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## **IMPACT OF RELIGION TOURISM ON COMMUNITY: CASE STUDIES OF SYNAGOGUE CHURCH OF ALL NATIONS IN LAGOS, NIGERIA.**

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### **Abstract**

The study evaluates the economic impact of Synagogue Church of all nations as a religion tourism destination and its effects on Ikotun community, Lagos using questionnaire, personal observation and interview techniques. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 250 respondents comprises of tourists, residents and tourism service providers who have attained 18 years of age to ensure that all the respondents are mature enough to understand the research issues. Data collected from the survey were collated and analysed with the aid of descriptive statistics and chi-square statistics method. Findings from the study revealed that up to 84% of respondents agreed that religious tourism has increased economic activities in Ikotun Egbe community thereby reducing the level of unemployment in the areas. It was also discovered that despite immense contributions of religion tourism activities in the area the level of infrastructure facilities in terms of good quality road, uninterrupted power supply and communication facilities leave much to be desired. In view of this, the study recommended among others good management strategies in form of public-private partnership in provision of necessary infrastructure facilities in the study areas to enhance quality of service delivery to tourists as well as local communities.

**Keywords:** Economic Impact, Religion Tourism and Synagogue Church

### **Introduction**

The impacts of tourism on a community provide a good example of a double-edged because it touches many lives Marcoulier (2010), in his study of tourism development in US rural communities argued that the injection of tourists into a rural community can divide a previously homogenous community, because the influx changes the dynamics of



the community. For the successful development of tourism, understanding the economic impacts of tourist attraction such as cultural festival is necessary and this is even more important in the developing countries like Nigeria. The existence of religious tourism activities in any community has an important role to play in tourism development of such community, since it contributes the motivating forces for patronage, thereby improving the growth of the community, providing job opportunities for members of the community, creating better international relations between the nations and the tourists and also generating foreign exchange and improving the standards of living of the people through income generation (Adebayo, 2009). Understanding religion, especially the economic and social impacts of religious tourism on the community will be a valuable tool for not only the attraction but also the local community, the state and the country in general. As observed by Cooper et al. (2008), the tourism sector provides the greatest total employment in global terms and probably account for the highest level of receipts. To this end, events such as Osun-Oshogbo cultural festival, redemption centre, synagogue church plays an important role and hence, critical to the economy of the host communities. SCOAN has over the years positioned Nigeria among list of top religious destinations in the world, attracting an estimated 200,000 foreign tourists every year.

When one talks about religious tourism, reference is made to travel motivated by faith (Vijayanand, 2012). This kind of tourism generally involves faith-based activities, but in a heightened form it involves pilgrimages to holy places. Broadly speaking, Tourism Tidbits Archive (2014) argued that religious tourism is not only a visitation to a particular holy destination, but may also be travel for a humanitarian cause, for reasons of friendship. Religious travel can be the primary reason for a trip but it can also be part of a trip and provide a destination with additional attractions (Padin et al., 2016). For example, the Vatican holds special meaning for followers of the Catholic faith; millions of non-Catholics also visit the Vatican both for its spirituality and for its architectural beauty. The island of Curaçao is home to the Western Hemisphere's oldest synagogue and this synagogue is not only a national monument for Curaçao but also one of its major tourism attractions both for Jews and non-Jews alike. The index in the above arguments shows that religion tourism is a journey resulting from either religious or humanitarian causes or even as a form of leisure; externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding. The religion or faith based market has the advantage of appealing to people from around the world, of all ages and of all nationalities (Tourism Tidbit Archive, 2014). Furthermore, in the context of Nigeria, beyond several allusions by the government on the promotion of tourism, religion has continued to play a pivotal



role in the development of tourism in the country (Bello et al., 2016). It is pertinent to state that many dignitaries have in recent time found Nigeria the essential balm to many of their spiritual problems, with many heads of government visiting Nigeria to seek spiritual solution. The growth of religious tourism in Nigeria has been pivoted by Christians, Islam and Traditional believers, through various festivals, programmers that have become tourist attractions for many, both within and outside Nigeria. However, the Christian fold appears to be taken the lead in contributing to religion tourism development in Nigeria due to the upsurge of evangelical activities in the Pentecostal fold. Many Christian crusades, seminars and festivals that are held in every nook and cranny of Nigeria have become an avenue for economic development, especially with the crowd that normally throngs these venues. Among the mega places that attract religious tourists to Nigeria is the Synagogue church of all nations in Lagos state. Millions of tourists visit SCON for yearly program. Religious tourism has added to the growth of the economy over the years and with religious tourism huge addition to the economy most people do not see religious activity as tourism. This topic aims to educate people about religious tourism, its economic impact and how it can be used for infrastructural development. Hence, the evaluation of the impacts of the religious events to ascertain the degree to which the host communities gains from the activities is a question that has not been answered. This is necessary in order to justify government investment in the infrastructure development in cities that host religion centre.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted descriptive research technique. Descriptive technique allows researchers to study variables in their natural settings, in their natural environment. The study used questionnaire as instrument for collecting information from the respondents. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 250 tourists, residents, and tourism service providers in Alimosho local government area. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section A includes the demographic data of the residents and tourists, section B structured questions on the assessment of economic impacts of synagogue church as a religious tourism destination on the tourism service providers, section C perception of residents about religious tourism and how it has affected their local environment while section D dealt with perception of tourist on the effectiveness of tourism service provider.



The instrument was personally administered by the researcher to the respondent. Also, questionnaire was verbally translated to Yoruba language for non English speaking respondents. It was analysed by chi-square statistics.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **Socio-Demographics Characteristics of Respondents**

Table 1 reveals the socio-demographic results of the community residents who participated in the study. Sixty percent of those who participated were residents of the area, while 40% were business owners- who sell products and/or run services around the vicinity. The age distribution of the respondents showed that 30% were in the age group of “15 – 18 years”, while 44% indicated they were in the age group of “19 – 29 years”, 18% indicated to belong to age group of “30 – 39 years”, and 8% indicated to belong to age group of “40 years and above”. The distribution of the respondents according to their level of education showed that the majority of the participants have tertiary education about 44%, 20% indicated to had vocational education. 18% reported that they had secondary education, while 2% reported that they had primary education and 16%, no-formal education. The distribution of the participants according to their marital status showed that about 60% were single, 18% were married, 10% were divorced, while 12% indicated to have other forms of relationship. Fifty six percent were Christians, 28% were Muslims, 6% were Traditional religion worshippers, while 10% neither Christians nor Muslims. The distribution of the participants according to ethnic division revealed that the majority of the respondents were Yoruba, 44% a few others 30 percent Igbo, 28%; were Hausa. However 16% of these participants were civil servants, 30% were self-employed, 54% were student.



**Table 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE and GENERAL INFORMATION of RESPONDENTS**

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage%
Respondent Type	Resident	120	60.0
	Business owner	80	40.0
Age	15 – 18 years	60	30.0
	19 – 29 years	88	44.0
	30 – 39 years	36	18.0
	40 years and above	16	8
Level of Education	No Formal Education	32	16.0
	Primary Education	4	2.0
	Secondary Education	36	18.0
	Tertiary Education	88	44.0
	Vocational	40	20.0
Marital Status	Single	120	60.0
	Married	36	18.0
	Divorced	20	10.0
	Others	24	12.0
Religion	Christianity	112	56.0
	Islam	56	28.0
	Traditional	12	6.0
	Others	20	10.0
Ethnicity	Hausa	24	12.0
	Igbo	56	28.0
	Yoruba	88	44.0
	Others	32	16.0
Occupation	Student	108	54.0
	Civil Servant	32	16.0
	Self-employed	60	30.0



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## **Residents' Responses on the Impacts of Religious tourism on Ikotun area of Alimisho Local Government**

From the table above 84% of the respondents generally agreed that religious tourism has played a significant role towards increasing their financial activities within the community. They said that religious tourism activities have contributed to the economic growth directly or indirectly. About 48% also agreed that there are high employment opportunities in the community, which have been influenced by the religious tourism centre. On the question whether religious tourism activities have helped towards increasing infrastructural facilities in the Ikotun community, 46% respondents agreed that it does. Up to 60% of the respondents indicated that the religious tourism activities around the vicinity help in generating income to many residents of Ikotun area. Mention percentage 64% consented to claim that, expenditure from tourists in the community benefits many residents of the Ikotun community indirectly. 84% expressed their agreement to assertion that religious tourism also generates revenue to government directly or indirectly. 64% indicated that the activities of the Synagogue Church of all Nations have positive impacts on the lives of people in Ikotun area. 42% consented to the claim that foreigners patronize their businesses than citizens of the area. 48% indicated that a lot of business opportunities are opened in Ikotun area because of the high tourist patronage.



**Table 2: Residents Response to Impact of Religious Tourism on the Local Government**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Religious tourism has played a significant role in increasing financial activities in the community	100 (50.0%)	68 (34.0%)	12 (6.0%)	20 (10.0%)
Religious tourism activities have contributed to economy growth directly and indirectly	72 (36.0%)	88 (44.0%)	12 (6.0%)	28 (14.0%)
There is high employment opportunities in the community	24 (12.0%)	72 (36.0%)	52 (26.0%)	52 (26.0%)
Religious tourism activities have helped in improving infrastructural facilities in the community	8 (4.0%)	84 (42.0%)	56 (28.0%)	52 (26.0%)
Religious tourism activity in the community has helped in improvement of the overall economy	68 (34.0%)	64 (32.0%)	24 (12.0%)	44 (22.0%)
Religious tourism activity in the society generate income to many residents	20 (10.0%)	100 (50.0%)	48 (24.0%)	32 (16.0%)
The host community provides souvenirs to visitors	28 (14.0%)	72 (36.0%)	52 (26.0%)	48 (24.0%)
Money spent by tourists in the community benefits many residents of the community indirectly	16 (8.0%)	112 (56.0%)	36 (18.0%)	36 (18.0%)
Religious tourism also generates revenue to government directly or indirectly	108 (54.0%)	60 (30.0%)	8 (4.0%)	24 (12.0%)
SCON activities has added to our lives positively	48 (24.0%)	80 (40.0%)	32 (16.0%)	40 (20.0%)
Foreigners patronize our businesses than citizens	36 (18.0%)	52 (26.0%)	56 (28.0%)	56 (28.0%)
Business opportunities are opening constantly because of the high tourist patronage	32 (16.0%)	64 (32.0%)	48 (24.0%)	56 (28.0%)



### Perception of Ikotun Residents about Tourism

Furthermore, finding shows that new business opportunities have been opening constantly in area. 36% gave claimed that impact of the foreigners in the area is negative, while 60% agreed that prices of products and services have increased because of large number of foreigners who always visit the community. Lastly, about 72% consented to the claim that domestic goods and services have been on the increase, because of patronage by religious tourists.

**Table 3 Percentage Item Analysis of Residents Perception**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
SCON activities have added to our lives positively.	64 (32.0%)	100 (50.0%)	20 (10.0%)	16 (8.0%)
Foreigners patronize our business than citizens.	12 (6.0%)	84 (42.0%)	64 (32.0%)	40 (20.0%)
Tourists are friendly and are always willing to help residents,	24 (12.0%)	120 (60.0%)	36 (18.0%)	20 (10.0%)
New business opportunities are opening constantly because of the high traffic	32 (16.0%)	84 (42.0%)	48 (24.0%)	36 (18.0%)
Foreign impact is negative impact to the host community.	12 (6.0%)	60 (30.0%)	76 (38.0%)	52 (26.0%)
Prices of products and services has increased as a result of large number of foreigners that visit the community	40 (20.0%)	80 (40.0%)	52 (26.0%)	28 (14.0%)
Purchase of domestic goods and services by domestic businesses has increased	44 (22.0%)	100 (50.0%)	28 (14.0%)	28 (14.0%)

### Responses of Tourists at the Synagogue CHURCH of all Nations (SCON)

From all the respondents interview On the quality of goods sold and services provided to them by the business owners in the vicinity 66% indicated to have been on visitation to SCON, while the rest indicated they were on tourism for other reasons than visitation to the SCON. Up to 52% indicated they were on tourism with their family/friends, while about 48% indicated they came on tourism alone. Likewise, 52% indicated they came for





religious tourism, while 48% indicated they attended for other purposes. Among the tourists that were interviewed, 62% were found to be Nigerian, while 38% were found to be non-Nigerian. Further enquiry from the tourists showed that about 36% indicated there is good service provision by the business owners in the Ikotun, while the majority (amounting to 64%) rated the level of service provision as low. Only 32% affirmed that there is good means of transportation in the host community, while 68% stated that there is a poor means of transportation. Enquiry on access to purchase of souvenir revealed that 34% of the tourists claimed to have access to purchase souvenirs of their choices, while 66% claimed to have no access to purchase them.

**Table 4 Tourists Response**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Visited SCON	33	66.0
Not Visited SCON	17	34.0
Visited with family/friends	26	52.0
Visited alone	24	48.0
For Religious Tourism	26	52.0
For Other purposes	24	48.0
Nigerian	31	62.0
Non-Nigerian	19	38.0
Good Service Provision	18	36.0
Poor Service Provision	32	64.0
Good means of Transportation	16	32.0
Poor means of Transportation	34	68.0
Access to purchase of souvenirs	17	34.0
No access to purchase of souvenirs	33	66.0

Further enquiry from the study showed that among the tourists who had primarily visited SCON; the least number of visit was once, while the highest number of visit has been up to 4 times; with an average visitation of approximately twice. Enquiry made from those



who visited with friends or family indicated that at most they have had about 7 persons who were present on the tour.

**Number of Time Tourists Visit and Number of Persons**

	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
Number of times visited SCON	1	4	1.5	0.76
Number of persons on tourism	2	7	3.1	1.4

In conclusion, enquiry from the tourists showed that not more than 56% generally agreed that there is availability of good services in the Ikotun community; in addition, about 68%, cumulatively, agreed that the service providers deliver good and excellent services that are helpful.

**Service Delivery**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Availability of good service providers (hotels, souvenir shops, restaurants, bureau de change, tour guide, and guide operators) in the community	3 (6.0%)	25 (50.0%)	16 (32.0%)	6 (12.0%)
Service providers deliver good and excellent services that are helpful	3 (6.0%)	31 (62.0%)	9 (18.0%)	7 (14.0%)

**Test of Hypothesis**



**HYPOTHESIS 1**

H0: There is no association between socio-demographics characteristics of residents and their perception of impact of tourism in Ikotun area.

	<b>Chi-square Value</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Age	23.84	9	0.005
Level of Education	115.87	12	0.00
Occupational Status	66.99	6	0.00
Respondent (Resident/Business owners)	38.63	3	0.00

The Chi-Square test of hypothesis was used to check for association between major socio- demographics and the residents’ perception to overall impact of the religious tourism in the Ikotun area. The 5% level of significance was used generally.

It was found that age group has an association with the responses obtained from the participants, (with p-value of 0.005); level of education, occupational status and respondent category (resident or business owners) all has a significant association with their responses on the economic impacts of the religious tourism, each with p-value 0.00.

**HYPOTHESIS 2:**

H0: There is no association between respondents’ demographics characteristics and their perception of tourists

	<b>Chi-square Value</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Age	26.58	9	0.002
Level of Education	35.74	12	0.00
Occupational Status	34.89	6	0.00
Respondent (Resident/Business owners)	5.56	3	0.14



The Chi-Square test of hypothesis was used to check for association between major socio-demographics and the residents' perception of tourists who came for religious tourism in the Ikotun area. The 5% level of significance was used generally; p-values less than 5% indicate statistical significance. It was found that age group has an association with the responses obtained from the participants, (with p-value of 0.002); level of education, and occupational status both have a significant association with their responses on how they perceive the religious tourists, each with p-value 0.00. While the respondent category (resident or business owners) had no significant association with their responses on how they perceive the tourists (with p-value 0.14)

**HYPOTHESIS 3:**

H0: There is no association between respondents' demographics characteristics and their perception on the impact of foreigners on product prices.

	<b>Chi-square Value</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Age	49.03	9	0.00
Level of Education	44.54	12	0.00
Occupational Status	37.85	6	0.00
Respondent (Resident/Business owners)	2.65	3	0.45

The Chi-Square test of hypothesis was used to check for association between major socio-demographics and the residents' perception towards influence of foreigners on product prices in the Ikotun area. The 5% level of significance was used generally; p-values less than 5% indicates statistical significance. It was found that age group, level of education, and occupational status all has a significant association with their responses towards influence of foreigners on product prices, each with p-value 0.00. While the respondent category (resident or business owners) had no significant association with their responses on how the influence of tourists on product prices in Ikotun area (with p-value 0.45).



**HYPOTHESIS 4:**

H0: There is no association between respondents’ demographic characteristics and their perception on foreigner patronage of domestic business

	<b>Chi-square Value</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Age	33.51	9	0.00
Level of Education	28.89	12	0.004
Occupational Status	5.50	6	0.48
Respondent (Resident/Business owners)	7.26	3	0.06

The Chi-Square test of hypothesis was used to check for association between major socio-demographics and the residents’ perception towards purchase of domestic business by the foreigners in the Ikotun area. The 5% level of significance was used generally; p-values less than 5% indicates statistical significance. It was found that age group and level of education all has a significant association with their responses towards purchase of domestic business by the foreigners, with p-values of 0.00 and 0.004 respectively. While the occupational status and respondent category (resident or business owners) had no significant association with their responses towards purchase of domestic business by the foreigners, with p-value of 0.45 and 0.06 respectively.

**Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

**Summary**

This research sought to evaluate the economic contribution of Synagogue church as a religion tourism destination to the host community. Findings revealed that Up to 84% of the respondents generally agreed that religious tourism has played a significant role towards increasing their financial activities within the community. This implies that the destination and activities carried out there has been able to increase the economic standards and financial status of people in the community. 80% consented to claim that religious tourism activities have contributed to the economy growth indirectly or directly. 54% of the respondents are of the opinion that infrastructure facilities in the communities leave much to be desire especially when one compares to the qualities of facilities in the tourists’ home countries especially international tourists.



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## **Conclusion**

The study revealed that synagogue church of all nations has helped in improving the standard of living of people in the community, that community residents has benefited from the presence of the church in this community by assisting government to provide employment to citizenry thereby increase GDP of the nation. Tourism industry is a very lucrative business which is capable of generating more revenue to government and providing more employment opportunities for individuals if it is well managed and developed.

## **Recommendations**

In view of these, tourism infrastructural facilities can be enhanced through good management strategies such as public-private partnership in provision of quality facilities in the areas. Residents can also be educated on ways to maintain the available infrastructure facilities and make their environment better. This will increase the number of people that will be visiting the destination and thereby increase revenue generation from tourism activities.

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