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## **Visitors to Religious Sites in South Western Nigeria – Their Experience of the Physical Infrastructure**

**Elizabeth Ifeyinwa Benson**

### **Abstract**

This paper assesses the tourism experience and activities of visitors to religious sites in South Western Nigeria, in order to develop an effective and efficient strategy for the development of religious tourism. Religious tourism is a form of tourism whereby people of faith travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary, fellowship or leisure purposes. There is a paucity of research on the religious tourism segment in Nigeria. Existing tourism studies focus on ecological, cultural, heritage and historical sites. The paper was born out of my desire for exploratory research on religious tourism in developing countries. Data for this research were derived from primary and secondary sources. Fifteen religious sites were identified which are linked to the three official religions in the study area. Six religious sites were selected from the fifteen using a stratified sampling method. Six hundred questionnaires were administered to visitors at the six religious sites using systematic sampling of every tenth patron at the entrances to the sites. Data were analysed with descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The results show that the tourism experience of the visitors was influenced by socio-economic factors like residential location of the visitors, frequency of visit to the sites, duration of visit, accessibility and other factors. These were analysed using SPSS and the top influencing factor of visitors' experience is spiritual refreshing (seeking for peace) which constitutes 42.3%, of those surveyed while sight-seeing is represented by 37.5%. Other experiences are healing (10.3%) and other spiritual issues (4.3%). The study concludes that visitors' tourism experience is an important factor in the development of religious sites in the study area.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Religious sites, Experience, Visitors.

### **Introduction**

Throughout the course of human history people have travelled to various sites for the purpose of trade, health, religious conventions, war, economic gain and other compelling motivations. In 1841, Thomas Cook organized the first 'Tourist' excursion, a train ride through the English midlands and by the Mid-1850s; he was offering railway tours of continental Europe (Adrian, 2003). At about the same time, in the United States, the American Express Company introduced Travellers' Cheques. Despite its earlier origins, Adrian further notes that tourism is more of a twentieth century phenomenon such that it has become one of the fastest growing industries in the world and this has made the industry one of the most important global activities, particularly in economic terms (Foan and Franco, 2008).

One of the most valuable characteristics of the tourism industry is that while it has grown in number, it has also grown in variety of destinations as there has been a continued geographical spread of tourism to all parts of the world which has made it possible for many countries to develop tourism as a viable engine for socio-economic development (FRN, 2006). In essence, it has been validated that benefits from tourism, in terms of employment and income generation, depend on how well a nation develops its tourism industry.

Heretofore, the Nigerian economy has essentially been petroleum driven, with very little attention on the tourism industry. In Nigeria, research on tourism is a major scientific occupation if one considers the fields of environmental and social sciences, however, research which directly deals with the religious tourism segment is very scarce (Aliyu, 2004). There is therefore, little information on the development of religious tourism sites in Nigeria - a pattern evident in most developing countries - hence the existence of gaps in knowledge. This further elucidates why this research is necessary.

A good number of scholars have worked on ecological (Tuohino and Hynonen, 2001; Honey, 2002; Marion and Farrell, 2006), cultural (Law Abbot, 2004 historical and heritage tourism sites (Opperman, 1996; Graham *et al*, 2000; Brooks 2007), but much less attention has been focused on religious tourism sites. Studies on religious tourism sites in the United States, United Kingdom, and other developed nations include those of the WTO (2004), Woodward (2004), Osborne (2005), Coleman *et al* (2005), Wright (2007), Blackwell (2007), Raj and Morpeth (2007) Shinde (2011), and Cochrane (2011). All of these reflect Wright's (2007) contention that religious tourism in developed countries has become a full blown industry.

In developing countries, however, like Nigeria, research on religious tourism is yet to be explored at all. Religious sites in Nigeria receive increasing numbers of visitors every year, for example at the numerous traditional shrines which have been centres of attraction for many visitors. One example is the Osun Osogbo Shrine (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) which is visited by traditional religious worshippers and tourists from all over the world. Muslims also visit holy places within the country, examples include the Hubbari (Shehu Danfodio's tomb), and NASFAT camping ground (Aliyu,

2004). Christian religious spaces include convention sites such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) convention site in Ogun State (along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway). Another example is the Winners Chapel convention centre in Otta, Ogun State. According to the Nigerian Tourism Development Cooperation (NTDC) (2008), the festival of the 'Holy Ghost Congress' held at the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) site, attracts over 3 million visitors per year, from 34 countries (14 African and 20 Non-African countries). Over \$10million is spent on accommodation and feeding in seven days by foreign delegates and about approximately \$200 million (₦22billion) by domestic delegates on accommodation, transportation, food, souvenirs etc. Also, an annual gathering (popularly known as Shiloh) by the Winners' Chapel, attracts approximately 4.5 million visitors to Otta, in South western Nigeria. 'Shiloh' 2007 attracted delegates from different countries of the world. Foreign delegates spent \$1.5 million, while the Nigerian delegates spent about \$630 million during the course of the eight-day festival (NTDC, 2008; Uko, 2008).

Despite the high number of visitors to these religious sites, investigation into their tourism experience has not been well explored. Attempts have been made by some authors such as Aliyu (2004), Gbadegesin (2004), Uko (2008) and the NTDC (2008). In the main, these studies merely mention the need for a comprehensive study of religious tourism in Nigeria. Gbadegesin (2004) and Aliyu (2004) note that religious tourism is a new development in third world countries, and therefore, requires special research in order to comprehend the socio-economic implications of its existence in society. There is therefore a paucity of research, as little attention has been accorded to the religious tourism segment in Nigeria.

Against this background therefore, this paper aims to investigate the tourism experience of visitors to religious sites in south-western Nigeria, in order to further comprehend their socio-economic implications in Nigerian society and the global tourism industry. The major proposition in this study is that if a viable tourism industry in south-western Nigeria is to be achieved, then there is need to study and understand the tourism experiences of visitors to the existing religious sites. This study of visitors' tourism experience at religious sites as proposed here will provide useful contributions in this regard.

### **Tourism, religious tourism and tourism experience.**

With its increasing importance as a field of study and research, tourism has suffered from pluralism of definitions given by scholars from different disciplines like sociology, history, philosophy, geography, architecture, urban planning and professional definitions have been suggested by the likes of the UN World Tourism Organisation..

Tourism according to McKean (1989: 133) is defined as

a quest or an odyssey to see and perhaps to understand the whole inhabited earth . . . a profound widely shared human desire to know others with the reciprocal possibility that we may come to know ourselves.

Jafari (1997: 21) defined tourism as

a study of man away from his usual habitat of the industry which responds to his needs and the impact that both he and the industry have on the host socio-cultural and physical environment.

Ohakweh (1999) describes tourism as a person's trip outside his/her community or residence and environment to engage in activities for pleasure, business, education, or personal reasons which are not part of his/her regular routines. Some definitions like that of Bhatia (2002), mention various motivating factors (nature, culture, heritage, religion, health purposes) for the trip. This further explains various resources for tourism. Tourism resources are divided into two major categories: the natural and anthropogenic. These two categories exist separately; however, they complement each other in their values to tourism. Natural tourism resources are mainly geographical features which are subject to visual observation and assessment. They are therefore described as objects and phenomena of nature, such as landscapes, or different forms of earth surfaces, vegetation, the oceans and beaches, rivers and riversides, climate and changes in climatic conditions. The anthropogenic resources are human-made resources. They are creative objects and include resources like architecture and ethnographic features, history and archaeology, culture and religion. Tourism in any destination therefore depends on the existing tourism resources of the place (Daniel, 1997). However, for any of these resources to be developed for tourism, they must be concentrated in geographically suitable areas (Sondre 1998, Vincent and Thompson 2002).

Some definitions, such as those of Ryan (1991) and Falade (2003) describe tourism as an experience. Some also include duration of stay (often at least 24 hours and not more than a year (Doswell, 1997; WTO 1992)). These definitions are hereby applied in this study which defines religious tourists as visitors who spend the night or those who spend up to 24 hours.

### **Religious sites and religious tourism**

Religious sites are places where people gather to practice and experience their religion. Examples include sites like churches, mosques, temples and shrines. Woodward (2004) in his study on religious sites investigates the planning and management of religious sites in historic cities. His study looked into tourist activities at selected UK cathedral towns, the sacred city of Kandy, Sri-Lanka and the Holy City of Makkah in Saudi Arabia. These sites are places that connote sacredness. The concept of sacredness and the sacred sites is practiced in both western and indigenous traditions. According to Shackley (2003), and Thorley and Gun (2007), sacred sites can be natural, man-influenced or entirely man-made. Vukonic (1996), states that all religions in the world have sacred places that are visited. These are called pilgrimage sites, and can be considered as a category of religious site. In examining the range of pilgrimage experiences, Blackwell (2007) discusses how traditional views have identified that pilgrimage experience is expected to involve a measure of austerity, hardship and suffering before getting to the site, or even at the site, with the aim of fulfilling some spiritual goals or vows. Harrigan (2008) studied pilgrimage and hardship experiences of the Padayatra to Katharagama, in south-eastern Sri-Lanka, where visitors traditionally spend two months getting to their destination. Some of the pilgrims pierce their flesh with metal hooks and spikes, exemplifying the ascetic customs of south Asian religions. The study of Singh (2004) looked into the Rathayatra Hindu pilgrimages in the Himalaya in India where very heavy wooden 'carriages' are carried or pushed for miles. There is also the case of the tough prayer ritual of Tibetan Buddhists as they prostrate themselves repeatedly on the way to and around Jokhang Monastery in Lhasa.

However, Shinde (2008) in his study on the Brajyatra Pilgrimage around Vrindavan in northern India describes a contrasting experience, where the journey is arranged by tour operators and carried out by minibus transport. Cochrane (2011) speaking of

a similar style of pilgrimage notes that most domestic travel to pilgrimage sites is undertaken by motorized transport which allows a cohort of visitors to avoid spending the night. The further the distance travelled from home, the more effective the journey is considered. In certain faiths, the number of such journeys is expected to increase according to the income or wealth of visitors.

According to Wright (2008b), religious tourism is commonly referred to as faith tourism. He defined religious tourism as a form of tourism whereby people of faith travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary, leisure or fellowship purposes. Blackwell (2007) asserts that religious tourism encompasses all kinds of travel that is motivated by religion, where the destination is a religious site. Citrinot (2007) has categorized religious tourism into three main streams:

- Visits to a temple or place for the purpose of praying or paying homage or performing religious rites when staying nearby. The motivation is purely religious. (He referred to this as Spontaneous Religious Tourism).
- Visits of religious monuments and object as part of a sight-seeing tour. Heritage, architecture, history and art are the main motivations.
- Visits to religious sites involving religious activities such as spiritual retreat, festivals or religious teachings.

Blackwell (2007, in Raj and Morpeth) referred to one of the man-made classifications of religious sites as 'purpose built'. She affirmed that there is a growing trend towards the development of purpose-built religious sites, and proposed that managers of purpose-built religious sites need to be aware of the conflict between visitors' desires for authentic experiences and their need for security.

In North America, religious tourism is worth an estimated \$10 billion. Speaking about this and the inaugural *World Religious Travel Expo* which his group organised, Wright stated:

The tremendous response from global tourism leaders and organizations to our first trade show and conference clearly demonstrates that our partners around the world are committed to developing and promoting meaningful products and services that meet the needs of today's faith-based travellers (Wright, 2008b: 76).

In exploring this commitment, a study conducted by Zavadsky (2007), identified that 50,000 churches in the United States are engaged in religious travel programs and 25% of American travellers said they were currently interested in taking a spiritual vacation.

According to Wright (2008), Religious Tourism comprises many facets of the travel industry. These include pilgrimages, missionary travel, leisure and fellowship vacations, faith-based cruising, crusades, conventions and rallies, retreats, monastery visits and guest stays, faith-based camps and, visits to religious tourist monuments and attractions. This paper investigates the tourism experience in one of these contexts - visitors to religious sites in south-western Nigeria.

### **Understanding the tourism experience**

Some tourism studies have focused on conceptually framing the creation of destination image. The image of a tourist destination is an impression that a person holds about a place in which they do not reside (Hunt, 1975). It can be viewed as the sum of the beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has about a destination. It can be considered as the mental construct developed by a potential tourist on the basis of a few selected impressions among the pool of total impressions (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991). Ryan (1991) defines tourism as 'the experience of a place.' He states that the tourism product is not the destination or site, but it is about the experience of place and what happens there, with a series of internal and external interactions. Attempts have been made by other scholars including Sternberg (1997), whose contribution to this literature was his article titled 'The Iconography of the Tourism Experience'. He explains that tourism destinations sell hotel rooms, meals, admission tickets, souvenirs, tour-bus rides and others, but tourists do not come just for them. His paper discusses that these items and services are incidental purchases in the search for something more important: the *touristic experience*. He argues that tourism planning has as its central challenge the design of effective touristic experiences, and can find conceptual sources for this task in iconography, the field that studies the meanings of images. His article investigates Niagara Falls, where two main compositional elements: Staging and thematizing were identified in the design of tourism experiences. He posits that the market value of tourism destination



products, depends on how well they design, package, and deliver the resulting experiential content.

In their evaluation of satisfaction in the urban tourist experience using a disconfirmation model of customer satisfaction, Haywood and Muller (1998) identified two complimentary research methodologies: pre and post interviews. These were designed to evaluate visitor experiences with a city visit utilising the 16 variables they identified from literature. The study of Cole and Scott (2004) examined the mediating role of experience quality in their model of tourist experiences, using data from a tourist survey in Northeast Ohio. The purpose of their study was to examine the interrelationships among the four identified stages of tourist experiences: performance quality, experience quality, overall satisfaction and re-visit intentions. Results indicated that tourist experience is cumulative in the sense that performance quality leads to experience quality, which in turn contributes to satisfaction and revisit intentions. This type of model enables tourism promoters to identify which benefits tourists are likely to obtain when visiting tourism sites.

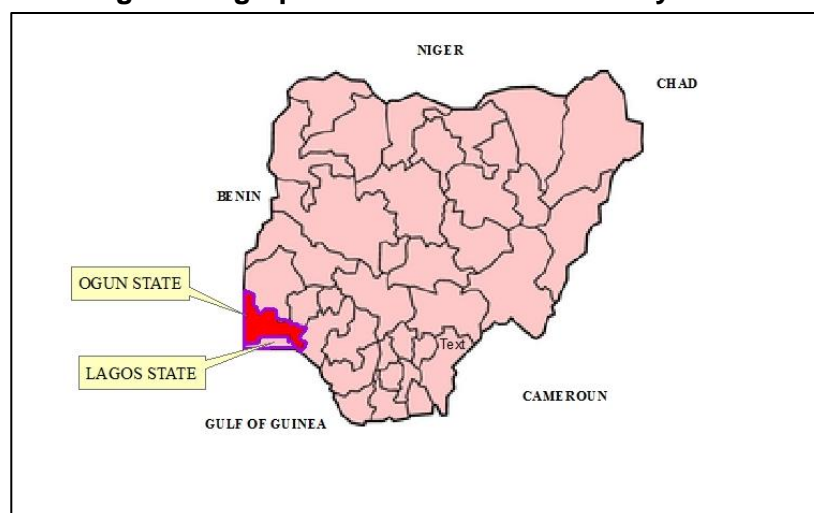
Carmichael (2005) presents a conceptualization of wine product attributes that consumers may consider when assessing the quality of their experiences in the touring destination. It is the consumer's evaluation on-site at the tourism destination; as well as travelling around in the region that forms their image and frames their experiences. Carmichael further disclosed that the core benefits for wine tourists are based on their motivations, expectations and experiences. A second and simpler conceptualization of wine tourism experience shows winery visitors' perception of the wine touring experience at different geographical scales for different geographical elements. It combines regional settings and activity site scales (spatial dimensions) with physical elements (natural and built environment) and human elements (social interaction environment). In this model, four factors were used to assess visitor perception of their experiences: perception of the rural landscape and the physical and built environment in the region; perception of the activity site which includes accessibility, winery buildings, vines and the aesthetics at the winery, the third and fourth factors are perception of social interactions with other visitors, and perception of interactions with staff and local residents.

A study on the experience of foreign tourists to Rishikesh, India for spiritual and yoga tourism was carried out by Aggarwal et al (2008). Results showed high dissatisfaction of visitors regarding poor availability of drinking water, poor availability of tourist offices, misguiding tour operators, poor accessibility, security and other challenges and obstacles. Jauhari and Sanjeev (2010) discuss that these experiences need to be well managed. They propose the need to adopt a dynamic approach where different stakeholders come together to offer various linkage points for the tourists to encourage return visits. It is important that a single solution point is offered to visitors so as to address these various challenges and obstacles. According to Jauhari and Sanjev, religious sites are revisited by tourists again and again, unlike other tourism sites.

### Location and features of south-western Nigeria

The study area is located in two south western states of Nigeria: Lagos and Ogun. Lagos State is bounded in the North and East by Ogun State on the West by the Republic of Benin and stretches over 180 kilometers, along the narrow coastal plain of the Bight of Benin, on the Atlantic Ocean. Lagos is the smallest state in Nigeria, encompassing an area of 3,577km<sup>2</sup>, while Ogun state is 16,762 km<sup>2</sup>. The justification for selecting Lagos and Ogun States is twofold: firstly, the early missionaries (such as Bishop Ajayi Crowder) settled in this area (Ezema,1993) and secondly; distinct geographical features provide major potential as a tourism environment. The geographical location of the study area is shown in Figure 1.

**Fig 1: Geographical Location of the Study Area**



Source: National Airspace Research and Development Agency (NASRDA, 2011)

### **Tourism development in South Western Nigeria**

The earliest inhabitants of the entities now called Lagos and Ogun States paid little attention to tourism. They were entirely preoccupied with primary production. Leisure time only existed at the end of the day's work, mostly under the moonlight.

Traditional festivals to celebrate the New Yam, New Moon, marriage ceremonies and the wrestling season were other periods of leisure. Visits to neighbouring communities to attend these festivals were usually over short distances and of brief duration. Localized forms of tourism were undertaken by the colonial settlers during weekends, but full-fledged tourism developed only after the introduction of locomotives into Nigeria. It was later expanded with the introduction of air transportation.

### **Research methods**

The research for this paper adopted a questionnaire administration method. Preliminary identified a total of fifteen religious sites related to the three official religions in the study area (The three official religions in the study area are Christianity, Islam and Traditional religions). Seven sites were identified in Lagos state, (Three Christian, one Islamic and three Traditional religious sites), while eight sites were identified in Ogun state (Five Christian, one Islamic and two Traditional sites). From this sample of fifteen, six sites were selected and stratified according to religion. The two Islamic sites were selected, while two sites each in the Christian and Traditional categories were randomly selected. The six selected sites and their corresponding faiths are: Christian sites - The Redemption Camp and the Synagogue Convention Site; Islamic sites - Nasrul-Lahi-ilFathi (NASFAT) and National Council of Muslim Youth Organisation (NACOMYO); Traditional sites - Oronna and Olofin Shrines.

A survey was carried out at each site during the relevant festival periods. Due to the high visitation volume at some of the sites, especially during festivals, the researcher undertook 100 questionnaires at each site to allow a significant level of confidence. 600 questionnaires were administered using systematic sampling of every tenth visitor at the entrances of each of the selected sites within a period of one week during three consecutive festivals in 2011. Data were collected on visitor demographic characteristics, trip motivating purposes, trip characteristics, revisit

intentions, duration of visit and perception of their experience. The data were coded into SPSS and used to analyse the elements of visitor experience.

### **Religious sites in the study area**

The major religious sites in the study area are linked to the three official religions of the region. All received high patronage from within and outside Nigeria. The Christian and Islamic sites are purpose-built religious sites, while the traditional sites can be categorized as sacralized sites (Shackley 2003). The following sections provide a brief overview of each site.

### **The Redemption Camp**

This recently developed facility is situated along Lagos-Ibadan Expressway in Ogun state. Before its development, the site was formerly known as 'Loburo', it was a thick jungle and a hideout for robbers and ritual killers. Today, the site hosts thousands of religious tourists annually during convention and music festivals. The camp has dormitories and international guest houses. Fig. 3 gives a view of visitors during the celebration of a religious festival.

**Fig. 2: Visitors at a festival.**



**Source: Author photo**

### **Synagogue Convention Site (Synagogue Church of All Nations)**

This site is located at Segun-Irefin Street, Ikotun Egbe, Lagos State, with branches in Ghana, South Africa, Greece, Austria and the United Kingdom. Every year, the site hosts thousands of national and international visitors from different races and colours. Tourists visit the Faith Resort Centre in this site, and many hotels and chalets have been erected in the surrounding area. Fig 2 shows the front view of the site.

**Fig. 3: Front View of Synagogue religious site**



**Source: Author photo**

### **Nasrul-Lahi-ilFathi (NASFAT)**

This site is located along the Lagos-Ibadan Express road in Ogun state. It is an Islamic camp where Muslim elites from Nigeria and beyond visit for leisure. The site has dormitories and other accommodation facilities as well as restaurants for visitors. It was established due to the existence of an Islamic society; Nasrul-Lahi-ilFathi (Meaning there is no help except from Allah), with the acronym NASFAT. The society was inaugurated on the 5th of March, 1995 at the residence of its pioneer president; Alhaji Abdul-Lateef Wale Olasupo. Fig. 4 (below) shows members enjoying their leisure during one of their events. The society was established with the aim of bringing Muslims to spend their leisure time together in their quest for Islamic knowledge and brotherly association.

**Fig. 4: Visitors at NASFAT Camp**

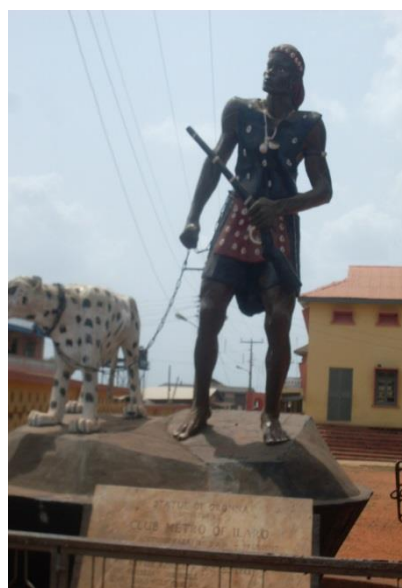


**Source: Author photo**

**National Council for Muslim Youth Organisation (NACOMYO)**

This is an Islamic society established for the purpose of bringing Muslim youths together. The society makes use of the multi-purpose hall located at Lagos state secretariat, Alausa, Ikeja. The society's events are held in this non-religious site (Shackley, 2003). Visitors make use of neighbouring hotels and guest houses, and adjacent roads experience high traffic during events. A permanent site is currently under construction.

**Figure 5: The Front View of the Forecourt of Oronna Shrine in Ilaro**



**Source: Author photo**

### **Oronna Shrine**

This sacred site, founded in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, about 1650AD, in Ilaro Town is important for the Yoruba traditional worshippers of Ogun state. The site is located where Oronna (a hunter) and Ekun (the Leopard) are revered and worshipped. Oronna's military prowess was very great, and he became an acknowledged hero, and he later disappeared into the earth. The point of his disappearance is called 'Oronna Shrine'. Visitors come from within and outside the country to spend days during festivals. Figure 4 (above) show the shrine's fore-court with Oronna and the Leopard.

### **Olofin Traditional Shrine**

This site is located at Iddo, in Lagos State. It occupies a large expanse of land and is used for hosting traditional religious programmes. During festivals, visitors arrive from within and outside Nigeria.

### **Results**

Results of the research are now presented. This begins with an overview of visitor profile, as well as elements of visitors' perception of their tourism experiences regarding physical infrastructure at the selected sites. Findings are linked to the key concepts discussed in the literature were and this is revealed in the discussion. Of the six hundred questionnaire administered, a total of five hundred and fifteen were usable in undertaking the following analysis.

### **Demographic characteristics**

Slightly more females (53.0%) were interviewed than males (47.0%). Marital status was quite balanced between married (44.7%) and single (48.7%) respondents, whereas widowed (6.6%) individuals represented a relatively small number. Visitors with the lowest household size of 3-5 have the highest visitation volume (48.2%), while respondents with the highest household size (above 10) have the lowest visitation level (5%). This shows that household size is inversely related to visitation to the sites. The 31yrs-40yrs cohort (35%) displayed the highest visitation levels. All the respondents claim to be educated with large numbers having post-secondary education (70.9%). Civil servants (26.8%), private sector employees (26.8%) and

students (24.9%) make up the largest economic groupings in the survey. Table 1 describes visitor demographics.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Occupation	Percentage	Age (years)	Percentage
Civil Servant	26.8	Below 10	1.0
Private Sector	26.8	11 – 20	14.0
Trading	14.0	21 – 30	31.3
Farming	2.9	31 – 40	35.0
Student	24.9	41 – 50	13.6
Artisans	4.9	Above 51	5.1

Marital Status	Percentage	Gender	Percentage
Married	44.7	Male	47.0
Single	48.7	Female	53.0
Widowed	6.6		

Education	Percentages	Household Size	Percentages
Primary	7.4	3-5	48.2
Secondary	21.7	6-8	30.1
Post Secondary	70.9	8-10	16.7
		Above 10	5.0

Residential Location	Percentage	Income (Naira)	Percentage
Within Lagos	55.1	Below 7500	13.4
Within Nigeria	25.0	7500-15000	8.9
Outside Nigeria	19.0	15000-22500	11.1
		22500-30000	9.5
		30000-37500	10.1
		37500-45000	12.2
		Above 45000	30.1

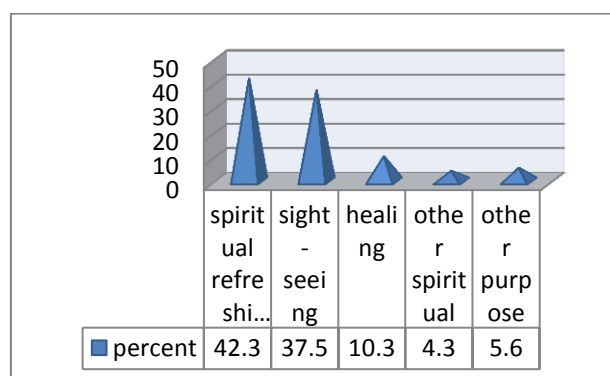
  

Religion	Percentage
Christianity	40.0
Islam	30.0
Traditional	28.0
Others	4.0

**Purpose of Visit**

Results from the analysis (see figure 6 below) reveals that the purpose of visit with the highest value (42.3%) is spiritual refreshing, and next in importance is sight-seeing (37.5%).

**Fig. 6: Trip Motivation Purposes**





This latter group claim that they only come to enquire and look around the site, to know what is happening. Healing and other spiritual issues constitute 10.7% of visitor motivation factors. This is in line with the studies of Jauhari and Sanjeev (2010). Therefore, most visitors actually come to experience peace.

### **Visit and Revisit Intentions, Frequency and Duration of Stay**

The study showed a very high rate of revisit intentions by the respondents. This is in line with results from literature on religious tourists (Aggarwal et al, 2008). Only 4.1% said they would not revisit, while 93% said they will. 61% claim they only visit during festivals at the site, 23.6% visit even when there are no events. Results on duration of visit, illustrate that 40.8% stay a few hours (less than 24 hours) and 29.6% stay for one to six days. It was further discovered that of those who spent a few hours, first-time visitors comprised 51.5%, while 35.3% had visited the site before. Furthermore, of those who spent a few hours, 24.5% claimed they did not spend the night due to poor accommodation facilities, 16.1% claimed they would have loved to, but they were limited by inability to afford a longer stay. 11.3% accorded their reason to inadequate security. Consequently, 56.7% of those who spent the night lodged in hotels and guest houses in town, while, 26.4% lodged in chalets within the sites. Visitors' mode of journey showed that 10.5% came by bicycle and on foot, 44.9% by public transport, and 43.7% by private automobile.

### **Rating Visitors' Perception of their Experience on Physical Infrastructures**

The following variables were used for the assessment of physical infrastructure:

communication and ventilation, toilet facilities, parking facilities, security, accommodation and good water, roads leading to and within the site, power supply, restaurants and well cultured relaxation centres, general aesthetics and drainage system / infestation of sun flies.

An overall satisfaction / enjoyment rating was also tested to reveal the respondents perception of their experiences of these infrastructures at the six selected religious sites. This test made use of elements adapted from the tourism experience concept (Carmichael, 2005), discussed in the literature. This study did not delve into the influences of human elements (social interactions with other visitors, staff of the sites and local residence) on the tourism experience of visitors, leaving space for further

investigations such as this. Respondents' perceptions of their tourism experience were based on the six selected sites. A five-scale rating of Very Good to Very Bad was adopted to reveal the overall perception of their experience.

As illustrated in Table 2 (below) the overall reaction of visitors is positive. Combining the positive responses, 63.6%, 55.5%, 77.0% 50.6%, 69.7% and 61.3% of respondents from SCOAN, redemption Camp, NACOMYO, NASFAT, Olofin Shrine and Orona Shrine respectively indicated that their experience of the infrastructure was either 'very good' or 'good'. Conversely, negative responses were very low; only 7.1%, 1.2%, 0.0%, 9.5%, 0.0% and 1.1% of respondents from SCOAN, Redemption Camp, NACOMYO, NASFAT, Olofin Shrine and Oronna Shrine indicated that they had either a 'bad' or 'very bad' experience of the physical infrastructures at the sites. Summarily, the table shows that the most highly rated site experience of 'very good' was for a Christian site, whereas both an Islamic and a traditional site received no negative responses at all (0.0% for 'very bad' and 'bad' combined).

**Table 2: Visitors' Experiences of the Physical Infrastructure at the sites**

Rating of Visitors' Experiences	Religious Sites													
	Christian Sites				Islamic Sites				Traditional Sites				Total	
	SCOAN		Redemption Camp		NACOMYO		NASFAT		Olofin Shrine		Oronna Shrine			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Very Good	27	31.8	10	12.3	11	12.6	13	15.3	9	10.1	9	10.2	79	15.5
Good	27	31.8	35	43.2	56	64.4	30	35.3	53	59.6	45	51.1	246	48.1
Fair	25	29.4	35	43.2	20	23.0	34	40.0	27	30.3	33	37.5	174	34.1
Bad	4	4.7	1	1.2	0	0.0	6	7.1	0	0.0	1	1.1	8	1.6
Very Bad	2	2.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	2.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	8.0
Total	85	100	81	100	87	100	85	100	89	100	88	100	515	100
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>166</b>				<b>172</b>				<b>177</b>				<b>515</b>	

## Conclusion

A range of concepts which are widely discussed in literature were tested in this study and a profile of visitors to the selected sites was produced. In line with most existing studies, the demographics of respondents showed that they were well educated, and most were between twenty-one to forty years of age. The most important trip

motivation purpose was peace and spiritual refreshing. Re-visit intention was found to be high but, very few respondents spent up to twenty four hours. Overall enjoyment level at the sites was seen to be below average. Managers of religious sites and tour operators need to examine this information for an effective and efficient management of the (religious) tourism industry. Government officials in the ministry of tourism and policy makers should provide for these needs in the religious tourism sector. Architects and Tourism Planners need to inculcate this information into the design and planning of religious tourism sites.

Findings from this study are expected to be the basis for further research. Further explorations will include investigations into planning standards for religious tourism sites.

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**Author details:** **Elizabeth Ifeyinwa Benson** is a Lecturer in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, where she teaches Tourism Planning and Development. She was a visiting PhD scholar at the International Centre for Research in Events, Tourism and Hospitality (ICRETH), Leeds Metropolitan University, UK between March and July 2012.

**Email:** [lizzyokeke@yahoo.com](mailto:lizzyokeke@yahoo.com); [ebenson@oauife.edu.ng](mailto:ebenson@oauife.edu.ng)