

Spatial Distribution and Utilization of Selected Recreational Facilities in Calabar, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the spatial distribution and utilization of four recreational facilities in Calabar. Questionnaire and interview were the major tools used for data collection. One hypothesis was stated and tested using the Pearson Product moment correlation. The findings show that the resorts were not nucleated rather they are scattered within Calabar South and the municipality. It was also discovered that the availability of leisure time and adequate facilities were the main determinants of visitors' utilization of the various resorts in the area. The result of the tested hypothesis indicated a positive correlation between the determinants of the utilization of the resorts and distance covered by visitors. Besides, it was observed that the bar was one of the most visited and patronized recreational facility in the resorts.

Key words: distribution, facilities, recreation, spatial, utilization.

Introduction

Tourism is one of the major engines of economic growth and has enhanced destination development in most countries with great tourism potentials including Brazil, Kenya and South Africa. The presence of great tourism potentials necessitated the development of tourism resorts which provides essential services such as accommodation, transport and communication to cater for the needs of visitors. The initiation of policies by the federal government of Nigeria towards tourism development has encouraged the private sector to invest in tourism resorts development especially in most states with great tourism potentials such as Abuja, Anambra, Enugu and Akwa Ibom where tourism is given more priority. In Cross River State and Calabar in particular, the introduction of the Calabar festival and development of the tourism industry has played a significant role in the socio-economic development of the state through income and revenue generation to both the government and private sector. Moreover, the development and rehabilitation of the existing tourism potentials have increased the inflow of visitors and other fun-seekers to Calabar.

However, despite the huge capital investment in the provision of tourism resorts and other recreational facilities by the government and private sector, the state government has not been able to provide and/or

enforce leisure time provision for workers. The resultant effect is that the available recreational facilities in most cases are underutilized. Besides, even when the leisure time is provided, majority of the workers are apathetic towards utilization of the tourism resorts, resulting in the decay of these laudable and existing resorts in Calabar. Furthermore, some of the facilities provided in the resorts are obsolete and therefore discourage the urge for their effective utilization. Apart from this, most of the destinations lack basic facilities and services such as good roads, electricity, water, laundry services and security which provide comfort to visitors. Apart from Calabar festival which encourages the high inflow of visitors to Calabar, the recreational facilities still seem to be underutilized. It is on this note that one would ask why the recreational facilities (resorts) in Calabar are underutilized. Does their location affect the utilization? Are the facilities adequate for visitors' usage? Does the socio-demographic characteristic of visitors affect the utilization of the recreational facilities (resorts) in Calabar? What facilities are available in the resorts as these form the bases for critically assessing the spatial distribution and utilization of selected recreational facilities (resorts) in Calabar?

Problems associated with tourism development

Tourism industry is often considered as a sector that is capable of creating jobs, generating foreign exchange and revamping the standard of living of the host. Others view tourism as altering the existing tradition, means of exploitation from external investors, the dependence on an unstable industry and an avenue for inflation. It is however concluded that in spite of these cases, tourism will only flourish given appropriate conditions. Like other industries, tourism demand proper planning and organization for it to succeed. Tourism in Cross River State is not devoid of problems that inhibit its development. According to Osamwonyi (2004), "the problem of tourism sustainability is that developing countries are competing for tourists without developing the needed infrastructure or linkages to host communities". Tourists from developed countries want to have clean water, secured and good accommodation, and excellent facilities. To develop tourism as a major foreign exchange earner, we need to build and upgrade/expand hotels, retail shops, restaurants, medical facilities, golf courses, stadia, resorts and publish guides. In Cross River State, much has been achieved in this direction but a lot more need to be done to be able to compete favorably. Security is considered one among other problems confronting tourism development in the state. The incessant communal clashes between Akwa Ibom and Cross River boundary communities, Boki and Ekajuk in Ogoja, Boje and Isom-Bendege in Boki Local Government are cases that discourage visitors and

other fun-seekers to these areas with great tourism potentials. Conservation legislation, such as, “the conservation of biological diversity, sustainable utilization of its benefits and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources”; can protect a nation's natural and historical heritage. Such measures may run counter to the short-term exploitation of these resources, but can contribute to national well-being in the long-run.

Tourism and environmental conservation can be present when both are established in harmony with one another. Unfortunately, the scenario is usually cut-short for the fact that growth in tourism leads to the alteration of the environment. This stage is either succeeded by symbiotic or conflicting relationships. There is a symbiotic or supportive relationship when tourism and conservation are planned in a way that is beneficial to both parties. From the conservationist perspective, “environmental facilities and conditions are left as close as possible to their original state but at the same time they provide benefits to the tourist who view and experience them” (Inskeep, 1987). In some cases that these conditions have been attained such as; tourism and preservation are at variance, especially after tourism stimulates damaging consequence (e.g. congestion, disruption of animal life cycle, noise and litter, the loss of frail plants etc) (Pearce, 1989). More often, outcomes of tourism have inspired preservative actions so as to safeguard delicate ecosystem, Decree 36 of 1991, establishing the Nigerian National Park is in line with this direction to give a blue print of activities at the parks to avoid conflict with tourist activities. Also, government monetary policies may promote or hinder the growth of tourism. Adjustment of exchange rates both in the market and destination may encourage or hinder tourist movements. Government permissible limits on the level of foreign investment and the repatriation of earnings through grants, incentives, and taxes can limit investment on tourism (Nwakanma, 2002); (Osamwonyi, 2004). Other areas of government restriction or regulation include, civil aviation regulation of both scheduled and non-scheduled (charter) operations, customs and immigration regulation, liquor licensing, shop trading and anti-smoking (cigarette) laws. In Cross River State, the industry is still on its developmental stage, the government is still careful not to plunge it into direct control by foreigners. Nevertheless, the great tourism potentials have the capacity to change the fortunes of Cross Riverians if fully exploited and utilized.

Methodology

In order to carry out this research, four recreational facilities were surveyed namely; Marina resort, Aqua vista, Calabar harbor resort and

Orange resort. Seven hundred and forty eight (748) respondents were administered with the questionnaire as follows: two hundred and forty three (243) visitors in Marina resort, one hundred and seventy eight (178) visitors in Calabar harbor resort, two hundred and three (203) visitors in Orange resort, and one hundred and twenty four (124) visitors were obtained in Aqua vista resort. These visitors were captured on a daily basis for a period of one week. The average number of visitors was obtained and used as the sample size for this study. Information such as the socio-economic characteristics of the visitors to the recreational facilities, the most patronized recreational facilities were obtained. The questionnaires were randomly distributed to visitors at the recreational facilities. The Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the stated hypothesis which tries to examine whether or not there exist a significant relationship between the determinants of visitors' utilization of the recreational facilities and the observed distance covered by visitors. The spatial distribution of the recreational resorts were obtained with the aid of Geographic positioning system (GPS) which was used to obtain the coordinates and the location of each of the recreational resorts.

Findings

The socio-demographic characteristics of the visitors in the recreational resorts

The socio-demographic characteristics of the visitors as presented in table 1 shows that majority of them were male and single with values of 74 and 70 percent, and those between the ages of 26 and 35 years and 36 years to 45 years represented with the values of 29 and 43 percent respectively dominated. Between 30 and 43 percent of the visitors hold secondary education and higher degree certificates. The table also indicates that majority of visitors are businessmen with values of 46 percent and are Nigerians with values of 66 percent. Even though Nigerian visitors to the resort predominate, there are as well visitors from other parts of Africa, America etc.

Table 1: The Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Visitors in the Resorts

s/n	Socio-demographic characteristics	Resorts				Total	Percentage
		Marina resort	Calabar harbor resort	Orange resort	Aqua vista resort		
1	Sex						
	Male	198	112	166	75	551	74
	Female	45	66	37	49	197	26
	Total	243	178	203	124	748	100
2	Age						
	15-25	14	10	12	10	46	6
	26-35	64	59	58	34	215	29
	36-45	90	77	89	325	43	43
	46-55	39	20	18	7	84	11
	56-65	24	8	15	3	50	7
	66 and above	12	4	11	1	28	4
	Total	243	178	203	124	748	100
3	Marital status						
	Married	40	24	20	7	91	12
	Divorced	59	33	35	9	136	18
	Single	144	121	148	108	521	70
	Total	243	178	203	124	748	100
4	Educational						
	Non – formal education (NFE)	32	11	16	11	70	9
	Primary education	49	35	35	20	132	18
	Secondary education	69	56	58	38	221	30
	High/degree	931	83	94	55	325	43
	Total	243	178	203	124	748	100
5	Occupation						
	Student	14	11	14	12	51	7
	Civil servant	39	9	14	12	74	10
	Businessman	97	87	91	69	344	46
	Applicant	11	11	12	4	38	5
	Artisans	14	12	13	13	52	7
	Politicians	68	48	59	14	189	25
	Total	243	178	203	124	748	100
6	Nationality						
	Nigerian	133	128	130	104	495	66
	African	69	23	65	20	177	24
	American	15	2	0	0	17	2
	Others	26	25	8	0	59	8
	Total	243	178	203	124	748	100

Source: Author's field survey (2016)**Spatial distribution recreational facilities**

The spatial distribution of recreational facilities presented in figure 1 shows that Orange resort and Calabar harbor resort were located in Calabar Municipality while Marina and Aqua vista resorts were located in Calabar

South Local Government Area. Orange resort lies within latitude $5^{\circ}10'26.978''$ North and Longitude $8^{\circ}21'27.499''$ East while Calabar harbor resort lies within latitude $4^{\circ}59'29.53''$ North. Marina resort lies within Latitude $4^{\circ}57'55.161''$ North and Longitude $8^{\circ}19'23.97''$ East while Aqua vista lies within latitude $4^{\circ}55'20.015''$ North and Longitude $8^{\circ}19'20.623''$ East. Indeed, the recreational facilities in the study area are not concentrated in one location.



FIG. 1: Map of Calabar showing the spatial distribution of recreational resorts.

Source: Geographic Information System (GIS) Laboratory, Department of Geography and Environmental Science, University of Calabar.

Determinants of visitor utilization of the recreational facilities

Table 2 revealed that the availability of leisure time and adequate facilities were the major determinants of visitors' utilization of the recreational facilities with values of 21 percent and 20 percent respectively.

Effective service delivery and the presence of tourism activities were also determinants of visitors' utilization of recreational facilities in the study area while attitude of staff and individual income were the least determinants of the utilization of recreational facilities in the area.

Table 2: The Determinants of Visitors' Utilization of Recreational Facilities

s/n	Determinants	Marina resort	Resorts Calabar harbor resort	Orange resort	Aqua vista resort	Total	Percentage
1.	Effective services delivery	57	44	36	6	143	19.25
2.	Adequate facilities	71	25	44	10	150	20
3.	Adequate security	36	20	16	7	79	11
4.	Attitude of the staff	12	8	10	9	39	5
5.	Presence of tourism activities	43	12	12	22	89	12
6.	Availability of leisure time	10	49	59	41	159	21
7.	Individual income	10	16	22	17	65	9
8.	Others (specify)	4	4	6	12	24	3.2
	Total	243	178	203	124	748	100

Source: Author's field survey (2016)

Table 3 reveals the relationship between the determinants of visitors' utilization of the recreational facilities and the observed distances covered by visitors to the recreational facilities. The r-calculated value of 3.52 greater than the t-tabulated value of 0.24 derived the hypothesis tested indicates a positive correlation between the utilization of the recreational facilities and distances covered by the visitors to the recreational facilities. Therefore, Null (H₀) hypothesis was rejected and alternate (H₁) was accepted.

Table 3: Result Analysis of Hypothesis One

		Determinants	Distance covered
Determinants	Pearson Correlation	1	2.315**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.192
	N	8	8
Distance covered	Pearson Correlation	.515**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.192	
	N	8	8

Source: Data Analysis (2016)

The Most Patronized Recreational Facilities

Results of the most patronized recreational facilities presented in table 4 shows that cocktail bar and bar, sporting activities and parking space were the major recreational facilities that were ly patronized by visitors with values of 34.0, 13.5 and 12.8 percent respectively. Furthermore, it was observed that the facilities were patronized on a low scale particularly restaurants and banqueting facilities with values of 10.4 percent and 8.1 percent and 8.1 percent. It was also noticed from the result of the 748 sampled respondents that Marina Resort and Orange Resort were the most patronized resorts with total values of 243 and 203 visitors, while Aqua vista resort had the least with a value of 124 visitors.

Table 4: Recreational Facilities Provided in the Resorts

s/n	Visitation facilities and services	Resorts				Total	Percentage
		Marina resort	Calabar harbor resort	Orange resort	Aqua vista resort		
1.	Cocktail bar and bar	123	68	42	23	256	34.2
2.	Banqueting facilities	1	32	28	0	51	8.1
3.	Valet	0	4	20	0	24	3.2
4.	Sport facilities	43	0	26	32	101	13.5
5.	Garaging/parking space	4	46	31	15	96	12.8
6.	Cinema and entertainment	6	10	0	0	16	2.1
7.	Restaurant	26	6	18	26	76	10.4
8.	TV and video in rooms	32	7	24	18	8	1.0
9.	Others	8	5	14	10	37	4.9
	Total	243	178	203	124	748	100

Source: Results management (2016)

The Most Visited Recreational Resort in the Area

Figure 2 below indicates that Marina and Orange resorts were most visited recreational resort in the area with values of 32 and 27 percent, followed by Calabar harbor with a value of 24 percent. Aqua vista was the least visited of the recreational resorts in the area with a value of 17 percent.

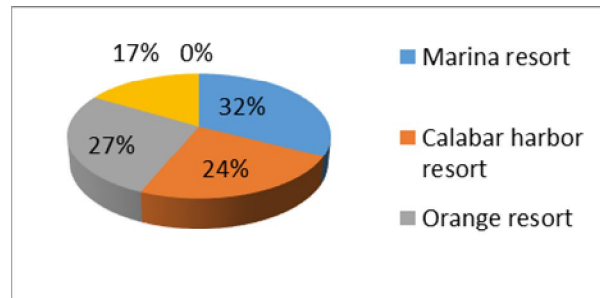


Figure 2: The most visited resorts in the area

Source: Author's field survey (2016)

Discussion of findings

The data collected show that recreational facilities in the study area were spatially dispersed and their utilization were determined by a lot of factors such as effective service delivery, attitude of staff, individual income, adequate security etc. It was observed that availability of leisure time and adequate facilities were the major determinants of visitors' utilization of recreational facilities. This assertion collaborates the empirical findings of (Eja and Ajake, 2012) in their study of spatial analysis of hotel strata and rate of tourists inflow in hotel industry in Calabar. They observed that patronage of recreational facilities is dependent on adequate facilities and attitude of staff in the industry, as also cited by Eja and Ukwai (2012). The result from the data collected indicates that cocktail bar, sporting facilities and parking space were the most patronized recreational facilities. Result of the tested hypothesis shows a significant relationship between the determinants of visitors' utilization of the recreational facilities and the observed distance to the recreational facilities as indicated in the high r -calculated value of 3.52 greater than the t -value of 0.24 which rejected the null (H_0) hypothesis and accepted the alternate (H_1). Therefore, an effective measure must be put in place to ensure adequate utilization of recreational facilities in the study area.

Conclusion

The inflow of visitors and other fun-seekers in most tourism destinations with great tourism potentials has always propelled tourism development in many countries. The scenario is the same in Calabar such that the development of tourism potentials and other tourism activities has attracted numerous visitors, resulting in development of Calabar as a tourism destination. However, despite the impact of recreational facilities on visitors' inflow, more effort must be made by both the public and private sectors to ensure the effective utilization of the resorts in Calabar.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby put forward:

- The operators and owners of the recreational facilities must ensure that the staff are adequately trained so as to ensure effective services delivery.
- The facilities and services provided must be unique to meet international standard.
- The government and other security agencies must provide adequate security especially in areas where these facilities are located so as to guarantee the safety of visitors in the resorts.
- The government must provide adequate incentives to staff who embark on holiday.
- The government must set up a taskforce that would enforce and ensure that staff on holiday embark on recreation
- The government should enhance staff income to encourage staff to embark on recreation during holiday.

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