



PACKAGING AND PROMOTING LOCAL HANDCRAFT IN ERIN IJESA FOR TOURISM GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

¹CHUKWU J.C., ²ELUJOBA E.T., ³MIKE-ROWLAND O.F., ⁴AJANI A. A., AND
⁵AIYEBAYO O. O.

¹⁻²Department of Leisure and Tourism Management, Federal Polytechnic Ede

³⁻⁵Department of Hospitality Management, Federal Polytechnic Ede

Corresponding Author E-mail: chukwujohnson95@gmail.com

Abstract: Handcrafts play an important role in the visitor experience because they represent local traditions and indigenous populations while also serving as invaluable souvenir. The local craft sector is performing much below its potential as a tourism product; thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine the challenges facing local handcraft development and to suggest ways to promote and package them as souvenirs in Osun state tourism destinations. One hundred and thirty (130) questionnaires were administered to the staffers, tourists, and residents at Olumirin waterfall, Erin Ijesa, Osun state and 120 questionnaires were properly filled and returned which gives a 92% return rate. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the research instrument. The findings of the study revealed that ($F_{(1,118)} = 2.070$, $r = .151$, $\text{Sig.} < 0.05$) there exists a weak and positive relationship between local craft development and the overall development of tourist destinations in Osun state, Nigeria. Therefore, it was concluded among others that a lot needs to be done to adequately package and promote local handcraft since it was found to have a significant impact on the development of tourist destinations. This in return will increase the popularity and acceptability of handcraft both at home and abroad. The study recommends among others that government should establish a tourism entrepreneurial development centre charged with the responsibilities of creating and identifying tourism business opportunities and act as a 'one stop shop' to purchase local souvenirs and disseminate information to potential tourist cum entrepreneurs in various attractions in the state to help in diversifying the revenue base of the State for tourism growth and development.

Keywords: Development, Handcraft, Packaging, Promoting, and Tourism

1.0 Introduction

As the number of people living below the poverty line rises, the world faces challenges in eradicating poverty and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (Okech, 2010). The tourism industry is increasingly becoming a source of employment and a significant contributor to a country's revenue growth through multiple segments, including the sale of handcraft items to tourists (Binns and Nel, 2002).

Tourism handcraft-related enterprise has been given a high level of importance in some developing countries, such as Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, and Tanzania because it contributes to the economic growth of these countries and increases foreign revenue generation (Wherry, 2007). In destinations where the tourism industry is thriving and the unemployment rate is high, local people employ themselves in the curios industry since it is inexpensive and simple to begin a craft business (Croes and Vanegas, 2008).

1. Many Nigerian communities are richly blessed with their own indigenous crafts and industries, which could help them to grapple with their environment and progressively enhance their living. Croes and Vanegas (2008) identify the fact that tourism handcraft-related business is a mechanism for poverty reduction and improving the livelihoods of the poor with minimal entry barriers. The tourism handcraft business sector is distinguished by a relatively small scale of production as well as a large informal sector. Smaller businesses are more vulnerable to the problems of bad governance, poor policies, and weak institutions due to their size, and they are also more negatively impacted by high bureaucratic costs than larger businesses. Furthermore, for smaller businesses, remaining in the unregistered informal sector limits their ability to grow by limiting access to financial and other inputs, limiting access to public services, and restricting the types of contracts or investments they can make.

2. Tourism is becoming a thriving industry in the twenty-first century, and handcrafting is one of the fastest-growing activities; together, they form a logical and powerful combination (WTO, 2008). Tourism handcrafts business was chosen as one of the three major sectors (agricultural, craft and textile, and tourism) to improve poor people's livelihoods and eradicate poverty while also empowering a large number of women in order to achieve some of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. (UNCTAD and WTO 2009). Nonetheless, handcrafts have developed without specific political strategies and rely heavily on demand generated by the tourism industry and intermediary business activities.

Local handcrafts that serve as souvenirs of a destination are the most sought-after items by most visitors. Handcrafts, among other things, represent local culture and heritage. Possession of a handcrafted item thus represents attachment to the host society. Nothing, perhaps, can better represent a tourist's visit to a destination than a hand-made product, which is often referred to as authentic. Many tourists are looking for authentic items to purchase as a souvenir. The purchase of mementos and souvenirs is a common practice associated with many activities. Few people will go on a vacation without acquiring some kind of evidence to tangibilize the experiences they have had (Gordon, 2016).

Previous studies have explored souvenir shopping from various perspectives, including the motivations of shoppers (Kong and Chang, 2016), the meaning of souvenirs (Collins-Kreiner and Zins, 2011), and tourist and retailer authenticity and souvenirs (Trinh *et al.*, 2014). Understanding both the mental and physical needs of tourists will help designers develop their work so as to appeal to travelers (Wearing, Stevenson, and Young, 2010). Despite the importance of souvenirs in the tourism experience (Shenhav-Keller, 2013), little research has been found that investigates souvenir usage and motivations. Textile crafts and apparel items account for a sizable portion of the products purchased by tourists (Anderson, 2013).

Hence, the need for this research work on the benefit of packaging and promoting local handcraft for the growth and development of tourism in the Erin Ijesa community which houses one of the major tourist attractions in Osun State.

The objectives of this study are to:

1. identify the benefit of promoting handcraft development in the Erin Ijesa community
2. examine the impact of craft development in tourist destinations in the Erin Ijesa community.
3. identify the challenges facing handcraft development in the destination.

The following is the null hypothesis for this research:

- H_0 : There is no relationship between promoting handcraft and tourism development in Osun state.

1.1 Local Handcraft that can be Packaged as Souvenirs for Tourists in the Host Community

Depending on the type of raw material available and the producers' indigenous expertise, the various regions and districts of the country produce a diverse range of handcrafts. In this regard, specific products have become strongly associated with specific regions. Each manufacturing location has distinct strengths and characteristics that, when developed, can lead to product specialization, ease of sourcing, and marketing. Nigerian handcrafts are typically of low quality, with little or no differentiation and innovation in terms of designs, styles, and dimensions. Prices are high because of low volume and haphazard production, as well as poor management and costing abilities (Bakari, 2009). This section identifies the major handcraft categories that can be used to develop tourism in the Erin Ijesa community of Osun State:

a. Mats and Baskets

The most popular craft products in Nigeria are mats and baskets. The type, design, and price of these are determined by the materials used and the source of those materials. Colours used vary (mineral dyes, vegetable dyes, a combination of the two, natural colour of the materials themselves, among others), but markets prefer natural colours. These materials can be used to make table and plate mats, beach mats, floor mats, bread baskets, fruit bowls, and coasters.

b. Embroidered and Woven products

Embroidery has long been used as a soft furnishing adornment on clothing (both by hand and with sewing machines). The technique has largely gone unnoticed; with only cushion covers, tablecloths, and, more recently, bags and purses being used. The vast majority of embroidered and woven goods of various qualities are consumed both locally and globally. To create new looks embroidery methods could be applied to hand-loomed products and leather on a smaller scale (Edwin, 2005).

c. Hand-loomed Products and Textiles

Nigeria produces a variety of bedspreads, cushion covers, wrappers, rugs, shawls, towels, tie and dye materials, and casual wears under this category (children's wear, dresses, and shirts). The sub-groups differ greatly in terms of warping/construction, surface design, and thread type/texture. Tourists and foreign residents in Nigeria contribute to the local market, with Europe (particularly Germany and Italy) serving as the primary export market for this array of products.

d. Pottery and Ceramics

It is thought that the first pottery was formed in a basket to give it the shapes, which were then fired in an open kiln after drying. Nigerian pottery is, for the most part, unglazed, which may give us an advantage in a market where glazed pottery (ceramics) attracts higher tariffs and health consciousness, as well as stiff competition from the Far Eastern suppliers. Ceramics and pottery are commonly practiced in the south-western part of the country mainly by the Yoruba tribe. There are so many small-scale ceramics industries cited in some southwest states like Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, Lagos, Kwara, etc. (Kojo, 2009).

e. Leather and Leather-Related Products

Nigerian artisans are increasingly using ecofriendly leather alone or in combination with other woven or plaited materials to create items such as purses, bags, belts, and sandals, among other products. In this sub-sector, new Nigerian-made leather products have recently replaced previously sourced products from neighboring African countries.

f. Wood Products

Products within this category have remained quite traditional, with rationalized skills, such as carving wood to form man-made gods used for idle worship, making masks for masquerades, and idle worship. Some of these people also carve wood for chairs, tables, and other household items to sell (John, 2006).

g. Jewellery and Jewellery Accessories

Since the dawn of time, humans have adorned themselves with jewelry. People in Nigeria have adorned themselves with jewelry made from animal parts such as bone, horns, feathers, and teeth, as well as stone, seeds, wood, clay, and precious metals. The Yorubas and Igbos excel at this type of handicraft. Necklaces, earrings, finger rings, anklets, and waist beads are examples of jewelry that dominate the local market.

1.2 Challenges Facing Tourism Handcrafts Industry in Nigeria

Several challenges have been identified to stymie the growth of tourism-related handcraft businesses, which in turn thwarts the growth of the tourism industry in general, particularly in developing countries. In Nigeria, these impediments hamper the goal of transforming the country through the expansion of tourism and related sectors (Lewis, 2005).

1. Lack of Resources: Craft producers in rural areas spend most of their production time in the collection of raw materials. Russouw, (2002) articulated that lack of resources is one of the challenges facing craft traders in developing countries, Nigeria in particular.

2. Lack of financial support from both private and public agencies: Handcraft traders face difficulties in obtaining capital to expand their businesses or in marketing their products both nationally and internationally. Because the curio business is not a capital-intensive one and is seasonal, craft traders require a consistent flow of capital to ensure efficient and effective management of their business.

3. Shortage of skills: The industry is facing a skills shortage, a lack of entrepreneurship, a lack of training, and a lack of knowledge among those involved in trading activities. Craft traders in Nigeria have little knowledge of running a successful business; they lack skills in practical areas such as marketing, pricing, funding, costing, connecting with suppliers, and controlling their finances. Many states, particularly Osun, lack institutions dedicated to providing craft training to traders and those interested. Training is provided in a short period of time by available institutions; training is not well-conducted and is provided by nonprofessional personnel. (Binns and Nel, 2012).

4. Lack of marketing skills: Traders face difficulties marketing their products both locally and internationally due to a lack of capital, poor advertising skills, and a lack of knowledge of information and communication systems (Lewis, 2005). There are no effective marketing channels, and most traders are unaware of new marketing strategies such as social networks and websites.

5. Unregulated business environment: Unfettered informal trading with low-status products as well as an unregulated business environment is another challenge facing the industry, which has resulted in diminishing the reputation of the curios industry (Rauner *et al.*, 2010). However, De Beer (2015) pointed out that governments in most developing countries are currently regulating the industry to minimize negative passive value to customers and to ensure employment opportunities for their citizens.

6. Failure of governments: Failure of most governments to recognize the potential benefits derived from handicrafts sales has limited the ability of tourist handicrafts traders to enter the global market. Most governments in developing countries provide support and promote the industrial growth of their countries to gain a more competitive advantage in the global market. “The opportunity to perform in the marketplace does not depend on the individual character but on the cultural politics and public narratives of the nation-state engaged in symbolic contests for status in the global community” (Wherry, 2017).

2.0 Methodology

- A simple percentage method and bar chat was used to present the data collected where 130 questionnaires were administered and 120 were successfully completed which gives a 95% return rate to tourists, residents, and staff at the Erin Ijesa tourism community in Oriade local government area in Osun State. Correlation was used to determine the relationship between the promotion of handcraft and tourism development.

3.0 Result and Discussion

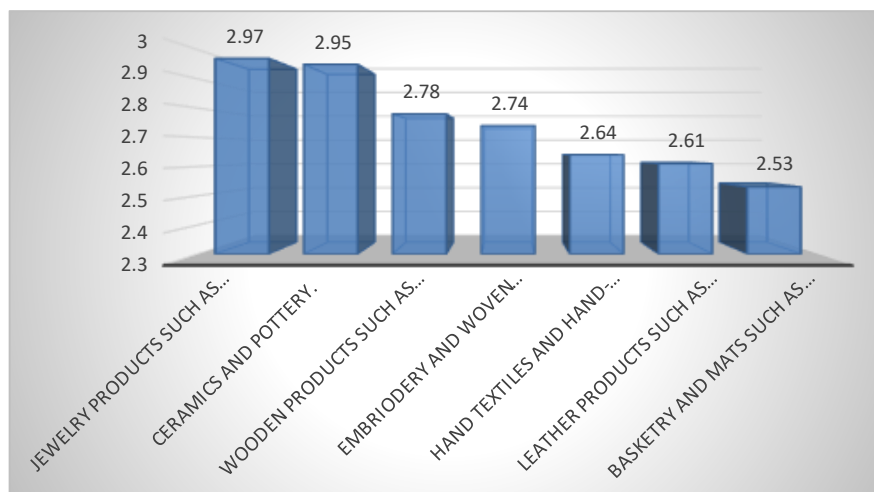


Figure 1: Bar chart showing the major handcraft product that can be harnessed in the destination.

Figure 1 above, shows that “Jewelry products such as necklaces, waist beads, etc.” has the highest mean score (mean score = 2.97), followed by “Ceramics and pottery” (mean score = 2.95), while the least in the list was the “Basketry and mats such as table and placemats, floor mats, etc.” (2.53).

The benefit of promoting local handicrafts business for tourism growth and development was achieved by using the correlation to determine the relationship that exists between the two variables.

Table 1: Relationship between of handcraft development and tourism growth

Model	Un-standardized		Standardized	<i>t</i> _{value}	Sig.
	Beta	Std. Err	Beta		
(Constant)	9.086	5.282		1.720	.088
Promotng Craft development	.530	.274	.175	1.934	.045

$F_{(1,118)} = 3.739, r = .175, \text{Sig.} < 0.05$

Table 1 above; examine the relationship between promoting handcraft development and development in the tourist destination. F-statistic = 3.739, Sig. value < 0.05. This indicates that the model is adequate since the significance value is less than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

From the same table, we have the coefficient of the independent variable (Promoting craft development) to be 0.530, the t-statistic = 1.934, with Sig. value < 0.05, this led to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) that there is no relationship between promoting handcraft and development in the Tourist destinations in Nigeria.

Hence, accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1), that there is a weak positive relationship between handcraft development and tourism growth in the tourist destination.

1.4 Discussion

This study which focused on the significance of packaging and promoting local handcraft for tourism development, a case study of the Erin Ijesha community in Osun State, the result identified jewelry products, ceramic products, baskets, and wood products as the major handcraft resources that can be harnessed for tourism growth, with mean scores of; 2.97, 2.95 and 2.73 respectively. This is in line with Bakare (2009), Alvin (2017), and Edwin (2005), who identified the product that can be packaged for tourist destinations as Basketry and Mats, Embroidery and Woven products, Ceramics and Pottery, Leather and Leather Products, etc.

Moreso, the study examined the significant impact of craft development in a tourist destinations and the result showed that F-statistic = 3.739, Sig. value < 0.05, indicated that the model is adequate since the significant value is less than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). this is in line with Hawkins, Best, and Coney (2003), which suggested that handicrafts are part of the tangible cultural heritage of all nations and hence this cultural component can lead to economic development.

Also, the study identified the challenges facing handcraft development in the destination. The findings revealed that local handcrafts face numerous challenges which include among others; high costs and small market area 96.6%, unavailability of raw materials and other inputs 98.4%, low skills or lack of knowledge about tourist's expectations 90.0%, etc are some of the major challenges facing handcraft development in the destination. This is in line with Russouw, (2002) who mentioned that lack of resources is one of the challenges facing craft traders in developing countries, Nigeria in particular.

Lastly, the study determined the impact of packaging and promoting local handcraft for tourism development and it was revealed that 81.4% of the respondents agreed that handcraft production provides an opportunity for communities to preserve their natural and cultural heritage and exposes it to international visitors, 86.6% agreed that local handcraft production is a key source of pro-poor income in the tourism value chain, and 82.5% agreed that local handcraft helps in promoting tourist destinations. This is in line with Tovey (2009), who stated that the local handcraft industry is seen as an informal sector and it, therefore, provides the opportunity for rural people rather than for them being dependent on government subsidies.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

3. Cultural tourism is a factor in social development. This is so because it improves the standard of living of the host community and ensures the maintenance of the local skills and crafts of the artisans Okonkwo & Oguamanam (2013). In the Erin Ijesa community, the wealth of cultural diversity available to tourists is quite enormous. However, very little attempt has been made to structure and market these potentials. They include among others; baskets and mats, embroidery and woven products, hand textiles products, ceramic and pottery, leather and leather products, wood products, jewellery and jewellery products, and arts (such as painting and sculpture) among others are important attractions and souvenir available to enhance tourists satisfaction and also ensure their revisit to the community. Their sales can be a significant source of income for residents, and they are an important part of a community's cultural heritage.

4.2 Recommendations

This study recommends as follows:

1. Government should create enabling environment for entrepreneurs in tourism to thrive by building shops, giving soft loans without interest to artisans, and promoting their products.
2. The government of Osun State should establish a tourism entrepreneurial development centre in the Erin Ijesa community, which will be responsible for creating and identifying tourism business opportunities and act as a 'one-stop shop' in order to disseminate information and provide entrepreneurial services and programs.
3. There should be leadership commitment by private and public sectors in driving the process through capacity building: to train entrepreneurs, and to assist in the development of local handcraft for tourism growth in Osun state.
4. Government and host community must ensure the safety and security of the lives and properties of entrepreneurs who engages in handcraft production and promotion in Osun state.
5. Government and tourism stakeholders should invest in promoting local arts and culture through publicity, programs, and event.

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