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### A Survey of Natural Attractions Important for Tourism Development in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria

\*Ochala, U. J., Omotayo, O.L., Adeniran, A.A., Uche, K.C., Okoli, E.N., Adio, O.R., and Bayode, O.C.

\*ochalajoy24@gmail.com

#### ABSTRACT

This study focused on surveys of natural attractions that are important for tourism development in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. Selection of respondents was through purposive sampling technique. The Staff of Kogi Tourism Board, Local Government Tourism Committee, Council of Chiefs and the Dekina Monarch formed the major respondents for this study. On-site observation, questionnaire and interview schedule were the instruments used to obtain data. Forty-seven (47) respondents were the sample for questionnaire administration in this study. The data collected were subjected to descriptive analysis. Results identified Ofo-obaji, Ebi (cold and warm spring), Itemie, Dekina uphill, Ofejiji, Ogo Iyale, Agbenemi cave, Odu-ogane, Uwo Ogboniha, Aji Idehi, Uwo Imodu, Okuta Ijoji, Abu-uja, Obara, and Unugbabi hill as the natural attractions important for tourism development in Dekina Local Government Areas. The study recommended the development of the identified attractions for tourism.

**Keywords:** Survey, natural attractions, tourism development, Dekina, Nigeria.

#### INTRODUCTION

Nature gave the environment numerous endowments. The interaction of man with nature has greatly influenced the natural composition and contribution of these endowments with development. Natural area is an area of historic, geologic, or ecological values and of sufficient size and characters so as to allow its maintenance in natural condition by the operation of physical and biological process, usually without direct human intervention (Amadi, 2015). Natural attractions are attractions created by nature. They are different types of physical natural features that

pull or entice a person to it. Such resources include landscape, seascape, parks, mountains, flora, fauna, coasts, and islands (Goeldner *et al.*, 1999).

Nature has endowed Kogi State with numerous natural attractions and potentials that are yet to be tapped. It is disheartening to observe that despite the availability of abundant natural attractions in Kogi State, these attractions are left in their natural form to diminish. Probably covertly, the efforts of government to survey, develop and maximize the gains of these potentials (natural attractions) have not been seriously noticed. Dekina Local

Government is endowed with wide varieties of natural attractions ranging from water base to rock formations. There are previous studies on natural attractions in different parts of Nigeria, however it is important to note that limited work has been on the tourist attractions in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State. Faniyi (2001) states that Kogi State is still at the infant stage on tourism development and needed to do more especially on the most important ones. Ogundayo (2001) observed that there is no tourism awareness in Kogi State. The study carried out inventory of natural attractions that are important for tourism development in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State. According to Ayodele (2002) inventory of potentials in natural tourism resources should be kept up to date for necessary information and promotion.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Study Area*

The study was conducted in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State located in the North Central part of Nigeria. Dekina Local Government Area lies between Latitude 7° 41' 24.59"N and Longitude 7° 01' 12.00" E. It shares boundaries with Anambra State to the South, Benue State to the East, Ekiti State to the West, and Niger to the North. The Local Government is predominantly made up of Igalas with other ethnic group which are sparsely populated. These tribes include Igbo, Yoruba, Bassa nge, Fulani, Tiv, Hausa, Epira among others. The region lies within the warm humid climatic zone of Nigeria with distinctive wet-dry seasons. The climate of the area is thus affected by two main air masses: the tropical maritime, (TM) and the tropical continental (TC) all year round with high temperatures with an annual range of 24.1<sup>0</sup>-31.2<sup>0</sup>.

Associated with the Tropical continental air mass is the North-East wind (Harmattan), which is prevalent at the beginning of (November-January) of the dry season. The South West monsoon wind is associated with the Tropical maritime air mass during the rainy season (Essien et al., 2013). Rainfall is heavy within the rainy months with an average of about 1500-2000mm annually.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

Quantitative and Qualitative methods were adopted for this study: questionnaire, interview schedule involving the key informants, and on-site observation. The selected areas were purposively selected based on preliminary information on the availability of natural attractions. A total of twenty-two (22) staff of Kogi State Tourism Board, sixteen (16) staff at the Local Government Tourism Committee, ten (10) members of the Traditional Chiefs Council were selected based on their knowledge of various natural attractions in Dekina Local Government. Dekina Monarchs were sampled for interview schedule while on-site observation was done to identify sites of tourism importance. Data obtained were presented descriptively.

## **RESULTS**

### ***Natural Attractions of Tourism Importance in Dekina Local Government***

Table 1 presents the natural attractions that are important for tourism development in Dekina Local Government Area and their respective locations. The attractions identified are Ofo-obaji, Ebi (cold and warm spring), Itemie, Dekina uphill, Ofejiji, Ogo Iyale, Agbenemi cave, Odu-ogane, Uwo Ogboniha, Aji Idehi, Uwo Imodu, Okuta Ijoji, Abu-uja, Obara, and Unugbabi hill.

Table 1: Natural attractions in Dekina Local Government Area

| S/N | Natural Attractions        | Locations      |
|-----|----------------------------|----------------|
| 1   | Ofo-obaji                  | Dekina town    |
| 2   | Ebi (cold and warm spring) | Dekina         |
| 3   | Itemie                     | Dekina town    |
| 4   | Dekina uphill              | Dekina         |
| 5   | Ofejiji fall               | Ochaja         |
| 6   | Ogo Iyale                  | Iyale          |
| 7   | Agbenemi cave              | Agbeji Ojimele |
| 8   | Odu-Ogane                  | Egume          |
| 9   | Akpa                       | Anyigba        |
| 10  | Uwo-Ogboniha               | Dekina         |
| 11  | Aji Idehi                  | Dekina         |
| 12  | Uwo-Imodu                  | Odu-ate        |
| 13  | Okuta Ijoji                | Egume          |
| 14  | Abu-uja                    | Ojo-oyo        |
| 15  | Aji Obara (cold spring)    | Dekina         |

**State of Development of the Natural Attractions**

Table 2 shows that one (1) out of the natural attractions in Dekina Local Government Area was

developed, fourteen (14) were undeveloped, while three (3) were maintained and twelve (12) were not maintained.

Table 2: State of development of the identified natural attractions in Dekina Local Government Area

| S/N | Natural Attractions        | Developed | Underdeveloped | Maintained | Not maintained |
|-----|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| 1   | Ofo-obaji                  |           | +              |            | +              |
| 2   | Ebi (cold and warm spring) |           | +              |            | +              |
| 3   | Itemie                     |           | +              |            | +              |
| 4   | Dekina uphill              | +         |                | +          |                |
| 5   | Ofejiji fall               |           | +              | +          |                |
| 6   | Ogo Iyale                  |           | +              |            | +              |
| 7   | Agbenemi cave              |           | +              |            | +              |
| 8   | Odu-Ogane                  |           | +              |            | +              |
| 9   | Akpa                       |           | +              |            | +              |
| 10  | Uwo-Ogboniha               |           | +              |            | +              |
| 11  | Aji Idehi                  |           | +              |            | +              |
| 12  | Uwo-Imodu                  |           | +              |            | +              |
| 13  | Okuta Ijoji                |           | +              | +          |                |
| 14  | Abu-uja                    |           | +              |            | +              |
| 15  | Aji Obara (cold spring)    |           | +              |            | +              |

## DISCUSSION

The result revealed that Ofo-obaji, Ebi(warm and cold spring), Itemie, Dekina Uphill, Ofejiji, Ogo Iyale, Akpa, Abu-uja, and Unugbabi hill are the prominent natural attractions important for tourism development in Dekina Local Government of Kogi State that were known by the inhabitants of the Local Government while others were not well known due to lack of awareness. This explains one of the reasons why there has been low patronage to potential tourism sites in Kogi State. Contrary to the findings of Ajake and Amalu (2012) that tourists who visited tourism attractions in Cross River State had increased from 53,634 to 63,972 due to awareness created by mass media and internet. The results indicated that out of the seventeen (15) attractions identified, only one (1) is developed, while 14 are underdeveloped, three (3) are maintained and fourteen (12) are not maintained. This is an indication of the untapped status of natural attractions that could be explored for tourism in the Local Government.

## CONCLUSION

With Kogi state as a tourists' haven, with much tourist potentials that are capable of attracting local and foreign tourists to Nigeria and the state in particular, it requires gingering and sustaining private entrepreneurship in tourism at its infancy for her tourism industry to develop in Dekina Local Government Area. As a matter of urgency, there is need for Dekina Local Government to ensure the preservation, development, and maintenance of the identified natural attractions in the Local Government.

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