

**IMPACTS OF OKOMU NATIONAL PARK ON ITS COMMUNITIES AND ITS
ECOTOURISM VALUES**

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in Okomu National Park, Edo State and was done to investigate the impacts of Okomu National Park on its communities and its ecotourism values. 100 questionnaire was administered to obtain information from the tourist while 100 questionnaire was also used to elicit information from the villagers. Descriptive statistic was used to analyze the demographic characteristics while the multiple linear regressions was used to find out some of the factors that influenced the visitation rate to the park. Visitation to the park was found to be gender sensitive as majority of the tourist were females (51%) while the highest age group was 11-20 years (48%). All the tourists (100%) were found to be educated up to tertiary level and predominantly students (79%) while others include civil servant (11%) private sector (5%), and self employed (5%). Majority of the tourists (79%) access the park with bus hire. Majority of the tourists visit the park for recreational purposes (67%), while others visit the park for research and education (21%), for relaxation (9%), for game viewing (2%) and others (1%). In addition greater percentage (68%) of the respondent (villagers) were found to be male while 32% were female, the modal age class of the villagers was 21- 30 years (50%). A large percentage of the villagers were also found to have secondary education (64%) and the predominant occupation of the respondent was farming (61%). A total of 102 visits per annum for the tourist were recorded at the cost of ₦ 530,460, with an average sum of ₦341,432.00 per visit. The highest number of visits and travel cost was incurred by the respondent's accessing the parks with hired bus. This category of tourist made a total 79 visits at cost of ₦376,820.00 while respondent with private car made the least number of visits (one visit) at a cost of ₦54,800. The total travel cost ₦530,460 represented the amount of money the respondents paid to access the park. Total travel cost was found to be the major factor through which visitation rate to the park can be explained and predicted, some suggestion were made toward the effective management of the park.