

ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETICS AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

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Abstract

Tourism means trade, jobs, development, cultural sustainability, peace and fulfillment of human aspirations. The global tourism industry has celebrated outstanding development in recent years and has become well positioned as one of the engine of economic, social and environmental development in many countries.

It is imperative therefore to note that for aesthetic look and psychological view of any tourism site to be sustained, the need to salvage the environment from the diverse impact of tourism should be paramount in the activities and programmes of all tourism stakeholders.

A survey carried out in Olumo rock tourism site in Abeokuta, revealed that about 82% of solid waste pollutants were caused as a result of tourism activities in the area, while the impact of human and vehicular congestions around the site cannot be over emphasized. Further findings also revealed that for effective environmental aesthetics to be sustained around tourism sites, travelers, visitors and tourists, should do all they can to minimize the negative environmental impacts of tourism.

The paper thus suggests a stakeholder participatory approach, which will facilitate a collaborative effort to permanently arrest the adverse effects of the activities of tourism on the physical environment for sustainability.

Key Words: Environment, Aesthetics, Stakeholder, Tourism, Participation and Sustainability

Introduction

Environmental aesthetics is one of the four new areas of aesthetics that have been developed in the second half of the twentieth century. Although, it has emerged as a major field of study only recently and considers the aesthetic appreciation of human as well as the natural environment (Parsons, 2002), since its early stages, the scope of environmental aesthetics has broadened to include not simply natural environments, but also human influenced ones.

Consequently, the influence of human activities and endeavors on the natural environment has impacted the same both positively and negatively. One of these major activities within the human environment is that which involves tourism and its associated businesses.

The global Tourism industry has celebrated outstanding development in recent years and has become well positioned as one of the major engine of economic, social and environmental development in many countries. It has become a divers and

complex industry, while enjoying a strong influence and significance on many issues, (Moutinho, 2000).

One of the issues of paramount concern to the urban planners is the environmental effects of tourism activities on the site and community where such tourism activity is located.

Consequently, cases of human and vehicular pollutions in such environment cannot be over-emphasized, while congestions and waste disposal and management problems ranked very high amidst other challenges associated with tourism.

The case of Olumo rock tourism site in Abeokuta, Ogun state is not an exception, as its ancient location has limited every effort of tourism site managers and planners to arrest the various problems associated with its location, human influences and activities and within the site. This notwithstanding, the aesthetic of the tourism environment must not be compromised from the benefits that may accrue from tourism, so that tourism can be sustained.

Problem Statement

Undeniably, the quality of the environment plays a vital role in attracting tourist to a site and the development of the tourism area. While unorganized and unplanned parking and traffic flow can become serious problems around tourism sit, especially where visitors volume exceeds the physical capacity (Doswell, 1997), it is also expedient that if waste generation is not properly managed, can pose a threat to tourism in-flow and be harmful to the environment concern.

Consequently to this therefore is the high volume of human traffic within tourism sites as their day-to-day activities constitutes diverse environmental nuisance, like pollution, congestions, noise with other

social and physical hazards and waste generation.

Environmental pollution around Olumo rock, especially during tourism peak periods is always very high, stretching the physical capacity and infrastructural provisions within the site environment.

Cases of traffic jams, human congestions, pollutions etc are very evident around the site, making it unattractive to some concerned tourists who may want to enjoy their leisure time in a more tidy and free environment.

The location of this ancient natural endowment is also worth mentioning, as physical development have developed across the ages without conscious planning efforts around the site making it difficult for expansion and also limiting further upgrading of some of the existing infrastructures.

This paper therefore, is of the opinion that for this tourism site to be more effective and sustained; every stakeholder must be involved in its planning and management.

The Olumo Rock

The Olumo Rock is located in the traditional core of Abeokuta Town in Ogun State, Nigeria. The rock is the most important tourist attraction in the state. The Olumo rock is a massive outcrop of granite rock, pre-Cambrian geological formation. It is located between Ikija and Ikereku neighborhoods and visible from all parts of the city.

Abeokuta , the capital of Ogun state derives its name from this rock. Abeokuta lies southwest of the Republic of Nigeria, and is 100 kilometers from Lagos, the commercial nerve of Lagos, to the north, and to the south some 70 kilometers away from the city of Ibadan, the largest city in Black Africa. The highest point on the Olumo rock is about 137 meters above sea level. The Ogun River which gives the name of the state flows west of the Olumo rock. The name 'Olumo' means "God built it." It is surrounded by a lot of

caves within which the Egbas took refuge in the time of Yoruba inter-cities war. One of such caves, which are about 6m by 7m wide, has slab-like stones that must have served as seats for ancient dwellers around the cave. Olumo rock is an historical monument, served as a shelter and fortress to the Egba people during the Yoruba wars. By 1930, the main body of the Egba's had already settled at the site of Olumo Rock and the refuge provided by the rock marked the end of their wanderings and struggles for existence. Since then, they regard the Olumo rock as their protective shrine and they make annual sacrifices to its deity.

People from all walks of life still come here for divine consultation. A 200 years old tree still grows at the apex of the Olumo Rocks thereby standing out as an active tourist destination of great choice. To the Egbas, Olumo Rock stands not only as a monument of faith and unity but also a source of strength and unflinching protection and sustenance from the Supreme Being who led their ancestors through the perplexes of life safely to their land of sojourn, **Abeokuta**. Olumo rock is a world class tourist destination that stands, as the only one of its kind in Africa and presumably the world.

The centre consists of a hotel, games hall with facilities for indoor sports games, fast food, and culture gallery, a giant telescope to view Abeokuta, a fountain of atonement, a health pond, a recreational park, an amphitheatre e.t.c The centre also has a heavy duty escalator and a class elevator running the different levels of the rock along side with the old stair way for visitors who loves climbing.

Environmental Aesthetics

Environmental aesthetics arose within analytic aesthetics in the last third of the twentieth century. Prior to the emergence, aesthetics within the analytical tradition, it was largely concerned with the philosophy of art. Environmental aesthetics originated as a reaction to this emphasis, pursuing

instead the investigation of the aesthetic appreciation of the natural environments. Since its early stages, the scope of environmental aesthetics has broadened to include not simply the natural environments but also human and human influenced ones.

Fruitful approaches to the aesthetic appreciation of human environments as well as to other aspects of everyday life also can be found in views that draw of features of both the cognitive and non-cognitive camps. There have been several attempts to forge connection between the two orientations (Foster 1998, Moore 1999, 2008, Berleant and Carlson 2007).

Moreover there are numerous studies that, without totally either cognitive or non-cognitive, inform our understanding of the appreciation of the human environments, such as rural country sides (Andrew 2007) and urban cityscapes (Von Bonsdorff 2002, Macaulay 2007) as well as more specialized environments such as the shopping center (Brottman 2007).

Beyond the consideration of these large, public environments, the aesthetics of everyday life becomes especially relevant. It investigates not only the aesthetic qualities of smaller, more personal environment, such as individual living spaces, for example, yards and houses (Melchinonne 1998, 2002), but also the aesthetics dimensions of normal day-to-day experiences (Leddy 1995 2005, Saito 2001 2007, Haapala 2005) as well as everyday activities, such as sports, relaxation activities etc.

Environmental aesthetics in Tourism therefore cannot be over-emphasized as every developed and functional tourism sites are full of activities, the product of which generates environmental pollutions, hazards and congestions. Sequel to this, proper tourism planning which includes

facility planning, space allocation and provisions for their management should be paramount to tourism managers and planners alike to enhance the aesthetic value of such site. Effective management of tourism sites is not a sole responsibility of the tourism managers as all stakeholders have a role to play for sustainability.

Who is a Stakeholder

Clarkson, (1995), suggests a definition of stakeholders as 'persons or groups that have, or claim, ownership, rights, or interest in a corporation and its activities, past, present, or future'. He classified as primary and secondary stakeholders. A primary stakeholder is one without whose continuing participation, the corporation cannot survive; there is a high level of interdependence between the corporation and its primary stakeholders.

Clarkson also defines secondary stakeholder groups as 'those who influence or affect, or are influenced by, the corporation, but they are not engaged in transactions with the corporations and are not essential for its survival.'

Secondary stakeholders are diverse and include those who are not directly engaged in the organization's economic activities but are able to exert influence or are affected by the organization. Thus, the major stakeholders in the tourism industry include the tourist, the host community and the government agencies etc.

The Tourists

Tourists are obviously of key importance in the management of tourism. Unfortunately, tourists are often viewed as the major cause of the problems of tourism. If they are perceived as homogenous group, then tourists are often called evils of tourism as they are 'outsiders' blamed by 'insiders' (the local people) for negative consequences of tourism. This is also the case when the appearance of tourists and their behavior is in mass contrast to that of

the local population. It is easy to point the finger of blame at them. However, this is rather a simplistic picture. It is possible to argue that the tourist has both rights and responsibilities, (Swarbrooke, 1999), and there are different forms of tourists. This can be grouped into individual, group, mass
Etc.

Tourists engage in different type of pursuits. Some forms of tourism are very active-sport tourism, for example, while others are relatively passive, such as sight-seeing from a coach, some activities consume resources and have marked economic, socio-cultural or environmental impacts, while others have minimal consequences. Tourists to one resort may vary according to seasonal factors; skiing in winter and whaling in summer in a mountain environment, for example. Additionally, an individual tourist may appear in none particular holiday location or a number of destinations in a variety of guises over a period of a week, a month, a year or a life time.

The Host Community

Some terminology as the host community may be somewhat misleading as it implies that there are guest to complement the supposed hosts. However, as tourists are always welcome, a more appropriate term could be local community.

The host community can act as a major attraction for tourists. More often than not, it is the cultural manifestation of the community, including crafts and art works, as well as the less tangible factors, such as music dance and religious festivals that act as important attractions. In some cases, actually meeting the members of a particular community and staying with them is a key motivation for certain types of tourists.

However, as several of the earlier case studies and discussions have indicated there are a number of dangers that may

result from the contact between tourists and host communities, particularly in terms of host community values and possible loss of cultural identity.

Government Agencies

Government agencies are frequently referred to as the public sector tourism. They are not commercial organizations with the intention of making profit, but are meant to represent the view of the tax payers and the electors. Government agencies are funded from the taxes and in most in most developed countries are run by democratically elected representatives supported by paid civil servants. However, there are multiplicity of government bodies that have a bearing on tourism planning and management. These bodies exist at different scales from national, through regional than to local.

A number of countries in Europe, such as France and Spain, (the two most important destinations globally in 2001 by number of international visitors) have national bodies for tourism in form of a ministry or department of tourism. The United Kingdom, a major tourism destination has a minister for tourism but subsumes this relatively minor role and its public sector national tourism functions with the department of culture, media and sport.

At the local and regional level, in the United Kingdom as well as other developed countries, they are necessarily government agencies focusing specifically on government representatives with tourism knowledge and experience, (Butler and Hall, 1998). Such factors will have a significant impact on the ability of the public sector to influence the course of tourism development in a particular tourism destination.

Research method

Data were collected from several sources. The management of Olumo rock tourism site provided the background information.

Major stakeholders (Government, tourists and the community) were duly involved in the gathering of relevant information as related to the research objectives.

Questionnaires were administered to head of households (where available) representing the community within the ward which the rock is located and also to tourists within the site. Oral interview was adopted to retrieve information from the Government arm of tourism development representing the major stakeholder.

Sequel to this therefore, the questionnaire consisted of two major parts- the first is for the tourist while the second part was administered to the head of households. The questionnaires totally 200 in numbers were divided evenly amidst these two sets of respondents. The questionnaires were administered in two phases- Some during the week days, while the rest were distributed during the Easter season in order to ascertain the volume of environmental degradation within the site during peak and non- peak periods.

All questionnaires were administered on the spot to enhance maximum response and return. It was also administered randomly within the sample frame identified, depending on the availability of the target respondents and their willingness to answer the questions.

A comprehensive field survey was also executed on waste generation and management within the rock area to validate the data collected through the methods above and other issues and strategies suggested in this article.

Findings

The basic profile of respondents shows a mix of men (43%) and women (57%). All the household heads interview were married and were between 35-65 years, while the

tourists category fall within different age groups, but 75% of them were not yet married.

The implication of this profile revealed that of the household heads are married while more of the unmarried youths patronize tourism sites often.

The table below revealed the major activities attracting tourists to the site daily but mostly during festive seasons. This is ranked in terms of frequency of responses from the survey carried out.

Table 1: Ranking of activities in the site

Rank	Label	Variable	Index
1	Attraction 3	Site seeing	1.191
2	Attraction 5	Mountaineering	1.177
3	Attraction 1	Shopping	1.140
4	Attraction 2	Trading/Business	1.106
5	Attraction 4	Outdoor/ Relaxation	1.035
6	Attraction 6	Exhibition/Research and learning	1.026
7	Attraction 7	Others	0.776

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Revelation from the table above shows that more of the tourists/visitors do come around the Olumo site for site seeing, while those that come for the purpose of climbing the historic mountain follow closely.

Appreciable number also visit to enjoy their leisure time through outdoor relaxation, while the business minded people are also regular at the site to trade and transact businesses.

Table 2: Time of Visit

Time of visit	Frequency	%
Daily	32	16
Weekly	44	22
Monthly	06	12
Festive Seasons	112	56
	200	100

Source: Field survey, 2010

The data above revealed that the Olumo rock site is more patronized during the festive season when more people engage in leisure activities. Consequently, further revelation shows that due to increased number of people visiting the site during the festive periods, activities at the rock environment increases, while infrastructure and facilities within the area are usually engaged beyond their designed capacity.

A survey of waste generation in and around the tourism site during festive seasons and that carried out on the ordinary days of the week revealed that about 86% of general waste generated in the site are from the activities of the tourists during visits to the site, while about 80% of the waste generated are solid in nature. Further survey revealed that from eating and drinking within the site take the highest percentage of the said volume of waste generation.

On the management of waste within the site, information gathered from the management of the site revealed that the management of waste in site area is the sole responsibility of the staff of Olumo rock.

Consequently, majority of the community members are of the opinion that since the site do not only generate waste within the site, but also along the major routes leading to the site, the management of Olumo rock should also take responsibility of clearing the affected roads mentioned while the Local Government Waste Management Agency do complement their efforts by packing the refuse for proper disposal.

Effectiveness of Stakeholder Collaboration in the Rock

The development of Olumo Rock so far is a product of stake holder's partnership in the planning and management of the site. Summary of their involvement and the level of the contribution of each stakeholder are detailed below;

Table 3: Level of stakeholder involvement

Major Stakeholder	Level of Participation	Ownership status
Private Investors	Fully Involved	90 Percent
Government	Fully Involved	10 Percent
Public/Host Comm.	Partially Involved	Nil

Source: Field survey, 2010

These three major partners in the development of Olumo Rock (there ownership status notwithstanding) have in various capacities contributed to planning and management of the site. The survey conducted in the site revealed that though the government own just 10% of the

investment, they (the government of Ogun State) where fully involved in the day to day activities of the rock site. The management of the rock site also revealed that there is always a forum where the government and the private investors (constituting the board) meet and

deliberate on the progress and development of the tourism site. This has given Olumo rock the necessary legal backing, under the constituted policy and regulations of the state government.

The involvement of the host though partial, they were given the opportunity to participate by submitting proposals that will enhance the growth of the site. The survey also revealed that in some occasions representatives of the host communities were called to meetings to deliberate on ways in which they can be fully involved. The management agreed that this collaborative efforts, has yielded much fruit and that the community themselves were happy to be involved. More of such partnership the site mangers promised to uphold for the sustainability of the rock site and the conservation of the historic importance and value of the rock area.

Also from the findings, it was revealed that apart from the three major partners as mentioned above, other key players were involved for effective development of the tourism site. They are; the media, non-governmental organization (NGOs), which in most cases performs advisory roles and professionals in related fields as consultants.

The inadequacy of funds was discovered from the survey as tool which has constituted a major setback to the development of the resort. Other limitations include inadequate publicity and marketing, which has affected the level of local and international attractions to the site.

Sequel to this therefore, the need to have a formidable and effective policy statements and regulations to guide the development and management of tourism sites is essential for a quality and sustainable development. This cannot be effectively achieved if every stakeholder in the industry is not given the opportunity to work as a team and produce results.

Stakeholders Collaboration: Policy Issues and Way Forward

Despite the fact that there are large number and range of tourism businesses, there are many linkages between apparently different sectors. The role of the stakeholders discussed above can only be successful if effectively complemented by the efforts and partnership of other actors of the tourism industry, such as the media, private sectors etc have specific and complementary role to play in the management of tourism industry for its sustainability. On the other hand, a major way in which members of the tourism industry manage their operation is through marketing mix. Marketing mix can be summarized under four headings, each of which begins with a 'P'. These are product, price, promotion and place. (Mason and Cheyne 2000), add one other 'P' to the list, that of the people. The marketing mix can be used by the tourist industry to manage the consumer, in this case the visitor or the tourist and the host environment as a whole.

Consequently, to manage the tourism industry properly especially sustaining its aesthetic value, the influences of the complementary actors and operators (grouped under the public, private and commercial sectors or operators) under which the major stakeholders as discussed above falls, will definitely constitute an effective partnership for tourism management and a synergy for the enhancement and sustainability of the sector as a whole.

The number and type of visitors in a destination is therefore strongly influenced by decisions taken by commercial tourism operators in terms of the product they have to offer there. However, this is only partially the case as a major part of the tourism product is the tourist experience and the public sector has a role to play here. This experience is

obtained within the wider context of the destination environment. Evidence suggests that few tourism operators in a destination have paid much regard to the wider environment in which tourism takes place. Small businesses, in particular, expect visitors to be provided with free access to the environment around them, but such operators have not accepted any responsibility, for example, for increased traffic congestion, pollution and litter that tourists may cause, (Funnell, 1999). However, if the quality of the environment falls, customers may go elsewhere. It is more often not, the public sector that makes attempts to improve the quality of the environment, which tourists purchasing from the private sector have contributed to damaging.

Commercial operators can influence the behavior of tourists by promotion which involves publicity and usually this is an attempt to increase product awareness and ultimately sell more holiday experiences, (Seaton and Bennet, 1996), thereby creating a functional maintenance culture. However, the public sector also has an important role in promoting and managing tourism destinations effectively, (Mitchell et al, 1997). It is frequently carried out by local council officials and staff at Tourists Information Centers as well as via a number of publicity media as the case may be. As promotion is a key way that both the private and public sector can influence tourists' behavior, it can be a very important tool the enhancement of environmental management and the beauty of the site.

However, in the last decades of the twentieth century, a number of tourism companies became involved in initiatives and this suggests a growing awareness and concern with the impact of tourists and tourism destinations on the environment. This include recycling, promoting 'green' holiday, providing information on environmentally sound activities for tourists and donating money to local charities. Some operators are also

using guides selected from local communities and are involved in partnership with local community groups in the management of tourism sites. Two other set of actors are important in term of tourism management. These are voluntary sector organization and the media. These voluntary sectors are made up of a number of different groups. These include pressure groups, voluntary trusts, some of which have charitable status, and industrial associations. Pressure groups can be further sub-divided into those, whose memberships are prima. The media on the other hand, have a potential in effective tourism management. Much of the media deals directly or indirectly with tourism, advertising tourism sites and attractions and also promoting holidays to particular destination. A number of newspapers in each country also use a similar approach. There are also significant numbers of travel-related magazines and radio programmes and travel information which is now available on the World Wide Web. The media therefore, should be further encouraged to continually show case tourism resources for effective and sustainable tourism management, which consequently results to effective cleanliness and aesthetic enhancement of tourism sites.

The foregoing has clearly revealed that, only effective collaboration efforts of every stakeholder in the tourism industry can bring about rapid and sustainable tourism development in any community or region. This paper is thus, recommending workshops and seminars that will bring these stakeholders together to discuss and subsequently contribute their quotas to effective environmental management of tourism resources within the tourism community in order for it to be more attractive and appealing to tourists. This partnership approach to tourism development will bring a direct synergy that will enforce and metamorphose sustainable tourism development and enhance the aesthetic value of the tourism sites, so as to be more attractive and

appealing to international and domestic tourists.

Conclusion

This paper has introduced a discussion of the key players in tourism planning and management with particular reference to Olumo Rock. The major stakeholders (tourists, the host community and government agencies) coupled with other operators, such as representatives of the travel industry and government agencies. NGOs and the media are all important players in the provision of maintenance services in and around the tourism site. The product of such services will enhance the beauty and cleanliness of the site.

In relation to tourists and host communities, it is important to note that neither group is homogeneous. This heterogeneity quality contributes to the

complexity of planning and managing tourism. The government role in tourism often viewed as promotional rather than regulatory, although government at various levels fulfills both these roles. The tourism industry, although multi-faceted, and thus should involve the active participation of every tourism stakeholders. The paper is therefore of the opinion that the effective participation of the major tourism operators (stakeholders) and private sector will enhance the speedy development as well as the management and promotion of the aesthetic value of the rock site.

In view of the above therefore, the need for collaborative relationship is recommended as a synergy for effective tourism management which should be strictly supported by policies and regulations.

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