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CONTENTS

Issue 1

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF LOKOJA, NIGERIA	1-16
<i>Adeniyi, Enekole Esther</i>	
THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANT OF ACCESS TO INFORMAL DOMESTIC WATER SUPPLY IN IJEBU-ODE, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA	17-31
<i>OBISANYA, D. Damola, ONAFESO, D., Olumide, and BADEJO, A. Bamidele</i>	
ASSESSING TRENDS IN AGRICULTURAL EXPANSION, VEGETATION RECOVERY, AND LANDSCAPE STABILISATION IN SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA (1984 -2024)	32-44
<i>Abdulumumin Garba Budah, Sunday Olukayode Oladejo, Fakpor Akpofure Miller, and Micheal Ajide Oyinloye</i>	
KNOWLEDGE OF ROAD SIGNS AND COMPLIANCE OF INTRA-URBAN COMMERCIAL BUS DRIVERS WITH TRAFFIC REGULATIONS IN ILORIN, NIGERIA	45-57
<i>Shittu F.M, Usman B. A, and Abdul, M.</i>	
PLANT SPECIES FREQUENCY, ABUNDANCE AND FOREST DYNAMICS IN CENTRAL ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA	58-68
<i>Adamu Sanusi., Abel Aderemi Adebayo., Gidado Abdulrazaq, and Musa Abdulkadir</i>	
ECOSYSTEM SERVICES OF JIKWATHLAR SPRING AREA OF GARKIDA TAULA CATCHMENT, BIU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, BORNO STATE, NIGERIA	69-86
<i>Rejoice Paul Mbaya, Nwaune Lawrence Ukoje, and Hadiza Abubakar Monguno</i>	
IMPACT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION QUALITY ON PASSENGERS' SATISFACTION IN THE BENIN METROPOLIS, NIGERIA	87-104
<i>Atewe, Amasikomwan Festus</i>	

Issue 2

- SPATIO-TEMPORAL ANALYSIS OF LAND USE/LAND COVER CHANGES (LULCC) IN EFON LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EKITI STATE, NIGERIA** 105-118

Idowu Adewale OGUNLADE

- ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY-BASED WASTE MANAGEMENT METHODS IN AKOKO SOUTH WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ONDO STATE, NIGERIA** 119-133

Agede, A. A, Ogunbodede, E. F. and Ogunade, A. O.

- SMALLHOLDER FARMERS' ACCESS TO CLIMATE CHANGE INFORMATION IN THE NIGER DELTA** 134-142

Prof. Onovughe Ikelegbe and Dr Joshua Longe

- URBAN ROADSIDE TOPSOIL–SUBSOIL NUTRIENTS UNDER THE CANOPY OF *TERMINALIA MANTALY*: RELATIONSHIPS AMONG TREE GROWTH, BIOMASS, AND SOIL QUALITY INDICATORS** 143-161

Paul Orobosa Orobator and Solomon Eghosa Uhunamure

- SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF FREIGHT FORWARDERS AS DETERMINANTS OF COMPLIANCE WITH TRADE FACILITATION POLICIES IN NIGERIA** 162-182

Ademola Benson Irinyemi and Adeyinka Peter Ajayi

- ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF LAND USE/LAND COVER CHANGES ON GULLY ERODED LANDSCAPE IN GOMBE METROPOLIS, GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA** 183-198

Richard Sunday Thlakm, Jajere Abubakar Ahmed and Umar Yahaya Zakarai

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TOURIST ATTRACTIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF LOKOJA, NIGERIA

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Abstract: *Tourism in Lokoja holds untapped potential to drive economic growth, cultural preservation and community empowerment in Kogi State, Nigeria. This study assessed the impact of tourist attractions on socio-economic development in Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria. Using a mixed-methods approach, primary data were collected from 384 respondents including tourists and site managers across 14 tourist sites, complemented by direct observations, GPS mapping, and secondary data from government records and literature reviews. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics and weighted means using SPSS version 27. The study revealed that tourism significantly contributes to local development by generating employment, fostering youth engagement, and promoting cultural identity. It was observed that 65.9% of respondents were youth under 35 years, highlighting strong youth engagement. Families (31.5%) and school groups (22.9%) constituted the largest visitor segments, emphasizing tourism's educational and cultural appeal. Educational and cultural motivations attracted 29.1% of tourists, while entertainment and relaxation accounted for 22.4%. Tourism also stimulated local businesses, with 47.6% of respondents noting the emergence of hotels and motels, eateries (26.9%), and tour guiding services (25.5%). Employment figures showed that 148 staff are employed across key sites, underscoring tourism's role in job creation. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited accessibility, and security concerns continue to constrain growth. Therefore, the study recommended targeted investments in infrastructure, enhanced security measures, and capacity-building programmes to empower local communities. These strategies are crucial to unlocking Lokoja's tourism potential and ensuring sustainable socio-economic development and cultural preservation in the area.*

Keywords: Tourist attraction, Economic growth, Cultural preservation, community empowerment, Lokoja

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has evolved from early human exploration and pilgrimage into a dynamic, rapidly growing global industry. It encompasses travel and stays outside one's usual environment for leisure, business, or other purposes, generally lasting less than one year (Akighir & Aaron, 2017; Rogowski et al., 2025). At the heart of tourism are attractions both of natural and man-made that motivate travel and shape visitor experiences, forming

the core of a destination's appeal (Anchovur et al., 2018; Lurdes & Sarkar, 2024; Zhang & Deng, 2024). These attractions enhance tourist satisfaction and significantly impact many nations' socioeconomic development by increasing incomes from visitor arrivals, stimulating domestic demand through growing tourist flows, and creating demand for travel and tourism-related products and services (Amalu et al., 2019; Stryzhak et al., 2024). In developing countries like Nigeria, tourism is increasingly recognized as a vital



engine for economic growth, presenting significant opportunities for investment, job creation, and cultural exchange (Anwuri & Osuoha, 2022; Augustine et al., 2023; Garidzirai & Pasara, 2020). Harnessing these potentials effectively can contribute to sustainable socio-economic development and national progress.

Despite Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and numerous historical sites, its tourism sector remains significantly underdeveloped and under-exploited. The country which is home to over 300 ethnic groups and 500 languages boasts of attractions such as the Slave Museum, Obudu Mountain Resort, Yankari Game Reserve, and Osun-Osogbo Grove, which highlight its vast potential for cultural and ecological tourism (Ebiloma, 2019). However, Nigeria's Gross National Income and Tourism Development Indicators from 1995 to 2023 reveal significant fluctuations (Linus et al., 2024). Linus et al. (2024) study revealed that national revenue was significantly influenced by tourism-related arrivals, excursions, and employment, whereas tourism expenditures showed no noticeable impact. Nevertheless, the tourism industry's contribution to Nigeria's GDP remains minimal, largely hindered by systemic challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poor marketing strategies, political instability, insecurity, and insufficient policy implementation (Augustine et al., 2023; Olonade et al., 2025). Moreover, the Nigerian Tourism Master Plan, designed to guide sector development, has largely gone unimplemented, further stalling growth (Haruna & Yusuf, 2021). Additionally, poor global awareness of Nigeria's tourist attractions and a lack of qualified manpower exacerbate these issues (Ohwo & Ndakara, 2023). Although, recent initiatives by the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation and other stakeholders to rebrand and promote

domestic tourism signal growing recognition of tourism's strategic socio-economic importance (Ewanlen & Bodmas, 2023). Harnessing tourism's benefits such as employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and local empowerment requires focused investment in infrastructure, effective marketing, security enhancement, and strong political will (Ameji & Urah, 2024; Olonade et al., 2025). Without addressing these multifaceted challenges, Nigeria's tourism sector will continue to underperform despite its abundant natural and cultural resources.

The tourism sector supports millions of jobs and fosters economic diversification, making it a key area for national development (Shafiee et al., 2025; Wijijayanti et al., 2020; Wosu & Ogan, 2022). Specifically, Lokoja, the capital of Kogi State, benefits from its rich cultural heritage and historical sites, attracting tourists to landmarks such as the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, thereby enhancing local economic activity. Despite, existing challenges, ongoing efforts to promote domestic tourism and improve infrastructure aim to boost the sector's contribution further (Ewanlen & Bodmas, 2023). Therefore, tourism in Nigeria, including Lokoja, holds significant promise for employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and cultural preservation, underpinning its strategic socio-economic importance (Attahiru et al., 2024; Zhang & Zhang, 2023). With sustained commitment and coordinated policies, the sector can realize its full potential as a driver of inclusive growth and national development.

Several studies had recognized the vital role of tourism in socio-economic development across the world noting its influence in poverty alleviation, cultural preservation, and infrastructure enhancement (Akighir & Aaron, 2017; Anwuri & Osuoha, 2022).



Globally, tourism is linked to GDP growth and improved social well-being, as evidenced in Jordan and cross-country studies (AL-Tamimi, 2020; Cárdenas-garcía et al., 2024). However, sustainable tourism demands economic diversification and cultural management to mitigate risks such as cultural commodification (Amalu et al., 2019; Anyira & Emakunu, 2021). Education also plays a key role, with higher parental and student education levels correlating with increased tourism participation (Al-amaera, 2019). Within Nigeria, states like Enugu, Cross River, and Rivers demonstrate tourism's positive impact on revenue generation, employment, and rural development (Augustine et al., 2023; Ibor et al., 2024; Wosu & Ogan, 2022). Specifically, Lokoja, Kogi State, is endowed with rich natural and historical heritage, including colonial relics, cultural festivals, and the Confluence Beach Hotel, which attract domestic and international tourists (Ebiloma, 2019; Ngozi & Rammat, 2017). These attractions stimulate economic growth by creating jobs, fostering local businesses, and attracting investment, crucial for Nigeria's economic diversification amid fluctuating oil revenues (Akighir & Aaron, 2017; Ebiloma, 2019). Tourism also promotes environmental conservation, cultural identity preservation, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Nonetheless, challenges such as infrastructural deficits and security concerns hinder full potential realization. Empirical evidence from Nigeria highlights tourism's role in peace-building, human capital development, and infrastructural improvements in host communities (Anchovur et al., 2018; Anwuri & Osuoha, 2022). Sustainable tourism development in Lokoja, supported by sound policies and community engagement, is essential for maximizing socio-economic benefits and advancing regional development (Augustine et al., 2023; Ezenagu, 2020).

Despite these advances, there remains a lack of detailed understanding of the socio-economic impacts of tourist attractions at the local level, especially in emerging destinations like Lokoja, Kogi State. Tourist attractions, a designated and managed resources, are crucial for drawing visitors and stimulating local economies, but few studies have systematically profiled these sites or assessed their developmental outcomes in Lokoja (Ebiloma, 2019; Ngozi & Rammat, 2017). Existing destination studies often focus on popular attractions without adequately prioritizing resource allocation and infrastructure development for sustainable growth (Anchovur et al., 2018; Ewanlen & Bodmas, 2023). This gap limits effective tourism planning and policy formulation tailored to local contexts. Consequently, this study addressed these gaps by assessing the contributions of tourist attractions to socio-economic development in Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria. It sought to identify key tourist sites, assess the infrastructure supporting them, and examine tourism's socio-economic impacts on the local community. The study aimed to provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, tourism planners, and stakeholders to optimize tourism's benefits in Lokoja and similar areas.

STUDY AREA

The study area spans latitudes 6°5'34"East to 6°47'57"East and longitudes 7°41'4"North to 8°44'13"North (Figure 1). It is bordered to the north by Katcha, Agaie, and Lapai LGAs of Niger State; to the west by Pategi and Kabba/Bunu LGAs of Niger and Kogi States, respectively; to the east by Kotonka and Bassa LGAs; and to the south by Okehi, Adavi, and Ajaokuta LGAs of the state. This area covers 3,160.5 km² and boasts of diverse tourist attractions, making it one of Nigeria's richest states in historical relics and cultural heritage.



The study area is one of the urbanized LGAs, the state capital and is particularly notable for its unique position at the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, a geographical feature that has shaped its historical and cultural significance. The city is home to numerous landmarks such as the Iron of Liberty, the World War Cenotaph, Mount Patti, and the Lokoja National Museum, which collectively narrate its colonial past and indigenous heritage (Ngozi & Rammat, 2017). Lokoja's cultural diversity is reflected in its vibrant festivals and ceremonies, attracting tourists nationally and internationally (Anyira & Emakunu, 2021). Its strategic location as a commercial link between northern and southern Nigeria further enhances its appeal as a burgeoning tourist and business hub. The natural environment, characterized by a warm continental climate with distinct wet and dry seasons, supports agricultural livelihoods, including yam, cassava, maize, and fishing, which remain central to the local economy (Saliu et al., 2021). This blend of natural beauty, cultural richness, and historical depth positions Lokoja as a distinctive destination with tourism potentials that can drive socio-economic development (Akighir & Aaron, 2017).

Despite these advantages, Lokoja faces challenges in urban planning and infrastructure management, which affects sustainable tourism development. Rapid physical expansion, especially in fringe neighbourhoods like Ganaja and Felele, has led to unregulated urban growth, with limited planning confined mostly to elite residential areas (Ebiloma, 2019). This fragmented development pattern complicates efforts to harness tourism's full economic benefits, including job creation, business stimulation, and investment attraction, critical for economic diversification in Nigeria's fluctuating economic landscape (Anchovur et al., 2018; Anwuri & Osuoha, 2022). Population growth of approximately 82,483 in 1991 to an estimated 292,600 in 2024 exerts additional pressure on infrastructure and services, underscoring the need for comprehensive urban and tourism planning. Addressing infrastructural deficits and enhancing security are imperative to maximize Lokoja's tourism potentials sustainably. With sound policies, community involvement, and strategic marketing, Lokoja can leverage its unique historical and cultural assets to foster socio-economic growth and regional development (Augustine et al., 2023; Ngozi & Rammat, 2017).

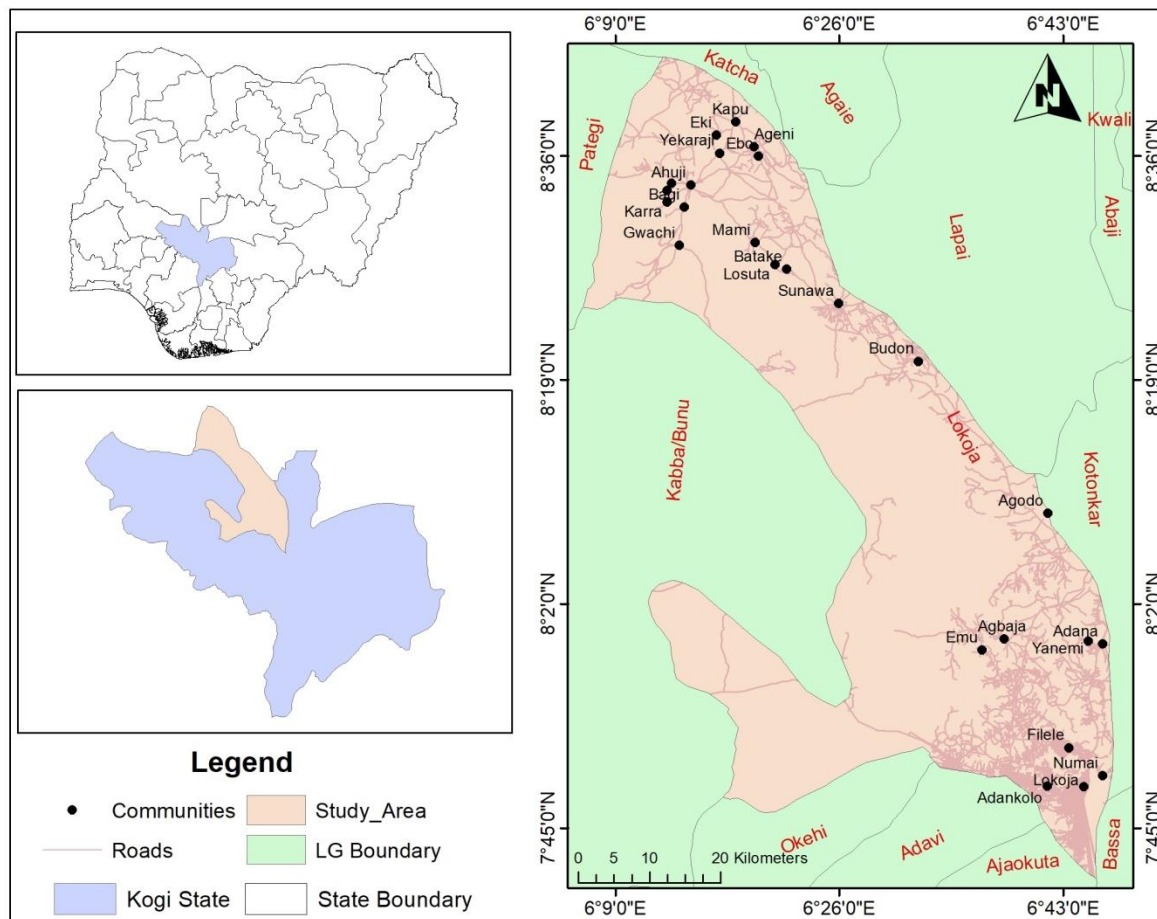


Figure 1: The Study Area

Source: Prepared by the Author (2024)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources to comprehensively examine the relationship between tourism and socio-economic development in Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria. The primary data were obtained through direct observation, questionnaire administration, and geographic coordinates of tourist sites obtained via handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) devices. Secondary data were sourced from the Office of the Surveyor General of Kogi State and population figures from the National Bureau of Statistics (2011). Relevant literature was also reviewed from journals, articles, dissertations, and online sources to provide context and support for the analysis. This mixed-methods approach aligns with similar studies such as Ajani et al. (2016), who combined questionnaires and interviews to

assess socio-economic benefits of tourism in Lagos State.

The sample frame of this study included tourists, tourist site managers and others within Lokoja town. Using the 2024 projected population of 292,600, derived from the 2006 census figure of 196,643, a sample size of 384 respondents was calculated via the Raosoft (2004) online calculator at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. After determining the sample size, simple random sampling was used to select respondents (tourists, managers, and others) during peak visitation hours (10 am – 4 pm) by compiling a site list of all available individuals at each tourist site, then drawing names randomly using numbered slips from a container which ensured unbiased representation. The same questionnaire was administered to the 384 respondents, applying this same method consistently across the 14 identified



tourist sites. The respondents comprised of tourists (seeking recreational/experiential insights), site managers (overseeing operations/maintenance), tour operators/guides or staff (on efficiency/satisfaction) and business owners/service providers (on economics/service quality). Specifically, seven tourist sites received 28 questionnaires each, six received 27 each, while one received 26. The sampling strategy applied in this study mirrors approaches used by Wosu & Ogan (2022), which employed simple random sampling to minimize bias and ensure representativeness while examining hospitality tourism on economic development.

Data collected covered socio-economic and demographic characteristics, perceptions on factors influencing tourist attraction, tourist profiles, and reasons for the presence of tourist

sites, mainly using categorical data. The contribution of tourist attractions to Lokoja's socio-economic development was measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly agree") to 5 ("strongly disagree"). Data analysis employed descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages, while weighted means were used to examine relationships between tourism and socio-economic development variables. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 facilitated this analysis. This methodological framework is consistent with global tourism studies that combine quantitative data collection and statistical analysis to understand tourism's socio-economic impacts, as demonstrated by Ajani et al. (2016) and Augustine et al. (2023). The spatial distribution and geographic coordinates of the tourist sites studied are detailed in Table 1 and Figure 2 provides a spatial distribution of these sites across the study area, which are concentrated in the most urbanized part of the study area.

Table 2: Coordinates of Tourist Site in Lokoja

S/No	Tourist Sites	Latitude	Longitude
1	Club 1901	7° 48' 16"N	6° 44' 3"E
2	European Cemetery	7° 48' 27"N	6° 44' 47"E
3	First Primary School	7° 48' 50"N	6° 44' 47"E
4	First Prison Yard in Northern Nigeria	7° 48' 9"N	6° 43' 57"E
5	Grave of Deposed Emir of Kano	7° 48' 37"N	6° 44' 53"E
6	Iron of Liberty	7° 48' 51"N	6° 44' 47"E
7	Lugard Government House	7° 48' 1"N	6° 43' 54"E
8	Lugard Rest house	7° 49' 10"N	6° 44' 5"E
9	Lugard Save	7° 48' 36"N	6° 44' 46"E
10	Mount Patti	7° 49' 50"N	6° 42' 59"E
11	National Museum	7° 48' 16"N	6° 44' 26"E
12	Spot of Royal Niger Company	7° 48' 38"N	6° 44' 38"E
13	The Cenotaph	7° 47' 56"N	6° 44' 37"E
14	The Confluence of River Niger and Benue	7° 48' 36"N	6° 46' 15"E

Source: Author's Field Work (2024)

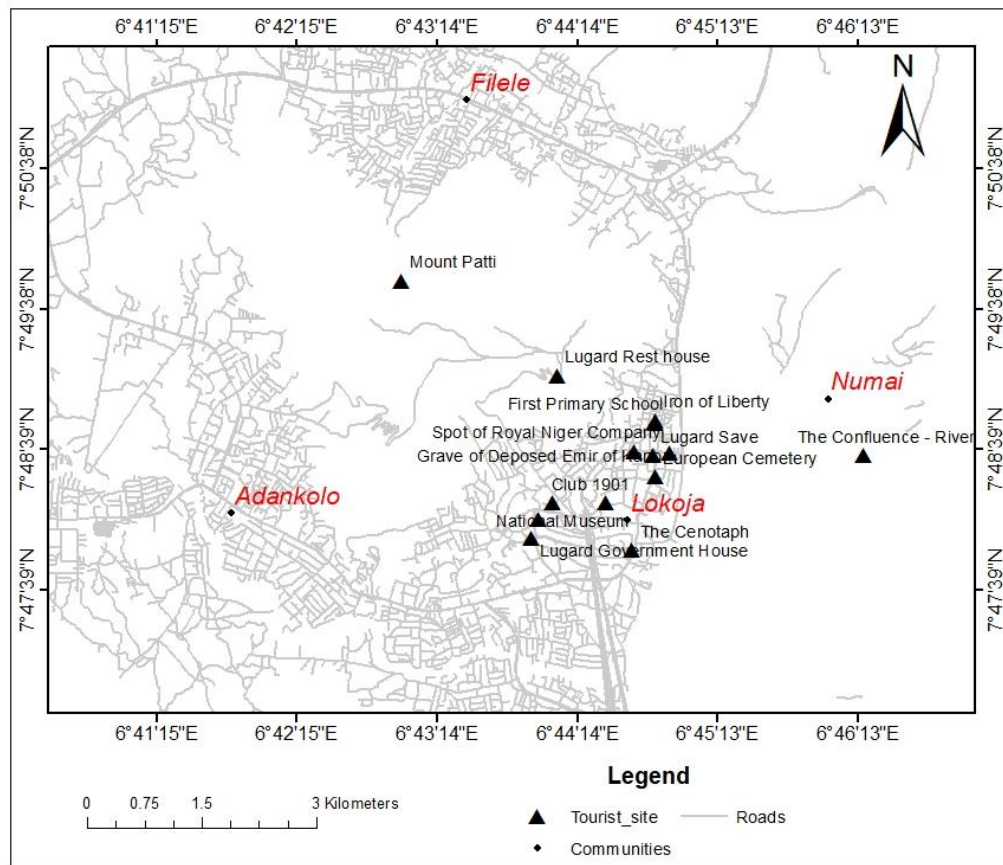


Figure 2: Spatial Distribution of Tourist Site in Lokoja

Source: Author's Field Work (2024)

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Table 1 shows the results of the demographic and socio-economic profile of respondents in Lokoja. As seen in Table 1 the findings highlight significant role of tourism in local development. The results revealed a slight male dominance, accounting for 53.6% among the participants, with a substantial youth presence of 65.9% that are under 35 years. These findings could therefore indicate

that younger individuals are more engaged in tourism activities in the study area. This trend aligns with findings from Omamogho and Okpoko (2024), who noted that youth are often more adventurous and likely to participate in tourism-related ventures. The marital status distribution shows that 61.7% of the respondents are married, suggesting that tourism in Lokoja attracts both individuals and family units, a pattern also observed in studies of similar tourist destinations in Nigeria. The religious composition is predominantly Christian (68.2%), followed by Islam (27.1%) and African Traditional Religion (4.7%), reflecting the study area's religious diversity.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	206	53.6
Female	178	46.4
Total	384	100
Age		
18-25 years	70	18.2
26-35 years	183	47.7
36-45 years	50	13
45-50 years	66	17.2
Above 50 years	15	3.9
Total	384	100
Marital Status		
Single	137	35.7
Married	237	61.7
Separated	10	2.6
Total	384	100
Religion		
Islam	104	27.1
Christianity	262	68.2
African Traditional Religion	18	4.7
Total	384	100
Level of Education		
Primary	55	14.3
Secondary	120	31.3
Tertiary	199	51.8
None	10	2.6
Total	384	100
Role		
Tourist	235	61.2
Manager of Tourist Site	20	5.2
Staff of Tourist Site	71	18.5
Business owner in Tourist Site Environment	58	15.1
Total	384	100

Source: Author's Field Work (2024)

Finding in Table 1 further shows that educational attainment among respondents is notably high, with 83.1% with at least secondary education, which supports the assertion that educated individuals are more

likely to appreciate and participate in tourism activities. This corroborates with the findings of Al-amaera (2019), who found that higher education levels positively influence tourism participation and awareness in the schools of



Amman Governorate. Regarding roles, the majority are tourists (61.2%), while others are site managers, staff, or business owners, illustrating the sector's capacity to generate diverse employment opportunities. This mirrors the findings of Ojugbo and Ojugbo (2021) tourism's contribution to job creation and socio-economic advancement in Nigeria's Cross River state. Collectively, these characteristics underscore the potential of tourist attractions in Lokoja LGA to drive socio-economic development, foster youth engagement, and promote inclusive growth through education and employment opportunities.

FACTORS INFLUENCING TOURIST ATTRACTION TO SITES IN LOKOJA

Table 2 displays the key factors influencing tourists to tourism sites in Lokoja. The findings on Table 2 shows that education is the primary motivating factor attracting tourists to sites in Lokoja, with 29.1% of the respondents visiting to learn about history, culture, and past events. This finding underscores the significance of educational and cultural experiences in driving tourism,

reflecting a growing trend where tourists seek meaningful and informative engagements. Entertainment and relaxation rank second at 22.4%, which revealed that leisure activities also play a crucial role in attracting visitors. Price and beautiful scenery each accounted for 14.1%, emphasizing the importance of affordability and aesthetic appeal. Other factors such as culture (8.3%), accessibility (7.6%), and the attitude of local people (4.4%) further contribute to tourists' decisions. These results align with Ezenagu (2020), who found that cultural enrichment and educational opportunities are key drivers of tourism in Nigerian destinations. Similarly, Hossain et al. (2021) reported that tourists are increasingly attracted to sites that offer both recreational and educational value, suggesting that a combination of learning and leisure enhances tourist satisfaction and repeat visits in Bangladesh. The relatively lower influence of accessibility and local attitudes suggests potential areas for improvement to boost tourism further. Overall, the findings affirm that Lokoja's tourist sites hold significant socio-economic potential by leveraging education and entertainment to attract diverse visitors.

Table 2: Attributes Driving Tourist Attraction to Sites

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Price	54	14.1
Culture	32	8.3
Entertainment and Relaxation	86	22.4
Beautiful Scenery	54	14.1
Education	112	29.1
Accessibility	29	7.6
Attitude of Local People Towards Tourist	17	4.4
Total	384	100

Source: Author's Field Work (2024)



CHARACTERISTICS OF TOURISTS VISITING THE ATTRACTION SITES

As displayed in Table 3, the findings revealed that families constitute the largest group of visitors to tourist sites in Lokoja, accounting for 31.5% of respondents. This is followed by individuals at 25.2%, and schools at 22.9%. Organizations make up 21.4% of visitors. This distribution suggests that these sites serve as important venues for family bonding and educational purposes, with schools actively engaging students in learning about history and nature. The prominence of family visits aligns with findings by Anyira & Emakunu (2021), who noted that family tourism plays a

crucial role in promoting cultural heritage appreciation in Nigerian communities. However, this contrasts with the study by Berhanu & Raj (2020), which found that individual tourists rather than groups dominated international tourists visiting Ethiopia, driven primarily by personal exploration and leisure. The significant presence of school groups highlights the educational value of Lokoja's attractions, reinforcing the role of tourism in formal learning and community awareness, as similarly reported by Omang et al. (2021). These varied visitor characteristics underscore the multifaceted appeal of the sites and their potential for diverse socio-economic impacts.

Table 3: Characteristics of tourists that patronize the Site

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Individuals	97	25.2
Organizations	82	21.4
Families	117	31.5
Schools	88	22.9
Total	384	100

Source: Author's Field Work (2024)

CONTRIBUTIONS OF TOURIST ATTRACTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT

Table 4 shows the results of the perceived contribution of tourist attraction to development in the study area. The contributions of tourist attractions to the socio-economic development of Lokoja are significant, as reflected in the study's findings. The availability of jobs emerged as the most prominent benefit; with a weighted mean of 4.3 which indicate that tourism has created employment opportunities across various skill levels, that is, from skilled professionals to unskilled labourers. This employment generation is linked to key attractions such as Mount Patti, the National Museum, and the Spot of Royal Niger Company, which serve as important

economic hubs. Cultural identity was ranked third with a weighted mean of 3.9, highlighting how tourism helps preserve and promote the unique heritage of the Lokoja people, fostering community pride and cultural continuity. Additionally, improved social amenities, including better roads, pipe-borne water, and enhanced healthcare facilities, scored a weighted mean of 3.5, demonstrating tourism's role in stimulating infrastructural development. These findings align with the work of Stryzhak et al., (2025), who emphasized tourism's capacity to generate employment and improve living standards, and Anyira & Emakunu (2021) and Augustine et al. (2023), who noted tourism's role in cultural preservation and social development.



Table 4: Ranking of Perceived Contributions of Tourist Attractions to Development of Lokoja

S/No	Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	WM	Rank
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)		
1	Improved Social Amenities	51(13.3)	191(49.7)	94(24.5)	10(2.6)	38(9.9)	3.5	3
2	Availability of Jobs	274(71.4)	35(9.1)	11(2.9)	47(12.2)	17(4.4)	4.3	1
3	Preserved Cultural Identity	182(47.4)	100(26.0)	28(7.3)	58(15.1)	16(4.2)	3.9	2

WM = weighted mean

Source Author's Field Work (2024)

STAFF EMPLOYED AT TOURIST SITES

The employed staff at the tourist site in the study area as displayed on figure 3. The tourist sites in Lokoja collectively employ a total of 148 staff, distributed across key attractions: 33 at the Niger-Benue confluence, 5 at the Royal Niger Company site, 3 at Lugard Rest House, 18 at Club 1901, and 13 at Mount Patti. This employment pattern demonstrates the direct job creation potential of tourism within the local economy. Such findings are consistent with Anwuri & Osuoha (2022), who established a positive and significant

relationship between tourist attractions and employment generation in Nigeria. This study further emphasized tourism's role in reducing unemployment and fostering rural development in Nigeria. However, Akighir & Aaron (2017) caution that despite tourism's potential, its contribution to overall employment in Nigeria remains below expectations, highlighting the need for improved investment and infrastructure. Overall, Lokoja's tourist sites contribute meaningfully to local livelihoods by providing diverse employment opportunities, reinforcing tourism as a viable strategy for socio-economic development in the region.

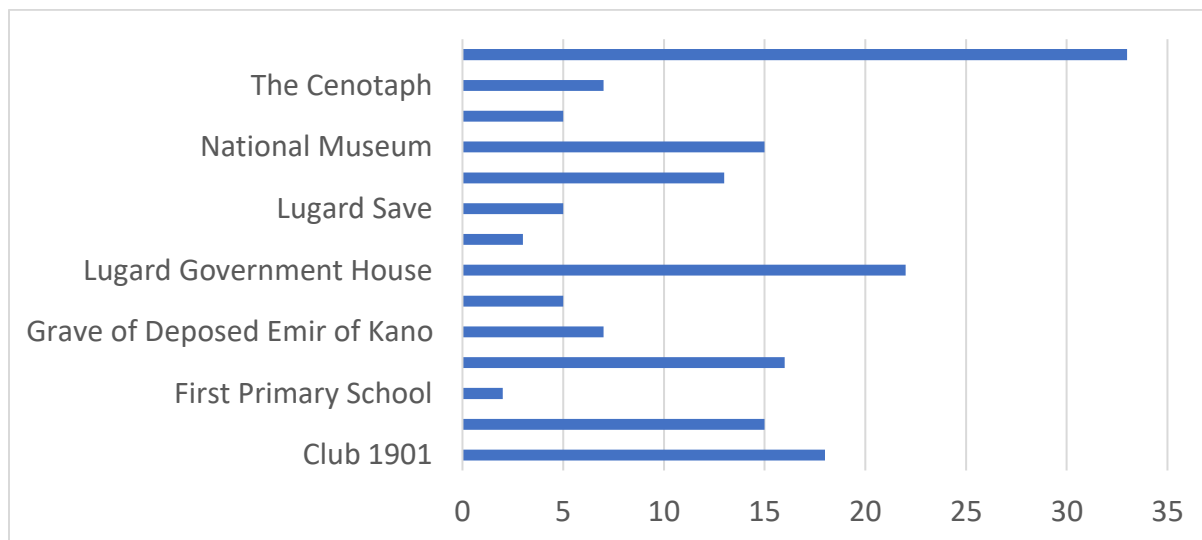


Figure 3: Employed Staff at the Tourist Site

Source: Author's Field Work (2024)



INFLUX OF BUSINESS DUE TO THE PRESENCE OF TOURIST SITES

Table 5 illustrates the businesses that have emerged due to the presence of tourist sites in Lokoja, highlighting how tourism acts as a catalyst for local economic growth. According to the results in this Table 5, 47.6% of respondents noted that motels and hotels, such as Edge Drive Hotel near the Cenotaph and Confluence Hotel by the Niger-Benue confluence, emerged primarily to accommodate tourists. Eateries and cafeterias account for 26.9%, catering to visitors' needs for food and refreshments, while 25.5% identified tourist guides as a vital business, providing essential services that enhance visitor experience and generate income. This

pattern aligns with findings by Ngozi & Rammat (2017), who reported that the Confluence Beach Hotel has positively impacted the economic well-being of Lokoja's host community by attracting both domestic and international tourists, which they added that it creates business opportunities and employment. Similarly, Ebiloma (2019) emphasized that tourism development in Lokoja has led to the proliferation of hotels, eateries, and recreational outlets, fostering entrepreneurship and youth employment. These businesses not only support tourism but also drive socio-economic development by expanding the local market and improving livelihoods.

Table 5: Influx of business due to the Presence of the Tourist Sites

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Motels/ Hotels	178	47.6
Eateries/Cafeteria	103	26.9
Tour Guide	98	25.5
Total	384	100

Source: Author's Field Work (2024)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the influence of tourist attractions on the socio-economic development of Lokoja. It offered valuable insights that extend beyond the immediate research context. The predominance of youth participation and the high level of education among respondents highlight tourism's potential as a powerful tool for empowering younger generations and fostering community involvement. The fact that most visitors are motivated by educational and cultural experiences indicates a growing demand for tourism that offers meaningful engagement, combining learning with leisure. The significant presence of families and school groups as tourists further underscores

the role of tourism in promoting social cohesion and cultural identity, which are essential for sustainable community development. Additionally, the emergence of businesses such as hotels, eateries, and tour guiding services around tourist sites illustrates tourism's capacity to stimulate local economies, generate employment, and expand market opportunities. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure, accessibility issues, and unplanned urban development highlight areas that require attention to fully unlock tourism's socio-economic benefits in the study area.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that: First, there should be a focused effort to improve infrastructure, including transportation, security, and visitor amenities,



to make tourist sites more accessible and attractive. Enhancing these aspects will likely increase tourist inflow and improve overall visitor satisfaction. Second, investing in education and capacity-building for local residents, particularly youth, will encourage greater participation in tourism-related

activities and entrepreneurship. By equipping the community with the necessary skills and knowledge, Lokoja can develop a sustainable tourism workforce and foster local ownership of tourism resources. These strategies will help transform Lokoja's tourism potential into a sustainable driver of socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and improved quality of life for its residents.

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