

## **An Assessment of Stakeholders Perception of Old Oyo National Park, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

**T**ourism has profound effect on the local community of its destination, as it brings economic and socio-cultural changes. This study investigates the stakeholders' perception of Old Oyo National Park, Nigeria. The broad objectives of this study are to assess the condition of existing facilities vis-à-vis the problems confronting and potential of the Park, identify the host and the visitors to the park and assess how people perceive the park. The research methods include in-depth fieldwork, observation, questionnaire administration, interviews, collation and processing of field data. The research instrument was the questionnaire administered with the aid of simple random sampling. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse data collected for the study. The result of the study revealed that Old Oyo National Park was an attractive tourist destination. However, it was observed that the level of awareness of the tourist centres to the general public is relatively poor and the Park is fairly developed. The result shows that the community members blamed the lack of development and public awareness of the Park on the government. The research also revealed that the Park has positively influenced the community for developments. Some of the major problems identified were poor management of the existing facilities. The research recommends maintenance of the facilities, improvement of the transportation facilities and public and private partnership in development of this National Park. If these recommendations are followed, the Old Oyo National Park will be an attractive tourist destination in years to come. This will boost the socio-economic development of the community.

**Keywords:** *National Park, Old Oyo, Park, Perception, Stakeholders.*

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### **Background to the Study**

Tourism has become a main focus of economic revitalization globally and especially in developing countries where attention is being directed to serve as avenue for economic diversification (Awodele and Ayeni, 2011 pg 121). It benefits the local economy and countries (Bankole and Odularu, 2006, pg 423). In view of this, it is vitally important that tourism is sustainably developed in Nigeria by providing all supportive and essential infrastructure that by providing all supporting and essential infrastructure that are lacking, which will collectively enhance tourism experience of potential tourists. As noted by Okosun et al (2016, pg 68) and Ayeni et al(2009 pg 22), 'Nigeria tourism industry is faced with numerous problems, prominent amongst these problems are the dearth and absence of tourism infrastructures and supporting institutions. Thus, there is the need to focus on improving the physical look of many of the Nigeria's tourist attractions (resort, hills, national parks, etc.) through adequate development and management. According to IUCN in 1997 cited in Okosun et al (2016, pg 70) national park is a protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation natural area of land and/or sea, designated to protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations, and it provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational and recreational activities all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible. National park is increasingly becoming very popular all over the world. The reason is that many countries have discovered its important roles in the preservation, conservation and propagation of important natural cultural heritage for the enjoyment of people (World Tourism Organization, 1992). The global growth in Eco-Tourism and visits to protected natural areas has led to new business and tourism opportunities for national and local economies (Okosun, et al 2016, pg 70). However, the negative effect of national park increase is evident on the environment and ecosystems of these sensitive regions (Dennis and Axel, 2007, pg 109). It has also been discovered that the tourism industry can be self-financing and has the potential to sustain rural economy while ensuring ecological balance. Therefore, national parks have unique attributes that are vital for the development of tourism in any country. In fact, it has made eco-tourism grow

In Nigeria, there are eight national parks and over 20 game reserves that cut across various geographical and ecological regions. However, literatures shows that the various reserves are yet to be fully developed to the standard required to promote tourism. If well developed, national parks can be exploited for domestic and international tourism (Okosun, et al 2016 pg 72, Aremu, 2001, pg 22). Lawan (2001, pg 15) reported that in 1979, Nigeria's first national park (Kainji Lake) was established following "the promulgation of Decree 49 of 1979". This became necessary after the establishment of the Nigerian Tourist Board via Decree No. 54 of 1976, which took effect in 1978 (Awodele and Ayeni 2011, pg 128). But the actual development of national parks for eco-tourism purposes did not start until 1991 when Yankari National Park was established by Decree No. 36. This was in reaction to the launching of the tourism policy on July 10, 1990 that accorded tourism a certain degree of government recognition in Nigeria's economy. The Old Oyo National Park followed thereafter. Other national parks that were subsequently established include Chad Basin, Cross River and Gashaka National Parks. With the establishment of the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation two additional national parks (Bankole and Odularu (2006, pg 432) were created in 1999 through Decree 46 bringing the number to eight.

Arabatzis and Grigoroudis, (2009, pg 167) studied satisfaction in Nadia National Park in Greece and found that tourists were dissatisfied with the infrastructure and recreation facilities in the park, which they regarded as important criteria for a quality destination. However, tourists were more satisfied with things the authors considered important, such as personnel and natural characteristics. Studies on the assessment of national parks in Nigeria are relatively few (Okosun, et al, 2016 pg 72).

### **Literature Review**

Chheang (2011, pg 213), examined tourist perceptions and experiences and argued that tourist perception is positive and their experiences are beyond expectations based on cultural enrichment and local people friendliness plus local hospitality facilities. Holt (2002, pg72) reported that tourism is being influenced by a “counter culture that opposes corporatism of all stripes”. According to Bramwell (1998, pg 40) consumers embrace tourism as an activity through which personal identity can be constructed autonomously and authentically. He also mentioned that travel and tourism industry has entered a postmodernist era. However to gain leadership in the tourism market few things need to be looked after they include value position, operational excellence and strong customer relations. On the other hand Henderson (2011, pg 162) in his research on Philippine highlighted that improper arrangement of infrastructure of a country seems to perceive negatively by the international visitors to choose a destination. He also highlighted on other factors that almost influence inbound and outbound tourists to travel. They include political instability, security and safety. Interestingly Higginbotham (2011, pg 179) employ basic social psychological concepts in the interrelated fields of recreation, leisure, and tourism. The result of his study reveals that although possessing an intrinsic motivation and an element of perceived freedom, travel for assisted-suicide is detached from the rewarding outcomes one normally receives from recreation, leisure, and tourism.

### **Service Quality**

According to Leisen and Vance (2001, pg 311) service quality helped to create the necessary competitive advantage by being an effective differentiating factor. Service quality is essential and important for a service provider company to ensure the quality service for establishing and maintaining loyal and profitable customer (Leisen and Vance, 2001, pg 313). Johnson and Sirikit (2002, pg 694) stated service delivery systems have the ability to allow managers of a company to identify the real customer's feedback and satisfaction on their service. According to Okosun et al(2016 pg 71), marketing and economics quality often depended on the level of service attributes. Wal et al., (2002, pg 337) argued that service quality reflects the extent to which a product or service meets or exceeds consumer's expectations. By the way consumers prefer service quality when the price and other cost elements are held constant (Boyer and Hult, 2005, pg 670).Customer perceptions of the quality of a service are traditionally measured immediately after the person has consumed the service (Wal et al., 2002 pg 339). Crosby et al., (2003 pg 31) found that perceptions of quality are created and maintained in the minds of consumers.

### **Customers Satisfaction**

According to Yi (1990, pg 100), the satisfaction measurement focuses primarily on the disconfirmation model of expectations. He also claimed that the desire of the consumer is the key determinants of satisfaction. This view was supported by Spreng *et al.*, (1996, pg 19) who believed that the extent to which a product or service fulfils a person's desires are significant in shaping the individual's feelings of satisfaction. Baker and Crompton (2000 pg 86) also supported this view by indicating that factors such as desires, needs and disposition can influence the measurement of satisfaction. However "Attribute satisfaction" is the individual assessment of the degree to which a product's performance is perceived to have met or exceeded desires and expectations (Spreng *et al.*, 1996, pg 21). Bramwell (1998, pg 39) suggested that the products of a destination should be designed to meet the demand of the targeted customers.

"Tourism satisfaction" refers to the emotional state of tourists after exposure to the opportunity or experience (Baker and Crompton, 2000 pg 89). Jayawardena (2002, pg 88) points out that the future of tourism markets is dependent on the ability of tourism countries to deliver "a high quality product that corresponds to the changing tastes, needs, wants and demands of the international traveller". The development of such marketing strategies requires tourism officials to measure the image customers have of the destination's tourism products and identify how satisfied they are with the delivery of these products (Jayawardena, 2002 pg 90). Tribe and Snaith (1998, pg 28) also measured tourists' satisfaction with their holiday experience and pointed out that the measurement of satisfaction provides some indication of the degree of customer loyalty. Kozak (2001, pg 489) found a relationship between overall satisfaction and intention to make a repeat visit.

### **Perception Study and Service Quality Constructs**

Okosun et al (2016 pg 71) stressed that a perception study based on tourist experiences has been widely utilised to measure service or product quality. Among the popular model is the service of tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy SERVPERF model. Introduced by Cronin and Taylor (1992), who improved the five service quality constructs of SERVQUAL, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Different from SERVQUAL, the SERVPERF model collects opinions on service quality based on the perceptions of the tourists after experiencing or using the services or products. A perception study is based on the argument that tourist satisfaction is a consequence of service quality. This means that tourist satisfaction can be explained by the positive perception a visitor gains as a result of his or her experience after using a service or product. The perception data were collected at the end of a trip. Therefore, the SERVPERF model is said to consider performance attributes of Parasuraman's SERVQUAL model. According to Ko (2005, pg 439), in cases where technical measurements of the services or products received by the tourists is difficult to obtain, tourist perception can serve as a valuable tool to assess the quality of services or products.

A perception study (SERVPERF) is argued to be relatively easy to conduct, as opposed to a service gap study (SERVQUAL) that involves data collection before the tourists leave for their

trips (tourist expectation) and after the tourists complete the trips (tourist perception). Unlike the SERVQUAL model, which faced much criticism because of its use of expectations in measuring service quality, the SERVPERF model is argued to be capable of explaining higher variances and yielding better results. Despite the argument regarding the advantage of the SERVPERF model as opposed to the SERVQUAL model, both models do not dispute the five constructs of service quality; tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. However, it is doubtful that the existing constructs are sufficient to explain service quality in tourism areas. Most recent tourism literature argues the need for responsible form of visiting tourism sites that conserves the environment and provides benefits to the locals. This characteristic of tourism produces the need for a special construct, named as a sustainable construct to be introduced to the existing service quality model.

Researchers are not in agreement regarding their views on sustainable constructs. What is obvious is that a sustainable construct is not just about the environment. Both natural resources and cultural assets are considered to be two important sustainable attributes in a tourist destination. Respecting local culture, preserving the environment and improving the economic well-being of the locals are considered sustainable constructs. Other researchers consider quality of the environment, harmony with nature, recycling and solid waste processing, and energy saving and benefits to the locals as sustainable constructs. As such, overdevelopment, overcrowding and neglecting of the environment are considered unsustainable. Therefore, a sustainable construct should include unspoiled destinations and activities that are harmonious with the environment and the locals. Akama and Kieti (2003, pg 75) investigated the cause of the decreasing numbers of tourists in national parks in Kenya. They found that tourists were satisfied with the quality of the parks but related the decline in the number of tourists to bad transportation and political unrest in East Africa.

### **The Study Area (Old Oyo National Park at a glance)**

The Old Oyo National Park is located in Oyo state. This state is based in the south west and is one of the 36 states in Nigeria. The Old Oyo National Park was carved out of the former Upper Ogun river game reserve and the Old Oyo forest reserve established in 1936. The park has a saxophone-like shape and is located approximately in the North of Oyo state of Nigeria. It is bordered in the North by Kwara State, in the South by Ikoyi while in the western part it is bordered by towns such as Igbope and Sepeteri. The Old Oyo National Park lies between Latitudes 8°10' and 9°05' N and between Longitudes 3°35' and 4°20' E. The park covers a land area of approximately 251,200ha making it the fourth largest park in Nigeria after Gashaka Gumti National Park (673,100ha), Kainji National Park (538,000ha), and Cross River National Park (400,000ha) (Fadare, 1989). The Park is about 120 km distance from the Southwest to the Northeast and about 50km at its and 660 km from Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. This study examines the stakeholder's perception of Old Oyo National Park with a view to enhance appropriate improvement policies. This study intends to assess the socio-economic characteristics of people and highlights the activities that influence community development, condition of tourism facilities in Old Oyo National Park, the tourists' perception on the level of development of the national park and problems of the national park.



## Research Method

The survey research method was adopted for this study. Two sources of data were explored; (i) primary and (ii) secondary sources. There are three target populations, namely, the tourists at Old Oyo National Park, the residents of the host community, and the workers at the National Park. For the purpose of this research, a survey design (field survey) method was adopted to ensure that meaningful data were collected. The collected data was subjected to analyses using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Thus, data was subsequently analysed by means of statistical package for social scientists (SPSS version 17). The total number of households in the sampled area was 8190. A total of 208 copies of questionnaire were administered to the household heads in the study area (Tede, Sepeteri, and Otu). For this study a total of 208 households were sampled. This represents two and half percent (2.5%) of the total number of households in the study area (table 1).

**Table 1: Settlements Population and Samples (11-20km Distance)**

SN	Settlements	Population	Households	Household sampled
1	Tede	25,512	2835	72
2	Sepeteri	25,241	2805	71
3	Otu	22,958	2550	65
	Total	73,711	8190	208

**Settlements Population and Samples (0-10km Distance)**

SN	Settlements	Population	Households	Household sampled
1	Tessi-Apata	686	76	2
2	Ogunlere	613	68	2
3	Ogunle	920	102	3
	Total	2219	246	7

Another three (3) settlements were randomly selected to represent all the twenty-eight settlements that fell within 0-10 km to the park area. These settlements were Tessi-apata, Ogunlere and Ogunle, with their corresponding population 686 (76 households), 613 (68 households) and 920 (102 households), respectively. The total number of households was 246.

A total of 215 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the household heads in the study area. This figure represents two and half percent (2.5%) of the population of the household heads. Old Oyo National Park has more than fifty members of staff. An interview guide was used for the National Park workers. Precisely, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays are notable days when the tourist centre is mostly patronized by different people. For this research, one weekend, Good Friday and Easter Monday in the month of March 2016 were selected for administering the questionnaire. A total of one hundred and nine (109) copies of questionnaires were prepared and administered to the tourists at the National Park during the questionnaire administration. Aremu (2001, pg 31) opines that "larger populations permit smaller sampling ratio for equally good sample because as the population size grows, the returns in accuracy for sample size shrink (table 2)

**Table 2:** Sample Size for the tourists

Date	Total number of tourists	Number of questionnaire distributed to the tourists
March 25 ( Good Friday)	300	30
March 26	160	16
March 28 (Easter Monday)	540	54
April 02	90	09
Total	1090	109

## Result and Discussions

In this section, discussions of the findings were based on the research objectives as follows:

### Socio-Economic Characteristics of People of Old Oyo

It was revealed in the analysis on table 3; that 64.2% of the respondents were male and 35.8% were female. This implies that males are majorly the heads of households. The questionnaire was administered on the household heads. The occupation status of the respondents shows that 37.2% were farmers, artisans accounted for 20.5%, while trader and civil servant were 13.5% and 28.8% respectively. This eventually shows that majority of the residents are farmers the table shows that the community is an agrarian community. The monthly income of the respondents in the study areas reveals that 43.0% of the population earned less than N7, 500, while 30.9% of the population earned between N 7,500-N15, 000, 4.3% of the population earn between N15, 001-N30, 000, while 11.8% claimed to earns more than N30, 000 per month. This reveals that majority of the respondents live below one dollar per day and therefore reduces the level of patronages of the tourists centre by the residents.

**Table 3:** Socio-Economic Characteristics of People of Old Oyo

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	138	64.2
Female	77	35.8
Total	215	100.0
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farmers	80	37.2
Traders	29	13.5
Artisan	44	20.5
Civil servant	62	28.8
Total	215	100.0
<b>Range of income</b>		
Below N7,500	93	43.0
N7,500-N15,000	66	30.9
N15,000-N30,000	31	14.3
Above N30,000	25	11.8
Total	215	100.0

### Activities influencing Community Development

The activities that influence the community development as revealed in table 4 it is quite obvious that recreational activity is the major activity that influences the community development with the highest percentage which amounted to 83.2%. As it can be observed majority of the resident's interview believed that the tourism centre has influenced development more than any other activities. Other activities considered that could attract development to the area along tourism resorts are commercial activities, religion and opportunities to work. None of these activities were said to be attractive enough. For work openings, about 8% is not unrelated to opportunities as a result of existence of tourism resorts. This is as a result of the presence of the warm spring in the community. This indicates that these attractions can be of good consideration by tourists, therefore a strong tourism attraction is a prerequisite for any destination to be considered by tourists.

**Table 4:** Activities that influence the community development

Activities	Frequency	Percent
Recreational	179	83.2
Commercial	13	6.2
Religion	5	2.2
Work	18	8.4
Total	215	100.0

### Condition of the existing facilities in Old Oyo National Park

An interview guide was used by the researcher to gather information both from the officers of the Park, with the assistance of the officials of the National park. At the Old Oyo National Park, there are modern facilities which could interest tourists to repeat their visit times without number. There are four Very Important Person (VIP) tastefully furnished chalets and four western chalets, there are also 30 states chalets flashy furnished, and 8 cabins for Students on excursions and canopy walk way.

The architectural design of the infrastructures is in fair condition based on the fact that the chalet is in small letter d shape. A multi-purpose and well- furnished conference hall is conspicuously located at the centre of the park.

The park is rich in abundant tree species such as the mahoganies, *Naucleadiderrichii* (opepe), *Terminalia ivorensis* (Odigbo), *Terminalia superba* (Afara), *Triplochitonscleroxylon* (Obeche) and others. Animals like Lion, Leopard, Greater bustard, spotted hyeana, Serval cat, Aadvark, Elephant, Buffalo, Kob, Waterbuck, Reed buck, Oribi, Roan antelope, Hartebeest Bush buck, Spotted hyena, Common warthog, Red river hog, Red flanked duiker, Bush buck, Mongoose, Maxwell's duiker, Patas monkey, Tantallus monkey, Olive baboon, Hunting dog and Mangabey were sighted in the National Park (Adetoro, 2008 pg 185; Toyobo et al, 2014).



Facilities in addition to chalets include tourist camps and restaurant, air conditioned bus and facilities for boat cruise and sport fishing etc. It was discovered from the tourists and personal observation that the accommodation facilities in the park are not well managed, the park is majorly faced with the problem of poor maintenance culture and underutilization of the natural features. Hence, the existing facilities in Old Oyo National Park are in a fair condition. However, mmaintenance of the facilities, improvement and public/private partnership in development of this National Park is key to improving the national park.

### **Utilization of the Facilities in respect of Old Oyo National Park**

#### **Tourists' Perception on level of Development of the National Park**

The analysis on table 5 shows that that 65.1 % tourist agreed that the Park is fairly developed as 20.1% of the respondents agreed that it is not developed and the remaining 14.8% of them agreed that the tourist centre is well developed. The availability of infrastructures, facilities and level of development of this Park are considered as fair. This can affect the rate of tourist influx to the Park. Based on personal observation it was discovered the National Park is fairly developed in terms of facilities.

**Table 5:** Tourists' Perception on Level of Development of the National Park

<b>Tourist's perception</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Fairly developed	71	65.1
Not developed	22	20.1
Well developed	16	14.8
Total	109	100.0

#### **Tourist perception about provision of additional facilities**

An investigation into the tourist level of satisfaction about provision of additional facilities shows significantly that about 4.7% of the respondents sampled strongly disagreed while 73.8% agreed and 21.5 % strongly agreed. This connotes that if more facilities were provided, people would be ready to patronize and also pay for the usage of the facilities. Such facilities include multi- purpose conference hall, golf course, sport centre and amusement park

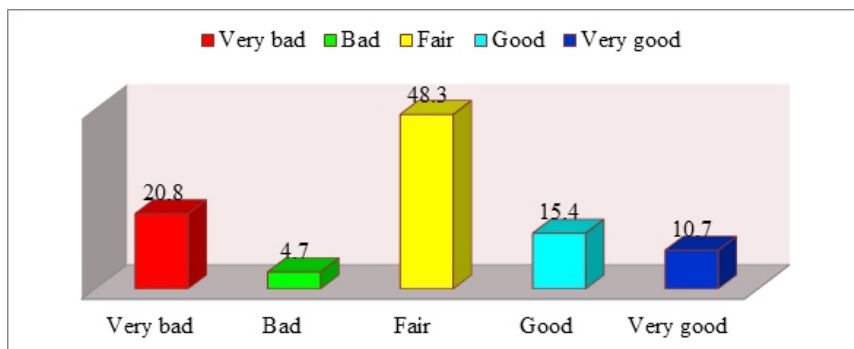
**Table 6:** Tourists Perception about Provision of Additional Facilities

<b>Provision of additional facilities</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly disagreed	5	4.7
Agree	81	73.8
Strongly agreed	23	21.5
Total	109	100.0

#### **Condition of Roads**

Accessibility to a tourism resorts is an important issue of consideration in assessment of tourism perception. The tourists were asked what they felt of the condition of the roads, viewing their movement to the national park. Result of the survey shows that 48.3% of the

tourists agreed that road condition to the tourist centre is fair, while 20.8% were of the opinion that road condition is very bad, 4.7% were of the opinion that road condition is bad, 15.4% were of the opinion that road condition is good, 10.7% agreed that the road condition is very good. The roads leading to this site are considered fair by most of the respondents. Easy access to tourism destinations through good road network is a primary requirement of tourism attractions of a place (Sedai, 2006). Sedai, 2006 suggested that development of the tourism destinations will help to improve the strength of the attractions and also Infrastructure development should be given high priority. Findings revealed that there is need for the government to upgrade the road in order to improve the condition of the road and make the Old Oyo Park very attractive for people to visit. Improvement of the transportation facilities through public and private partnership is suggested in order to enhance the development of the national park.



**Figure 1:** Condition of road

### Major Problem of the National Park

Result of the survey shows that like most Nigerians, the host community blames the government for inadequate facilities at the centre with 42.9% choosing this as one of the main challenges of this site. Everyone seems to opine that the majority of the responsibility of the site rests with the government. Next to that 22.0% of the respondents were of the opinion that the problem of the Park is as result of lack of awareness of the centre. This presupposes that the government did not do anything to advertise the place or see it as any of their business to see to the progress of the Park. In other words, there was no enough publicity concerning the existence of the park. About 9.9% of the host community respondents confirmed that the centre lack development due to the massive emigration of the youths which they opined are much needed for the promotion and every day running and maintenance of the centre. They ascribe the emigration to growth pole centres or the State capitals around the communities such as Ibadan, Oyo and Ogbomosho. Other problems include; difficult topographical terrain with 13.1% and communal conflicts with just 5.2%. This is a strong indication that Sepeteri is a peaceful community. There was more or less no blame on the tourist themselves with just 6.8% of the respondents putting the blame on bad usage by the tourists. Findings from the study reveals that government should be blame for the major problems of the National Park. Therefore, stakeholder's participation and involvement is necessary in addressing the major problem of the Old Oyo national park.

**Table 7:** Major problems of the National Park

Major problems of the tourist centre	Frequency	Percent
Inadequate government intervention	92	42.9
Difficult terrain	28	13.1
Lack of awareness	47	22.0
Poor usage by the tourist	15	6.8
Emigration of youth	21	9.9
Communal conflict	12	5.2
Total	215	100.0

### Conclusion

This study has shown that the Old Oyo National Park tourism potential has many benefits that can aid socio-economic and human development in community and their immediate surroundings. Based on the research findings, it is concluded the Park is fairly utilised and the National Park is fairly developed as a whole. It is obvious that the major problems of this National Park are blame on governments, very poor level of publicity and awareness, transportation, lack of good infrastructure, poor communication systems, and poor communal facilities, shortage of staff, and poor research facilities, poor access routes and lack of benefits accruing to the host community.

The future of Old Oyo National Park is vested in the hands of stakeholders. Thus, stakeholders' participation and involvement in the development process and management of the Old Oyo National Park is essential; hence will induce citizen's socio-economic growth and development. Therefore, the government and stakeholders must provide an enabling environment to enhance investment and the sustainability of the Old Oyo National Park .

Considering the findings and interpretations it is obvious that the development of Old Oyo National Park will create positive socio-economic impacts on local community. The following recommendations may facilitate utilization of this tourism potential and also maximize prospects of development of host community.

- (I) The government should extend more development to this area to serve as a tourist destination. The development will bring about job opportunities to the residents of Sepeteri which signify an improvement in their socio-economic status
- (ii) Media awareness is a contributing factor to any tourist destination in the world. The government should ensure the Old Oyo National Park becomes a potential tourist destination.
- (iii) Finally, the government should come up with proper policy implementation that would protect the environment. The policy should be harnessed in such a way that it will ensure sustainability of the national park.

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