.

This result is similar to previous findings that local distrust of authorities, power disparities and institutional disincentives were barriers to local community participation (Kim *et al.*, 2014). Besides non-involvement in planning, local residents are denied access to the grove except with the permission of the ministry official who is not always available since he is based in Oke-Igbo instead of Igbo Olodumare. This in turn, is to be expected due to the lack of enabling infrastructures and even decent accommodation in Igbo Olodumare. The study agreed with Fiseha (2014) that lack of infrastructures was militating against tourism development and thereby aligned with Adeyanju (2020) by finding that communities requested the provision of infrastructure such as good roads, electricity and so on as a requirement for ecotourism. Unlike Pichdaria (2013) or Manu and Kruder (2012), the study did not find significant levels

of benefits-sharing, instead discussants reported conflicts due to lack of clarity around fees schedules, collection and benefits-sharing all of which point to a poor management structure and perhaps lack of relevant skills. Also, unlike Clairborne (2010), the study did not find significant levels of opposition, anxiety or fears even though there had been a major opposition that resulted in turning tourists back, it was an isolated case. Just like Fiseha (2014), the study found lack of capacity, poor level of engagement and cooperation among stakeholders to involve in Community Based Ecotourism (CBET) business, low level of infrastructures and absence of promotional activities. The same is responsible for poor marketing, branding and publicity especially in this age where social media offers a cheap and easy platform. The problem of poor infrastructure however, is one that points to failure of government and can hardly be resolved without significant commitment of funds from the government. The study found that the communities fundamentally look up to the government for the fixing of infrastructures but are willing to collaborate with private sector and Non-Governmental Organisations for CBE development. The key stakeholder in the Igbo Olodumare project today are government officials, the local community residents, and the Oke-Igbo Chiefs. Even though the project was originally initiated by an individual and even though market forces are responsible for most of the visible progress so far at the destination, the stakeholders' clamour for greater government intervention as a solution to the predicaments of the destination. However, findings agree with Ekwale (2014) that the communities may better look more towards stakeholder's collaboration in the private sector, particularly with NGO's.

Considering the community readiness model (Oetting *et al.*, 1995), the community awareness and knowledge of issues and efforts to develop Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove are high especially among the community leaders, the community readiness especially in terms of core, technological and human resources preparedness are low. Core infrastructures such as tarred roads for accessibility, suitable accommodation near the destination, basic amenities such as a decent tourism office are missing, subsequently there are limited offers of activities for visitors who are thus inclined to leave the community rather too soon after a brief tour of the grove. With better infrastructure and the involvement of residents, the project will be in a much better position to attract domestic and international tourists, especially from among Yoruba diasporans including Brazilians, Cubans, and others whose ancestors were taken away



during the slave trade. This is a huge untapped tourism market for Nigeria and places like Igbo Olodumare can easily become very popular among them, when developed. Even the biodiversity in the grove has been diminishing with very little left of game viewing potentials, due to poaching. Modern information technology, especially social media has huge potentials for helping to promote community based ecotourism destinations such as Igbo Olodumare but needs to be a community led effort and requires local expertise. Social media is a huge technological resource that could be used but is currently grossly underutilised in promoting Igbo Olodumare. Similarly, the population of unemployed or underemployed youths constitutes a huge human resource potential that is being underutilised. Through capacity building workshops and seminars, the needed expertise can be passed along to the youths, they can also be armed with the appropriate smartphone devices with which they can regularly create and upload rich content about the destination, improving the destination image, identity and social capital while attracting visitors. However, the community climate suggests a high level of readiness and willingness to participate in efforts geared towards addressing these issues if they can get the right support in terms of community capacity building initiatives and funding. Community leadership also looks forward to such support.

Beyond the leadership, participation of local residents as well as non-community stakeholders in planning and management is another area where improvements are needed. While the state has major roles to play especially with regards to improving public infrastructure, the private sector comprising for profit businesses as well as non-profit organisations are a viable but largely overlooked alternative that can be harnessed especially where there is a vibrant local community initiative. Tourism is largely a capitalist business but a community-based ecotourism setting such as Igbo Olodumare provides ample room for entrepreneurs to practice conscious capitalism whereby businesses can embark on community service projects and gain a lot of social capital, get a lot of marketing visibility and social reputation for supporting a project that unites both conservation objectives and heritage preservation. With the right support for community capacity building initiatives, workshops and seminars, residents participation will also improve. Especially for a sacred grove, collective co-creative participation is necessary to build the identity and image of the destination into such an attractive force that could bring visitors. However, the low sacredness of the grove (Onyekwelu and Olusola, 2014) and the low popularity of traditional religion in the

area may constitute challenges. Since majority of residents in the area are christians and considering that mountain tops and rock formations are however popular as sacred places amongst several christian sects, religious diversity to include such christian sects may be a plausible factor in bringing visitors to the grove but this might also portend grave dangers as religious fanatics may also cause damage. In the meantime however, it is possible that the suggestion that nature beings are present in Igbo Olodumare sacred grove makes it a scary and perhaps abominable destination for some people based on their religious beliefs. This may also be a factor in visitor turnout.

Though it is imperative to ensure that key attractions within the grove are left in a pristine state, natural materials such as clay and wood can nevertheless be used to build more sculptures based on Fagunwa themes and in harmony with the local culture and environment. In addition, places like Ireke onibudo (sugarcane plantation) where there are no traces of sugarcane left, will need to be revived by replanting sugar cane in the area. Similarly, reintroducing wildlife to the grove will also help in reinvigorating its biodiversity. The most work however will have to be done outside the grove. There is a huge infrastructure deficit, from access roads to guest accommodation, to relaxation centres and even a tourist office. Further out in Oke-Igbo town itself, places like the Fagunwa house and the palace, can host museums, serve as regular venues for workshops, seminars and so on. Such can be organised regularly, in conjunction with nearby academic institutions such as the Yoruba, English and even Biology departments at Adeyemi College of Education and Obafemi Awolowo University and so on.

However, the case may be, greater local participation in planning can help unearth and resolve such issues, leading to improved destination image and identity as well as attractiveness. Also, with better infrastructure and the involvement of residents, the project will be in a much better position to attract domestic and international tourists, especially from among Yoruba diasporans including Brazilians, Cubans, and others whose ancestors were taken away during the slave trade. This is a huge untapped tourism market for Nigeria and places like Igbo Olodumare can easily become very popular among them, when developed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary

Igbo Olodumare forests have come to be revered as a sacred grove and also recognised as a top tourist attraction in Ondo State, protected by the community, using indigenous conservation methods. Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove is a sacred grove located in the Ile-Oluji/Oke-Igbo local government area of Ondo State where wildlife poaching and tree-felling are prohibited. It serves as a tourist attraction, using the Community-based Management Approach. This study investigated community residents' participation in the management, planning and related efforts towards the development of Igbo Olodumare as a community-based ecotourism destination by assessing their knowledge of ecotourism potentials, their willingness to participate in providing needed services, the relationship between socio-demographic variables and their willingness to participate, as well as inhibiting factors that could hinder residents participation and subsequently, the development of the community-based ecotourism project.

A review of literature provided insights into various concepts, theories, methods, and findings by other researchers, that helped to shape this research. Stakeholders' theory, Butlers model, community readiness model, participation theories as well as concepts such as community-based natural resources management, biodiversity conservation, community capacity building, environmental education, pro-poor tourism strategies, protected areas, eco-village development and so on were all reviewed to get a better understanding of the main issues covered by the study. A mixed-method research design was adopted with both qualitative and quantitative data collected. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions were used to gather qualitative data from community heads, community council members, representatives of government

parastatals, and leaders of community-based non-governmental organisations while a total of three hundred and sixty-one questionnaires were distributed among adult residents of communities around the sacred grove. The quantitative data collected were analysed with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 while the qualitative data were analysed using the narrative approach.

Findings suggest that the community residents have high knowledge of the potential of ecotourism due to the work of Fagunwa and the status of Igbo Olodumare sacred grove as a community-protected area and tourist attraction and that they are willing to participate in community-based ecotourism development, especially by providing homestay accommodation services, which makes an eco-village strategy very attractive. The findings also suggest high knowledge of ecotourism potentials may not necessarily lead to an increase in willingness to participate in providing CBE products and services due to intervening factors such as the absence of critical infrastructure and human capacity. The study also found that length of stay in the community is a significant determinant of willingness to participate and that inadequate collaboration among stakeholders, poor marketing efforts, capacity deficiency, poor state of public infrastructures (especially roads) and misunderstanding, related to benefits-sharing constitute hindrances to residents participation and thereby, to the development of community-based ecotourism in the area.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This study confirms that Igbo Olodumare sacred grove was first popularised by the writings of D.O Fagunwa, and became popular for its wildlife, unique flora and fauna, and geological features and is also believed to be the abode of non-physical nature beings such as gnomes, sphinxes and so on, making the place exotic in a very special way. It also confirms that the sacred grove is under threat from poaching and tree felling and that its touted touristic potentials are far from being actualized.

As a consequence of the work of Fagunwa and the status of Igbo Olodumare sacred grove as a community-protected area, the community residents have high knowledge of the potential of ecotourism and are willing to participate in community-based ecotourism development even though their motivation is mainly for economic reasons.

Residents are willing to provide various services to tourists, especially homestay services but this will require giving their houses a facelift which can be accomplished using an ecovillage strategy to redevelop the villages and bring up the standards of their houses while retaining harmony with the local culture and environment. Socio-demographic factors such as length of stay, religion, gender, and levels of education play significant roles in determining residents' willingness to participate in community-based ecotourism with less educated people tending to be even more willing than educated ones because they have fewer alternatives.

Residents do make some self-help efforts such as occasional grading of roads and erection of signposts, but their effort is limited by their capacity and access to funds. Therefore, they will need the support of non-community stakeholders that can help improve their capacities, in these areas. The poor state of infrastructure is a major barrier to participation and to the overall development of community-based ecotourism in the area, but residents are willing to collaborate with private investors and NGOs while calling on the government to fix critical infrastructure, especially roads.

### **5.3 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research**

Community-based Ecotourism studies range from the assessment of flora and fauna and their level of utilization/depletion to the level of participation/perception of local community residents and so on. This study focused on the assessment of community readiness and willingness by interviewing stakeholders related to the Igbo Olodumare project, the community participation/perception, and their socio-economic characteristics. The study area comprises of Okeigbo district in Ile-Oluji/Oke-igbo local government area in Ondo State and the study relied on the opinions and perceptions of community-based stakeholders and non-community-based stakeholders. The stakeholders covered in the public sector were drawn from the Ondo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the National Commission for Museum and Monuments. More ecological research is needed on the rate of depletion of flora and fauna in Igbo Olodumare also, the claims of mystical powers at Igbo Olodumare by the locals need to be further probed. Future anthropological research should investigate the linkages between Igbo Olodumare, Oke-Igbo and other parts of Yoruba land including Ile-Ife, in nearby Osun State.

#### **5.4 Recommendations of the study**

1. There is a need for educational programs aimed at improving residents' level of ecotourism knowledge as well as providing a range of entrepreneurial skills-based training that will enable them to provide valuable ecotourism services such as tour guiding, hospitality and so on. In addition, residents need to learn to learn tour packaging, branding and hospitality marketing skills which can help improve the chances of turning their high level of ecotourism awareness and willingness to participate to actual participation as they organize themselves into small tourism enterprises that can attract local and international tourists.
2. The community needs general re-orientation enlightenment about market solutions since Community-based ecotourism projects should be market-led, the community residents need to be better aware of the potential of market-led alternatives to government-led development
3. The communities need to develop an ecotourism-friendly culture of cleanliness, tree planting and nature appreciation all of which can result from community education programs.
4. There is a need for intensified efforts to further protect the flora and fauna of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove including a reintroduction of some wildlife species under a well-designed conservation programme.
5. Ireke Onibudo should be redeveloped as a sugar cane plantation, sugar cane from there can be harvested and made available to visitors.
6. Model eco-lodges should be built in Igbo Olodumare community and the village should be rebranded and promoted as a Fagunwa-inspired eco-village.
7. The communities already have a culture of self-help including attempting to fix their roads themselves, but they need more support and may benefit from learning about grant funding opportunities and how to assess them.

8. Industry players should support the government in developing amenities, accommodation, accessibility, and other infrastructure that will be required to fully harness the potential of Igbo Olodumare.
9. Community engagements by government officials, NGOs or tourism enterprises to increase awareness level or promote Community-based ecotourism should be open to all adults and youths in the community residents regardless of age.
10. Stakeholders should prioritize the construction of roads and the general development of public infrastructures.
11. Yoruba interest groups such as Egbe Akomolede Yoruba and other Yoruba language organizations should build a Yoruba literacy and cultural Centre in Oke-Igbo with a cultural/eco-village in Igbo Olodumare that can also serve as a film village and a literary centre complete with facilities such as art galleries, museums, perhaps an amphitheatre e.t.c.
12. The findings suggests that engagements that increase awareness of ecotourism activity may tend to increase knowledge of ecotourism generally as well as willingness to participate. Therefore, more publicity should be done in the community about visitors to Igbo Olodumare.
13. NGO's or tourism enterprises should consider increasing levels of awareness of ecotourism of community residents to increase their knowledge of and willingness to participate in ecotourism development.
14. Residents should take the lead in using social media for promoting Igbo Olodumare, through local organisations such as Igbo Olodumare Development Association. They should play a more active role in managing the grove. Creating and regularly updating local social media accounts with creative content about Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove and the writings of Fagunwa, will go a long way in attracting more visitors alongside other needed developments.

## **5.5 Contributions to knowledge**

The study established that the status of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove as a community protected area has led to a high knowledge of ecotourism potentials among community residents, suggesting that establishing community protected areas can be helpful as a tool for improving environmental education, leading to increased awareness about environmental issues. The study further found that residents of the communities are willing to provide a range of tourism services such as homestay, tour guiding, cultural performances, transportation, food and beverage services and so on. Homestay accommodation services is the most popular service they are willing to offer while being least interested in planning.

The study found that residents are interested in training programs that can help improve their capacities but may need to be financially incentivized as economic challenges may deter them from participating in trainings without compensation.

This study established the willingness of community leaders and residents to participate in further protecting Igbo Olodumare as a Sacred Grove as well as promoting it as a national monument and as tourist attraction as well as contributing towards its development as such. The study further established that socio-demographic factors such as length of stay, level of education and religion, influence residents' willingness to participate in community-based ecotourism development. The study found that less educated people are more inclined to participate because they have fewer alternative opportunities competing for their interests and are therefore more readily available. The study also found that poor collaboration among stakeholders, inadequate marketing, remoteness of the location, non-involvement of local community residents, poor skills level, poor state of public infrastructures and the occasional hostility by the youths, due to misunderstanding, related to benefits-sharing, are all inimical to community-based ecotourism development in the area. The study found that capacity building initiatives, stakeholders' workshops and involvement of residents can help to improve participation, build consensus and lead to a more effective community-based ecotourism development approach.



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# APPENDIX I

## UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### RESIDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY BASED ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN IGBO OLODUMARE SACRED GROVE, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed for academic purposes and the information that you will provide will be used strictly for academic purposes and treated with uttermost confidentiality.

Thank you

Adeyemi F.C

#### Section A: Socio-economic Profile

1. Gender: (a) Male \_\_\_\_\_ (b) Female \_\_\_\_\_ (c) other(specify) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Marital Status: (a) Single (b) Married (c) Divorced (d) Widowed (e) Separated
3. Age \_\_\_\_\_ (a) Below 20 (b) 21-39 (c) 40-59 (d) 60-79 (e) 80 and above
4. Educational Status: (a) Primary (b) Secondary (c) Tertiary (d) vocational (e) none  
(f) others \_\_\_\_\_
5. Ethnicity (a) Yoruba (b) Ibo (c) Hausa (d) Urhobo (e) Fulani (f) Igala  
(g) others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
6. How long have you lived in this area(in years) \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many people including yourself, live in your household \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_  
female \_\_\_\_\_ Adult \_\_\_\_\_ Child \_\_\_\_\_
8. What is the main source of income in your house \_\_\_\_\_ 1<sup>st</sup> source \_\_\_\_\_  
2<sup>nd</sup> source \_\_\_\_\_ 3<sup>rd</sup> source \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your employment status? \_\_\_\_\_ Formal employed \_\_\_\_\_ Part-time  
employed \_\_\_\_\_ Self employed \_\_\_\_\_ Unemployed \_\_\_\_\_ Retired \_\_\_\_\_
11. How many people in your household are employed \_\_\_\_\_
12. What is your occupation \_\_\_\_\_
13. Which of the following best describes our total household income every month Less than  
10,000 \_\_\_\_\_ 10,000 to 30,000 \_\_\_\_\_ 30,000 to \_\_\_\_\_

60,000 \_\_\_\_\_ 60,000 to 90,000 \_\_\_\_\_ 90,000 and above \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION B:**

**Respondents participation in Igbo Olodumare**

- a. Have you ever participated in planning Igbo Olodumare Destination?  
 Yes ( ) No ( )
- b. Have you ever visited Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove? Yes ( ) No ( )

If you have visited, for what purpose did you visit or usually visit the place? Please tick all that applies to you below:

S/N	Category	Tick as appropriate
1	Recreation/tourism	
2	See wild animals, birds, trees, landscape, nature	
3	Adventure	
4	Harvesting of herbs, wild animals and so on	
5	Cultural festival/traditional religious practice	
6	Others(specify)	

**SECTION C 1:**

**Community Residents benefits from Ecotourism activity Survey Instrument**

- a. Have you heard of Igbo Olodumare as a tourist destination? Yes ( ) No ( )

**Tick the appropriate column in the section below:**

S/N	Questions	Yes	No
1	Visitors usually go to see the tourist sites in Igbo Olodumare for cultural festivals and traditional practices		
2	Visitors to Igbo Olodumare, usually spend the night, within Oke-Igbo		
3	People visit Igbo Olodumare to see natural attractions and enjoy the scenic environment		
4	Igbo Olodumare visitors spend money in my community by buying things from us.		
5	Igbo Olodumare tourist site is contributing to community development programs/ projects/activities		

**SECTION C 2:**  
**Community Residents Knowledge of Ecotourism potentials Survey Instrument**

**Tick the appropriate column in the section below:**

S/N	Questions	Yes	No
1	Ecotourism encourages conservation of the forest and wildlife		
2	Ecotourism encourages the preservation of cultural heritage		
3	Ecotourism encourages participation of the community residents in planning and decision making		
4	Ecotourism leads to economic benefits for community residents		
5	Ecotourism encourages sustainable use of vegetation, wildlife, and landscapes		

**SECTION D:**

**Community Willingness to participate in providing support services for Igbo Olodumare**

a. Would you like to provide some support services to support Cb-ED in IOSG?

Yes ( )      No ( )

To what extent are you interested in providing each of the following services

S/N	I am willing to provide	Very Unwilling	Unwilling	Neutral	Willing	Very willing
1	Housekeeping/accommodation services					
2	Tour guiding services					
3	Craft making					
4	Food and Beverage Service Skills					
5	Transportation services					
6	Cultural Story Telling					
7	Cultural dance, drama, and musical performances					
8	Planning					

## **Interview Guide and Focus Group Discussion Check List for Community Leaders**

### **Profile:**

1. Kindly tell me about yourself.
2. Were you born in this village?
3. Are you fully resident here or do you have a second home elsewhere?

### **Local Community Participation:**

1. Have you participated in any activity related to planning the development of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove as a tourist destination?
2. If you have, describe your participation and involvement ?
3. If you have not, are you interested in participating and if interested, in what way would you like to participate?
4. What is your opinion on the participation of local community residents in the Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove as a whole?

### **Attitudes towards Community-based Ecotourism Development in Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove**

1. What do you think about Igbo Olodumare as a Protected Area?
2. What do you like about Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove ?
3. What do you dislike about Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove?
4. Tell me about your favourite sites within the Sacred Grove
5. What do you think about the management of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove ?  
Should government be the sole-owner/manager of Igbo-Olodumare, should it remain co-owned/co-managed with the community, or should it become sole-owned/sole-managed by the community?
6. In what ways can the management of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove be improved?

7. What do you know about Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE), do you have any applicable skills that can aid its development?
8. What role does the ministry play in Community Based Eco-tourism development in Igbo Olodumare (CBE)?
9. What CBE initiatives, programmes or projects did the ministry carry out at Igbo Olodumare in 2016, 2017 and 2018
10. What are the accrued benefits for residents of the CBE initiatives in Igbo Olodumare to your community?
11. What benefits does the government get from the CBE approach in Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove?
12. What do you think about the Igbo Olodumare's potential for CBE development ?
13. Is CBE the right approach for conservation at Igbo Olodumare, why?
14. What are the features of the CBE initiative in Igbo Olodumare?
15. What are the future plans for the development of CBE in Igbo Olodumare.
16. Are you involved in any form of tourism business? If yes, which one? If no, are you interested in such?
17. Do you know any resident of your community that is involved in any form of tourism business?
18. Have there been any capacity building training targeted at developing tourism business? If no, will you be interested in such?
19. Would you be interested in having eco-lodges built in your community?
20. Which other stakeholders in Ondo State can contribute to the success of tourism development at Igbo Olodumare? List them and state their role/potential role.



21. How much stake/Interest has the government in Igbo Olodumare viz a viz the community and other stakeholders.
22. Has tourist activities ever led to any problem in Igbo Olodumare?
23. How are the local residents participating in the CBE project?
24. Are there any hindrances to community participation? Name them.
25. What are the main challenges facing the project as a whole.

**Interview Guide and Focus Group Discussion Check List for Businesses / NGO's  
and Government Officials**

**Profile:**

1. Kindly tell me about yourself.
2. What is the name of your organisation/parastatal?
3. What is your role in the organisation/parastatal?

**Clarifying Organisations Participation:**

1. Are you/your organisation involved in planning the development of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove as a tourist destination ?
2. If you are, describe your participation and involvement?
3. If your organisation is not, in what way could your organisation participate in the planning for ecotourism in Igbo Olodumare?

**Attitudes and perceptions about Community-based Ecotourism Development in Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove**

1. What do you think about Igbo Olodumare as a Protected Area?
2. In what ways can the management of Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove be improved?

3. What is the role of your organisation/parastatal in Community Based Eco-tourism development in Igbo Olodumare (CBE)?
4. What CBE initiatives, programmes or projects did the ministry carry out at Igbo Olodumare in 2016, 2017 and 2018
5. What are the accrued benefits for residents of the CBE initiatives in Igbo Olodumare to your community?
6. What benefits does the government get from the CBE approach in Igbo Olodumare Sacred Grove?
7. What do you think about the Igbo Olodumare's potential for CBE development ?
8. Is CBE the right approach for conservation at Igbo Olodumare and why?
9. What are the features of the CBE initiative in Igbo Olodumare?
10. What are the future plans for the development of CBE in Igbo Olodumare.
11. Is there a policy document that defines the management approach used at Igbo Olodumare
12. If yes, name the document and when it was gazetted
13. What is the relationship between your organisation/parastatal and the local communities around Igbo Olodumare and how is this relationship?
14. Is there any other organisation/parastatal that has a role to play at Igbo Olodumare? Which organisation/parastatal is it and what is your relationship with them?
15. Which other stakeholders in Ondo State can contribute to the success of tourism development at Igbo Olodumare. List them and state their role/potential role.
16. How much stake/Interest has the government in Igbo Olodumare viz a viz the community and other stakeholders.

17. Has tourist activities ever led to any problem in Igbo Olodumare?
18. How are the local residents participating in the CBE project?
19. Are there any hindrances to community participation? Name them.
20. What are the main challenges facing the project as a whole.

## APPENDIX 2:

### Population size determination by Krejcie & Morgan, 1970

Table 3.1									
<i>Table for Determining Sample Size of a Known Population</i>									
N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
65	56	210	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	1000000	384

Note: N is Population Size; S is Sample Size Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970