



EXPLORING THE POTENTIALS OF LANDSCAPES FOR THE PROMOTION OF TOURISM IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has been established as one of the fastest growing sectors in the world's economy at large. It is said to be an effective way to revitalise any economy. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), it is estimated that by 2020 there will be 1.6 billion international tourist arrivals worldwide, as it represents 30% of the world's exports of services. This is to say that tourism has tremendous capacity for generating growth in destination areas. However, tourism in Nigeria is still down the ladder for the growth of the economy and development, for many reasons Nigeria is identified as one of the developing countries whose exports are dominated by few commodities or mono-cultural economic qualities. The sector no doubt needs researchers that will place or reposition the nation on the world map. The aim of this study is to explore the potentials of landscapes for tourism in Nigerian economy. This paper examines landscapes and tourism and covers some specific landscape features in Nigeria. The research instrument adopted was through observation schedule. Nigeria is blessed with abundance of natural features including land forms that could be explored and used to promote the tourism sector in the country. As a way forward for Nigeria, more research should be carried out on the need for diversification of the Nation's economy and one of the areas that could be checked is tourism, it is very crucial because in conclusion if Nigeria gets tourism right then it will become a tremendous upward shift for employment rate as the tourism sector will be a massive employer of labour.

Keywords: Diversification, Economy, Features, Landscape and Tourism

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been established as one of the fastest growing sectors in the world's economy at large. (Raymond, 2001; Newsome et al, 2002; Basu, 2003, Ozgen, 2003; Chockalingam and Ganesh, 2010; Jennie, 2012). Tourism is said to be an effective way to revitalise any economy. Niger State, one of the 36 States in Nigeria with Minna as its capital is blessed with abundance of natural features that can be explored and used to promote the tourism sector in the country.

In times past, many tourists' centres have been left under developed and not properly maintained, as well as places that possess high tourism potentials were mostly neglected or left unnoticed, but recently, the awakening of the tourism sector has brought a light to some of these places making them a focus point of most economy. It is quite understandable since the benefits associated with recreation and tourism is widely acknowledged which is the case especially when the effects on stress and the enhancing impact on well-being and productivity are considered. (Ayeni et al, 2009). Nowadays society thrives to facilitate places of recreation and tourism some of which are natural and others man-made features which are commonly referred to as landscapes. Landscaping is generally used to engineer and boost tourism by many countries, as it

adds to the natural beauty and scenery of the physical environment.

Landscaping in architecture entails the designing of the outdoor public space surrounding a building, such that it extends the indoors to the outdoors. Landscape techniques refer to all the steps taken to enhance the natural landscape form of the environment, it includes the following; Storm water management, Site grading, Vehicular circulation, Pedestrian circulation, Plants and planting, Sustainable landscape development.

1.1 Tourism

Tourism according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) tourism is defined as an activity that involves a person travelling to a destination or places outside their usual environment for not more than one year for leisure.

Indeed, tourism has a range of importance both to the tourists, the tourism organizations, and the local economies and communities in terms of employment, income, and enhancement to the quality of life (Besculides et al, 2002; Oh, 2005). For some major tourist destinations, tourism has become a major alternative form of commodity export and a significant source of foreign exchange that allows internal and external trade balances to be reconciled.

1.2 History of Tourism

One of the principal ways in which we view the world is through tourism. Tourism has a way it shapes our perception of the world, the way we understand geography of our world and the way we present it to one another (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). The word tourism appeared in 1811 in the Oxford English dictionary but the concept of it as leisure dates back to the ancient Greeks and Romans (Honey, 2008). During the pre-industrial era pleasure travel was limited to a small group of wealthy people, which was usually pilgrimage travel, a trip to spas, geographic exploration and seaside resorts, often combined with business interests or education (Murphy, 1985). Travelling abroad was most times inconvenient, not welcome and expensive but visiting far places for adventures and having to experience different lifestyle and culture have through history worked immensely as renewing of the human mind and universal catalyst (Boorstin, 1962). During the seventeenth century, there was an important educational trip called The Grand Tour for potential English diplomats and other rich young men who wanted to explore culture, politics, society and capitals in western Europe. To travel was such a huge opportunity and such a person was tagged a man of the world. Later the industrial revolution together with steam power transportation gave rise to new opportunities and possibilities for recreation and holiday among the middle class. Most people became wage earners and stayed in the big cities and gradually as time went by surprisingly the motivation to move down to rural environments increased. The working class involvement in tourism was more gradual but later changed the types and scale of tourism we have today (Murphy, 1985).

1.3 Tourism in Africa

Tourism in Africa is at the developing stage and with continuous expansion could contribute towards the issue of poverty alleviation and an overall progress in the continent's economy at large. Some of the developing countries in Africa, promote tourism as an invaluable and necessary strategy for economic development (Ondicho, 2003) and compared to

other countries in other parts of the world, tourism here is given a different outlook. Tourism provides opportunities for diversifying their sources of foreign exchange and employment creation, but not only for economic and social reasons but also as a part of their globalization policy (Sindiga, 1999). This in other words means that a well-planned tourism development has the possibility to provide crucial resources for Africa's economic transformation.

Tourism's contribution to development is indirect through generating revenues, it involves the creation of an infrastructure of attractions, accommodation facilities, travel and transport and communications and so far it is well developed in only a few African countries (Sindiga 1999). Africa, although a large continent, only has less than 4 percent of the world's tourists (Sindiga 1999, van Beek 2007). Tourism is unevenly distributed among the countries: Northern Africa has 33%, Southern Africa 31%, Eastern Africa 25%, Western Africa 10% and all the other countries in Central Africa share the remaining one percent (VanBeek, 2007). To some of the African countries, among them Kenya and South Africa, tourism is very important and they compete with one another in order to attract tourists. Tourism in Africa took off after decolonization but there are a lot of similarities between the colonial period and today's tourism.

1.4 Tourism and landscapes

Landscapes are sceneries of nature. Landscapes are the configuration of the earth surface especially the classification, description, nature and the development of the different surface features. These surface features like hills, valleys, lakes, springs high and low lands, rivers, sand bars and sand dunes are wide spread throughout Nigeria. Today, traveling, boundary delineation, human activities such as agriculture, trade military adventure, tourism and even resources of a country are based on these features. However, four group classification of these features stand out. These are plains, plateau, hills and mountains. The shape, size, location and the absolute elevation of these features help in the development of tourism

2.0 STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

Niger State, is a State in central Nigeria and the largest State in the country. The State capital is Minna and other major cities within it are Bida, Kontagora, Shiroro and Suleja. The majority of the indigenous tribe of Niger state is formed by the Nupe,

Gbagyi, Kamuku, Kambari, Dukawa and Koro. Niger State was formed in 1976 and it is also known as power state. Three of Nigeria's major hydroelectric power stations are located in Niger State namely the Kainji Dam, Jebba and the Shiroro Dam.



Plate 1: showing Niger State in Nigeria.

Source : (www.cometonigeria.com) Source : (nigeriazipcodes.com)

A case study approach was used to provide an insight into the state of tourism in Niger state because it is an ideal method of capturing a snap shot of a wider issue, and since it is possible to analyse the whole of Nigeria. The tourist attraction that were examined include Zuma rock, Gurara water fall, Shiroro hydro-power plant and kainji National park.



Plate 2: showing L.G.As in Niger state.

a) Zuma Rock

Is a large monolith, an igneous intrusion composed of gabbro and granodiorite, that is located in Niger State, Nigeria. It rises spectacularly immediately west of Nigeria's capital Abuja, along the main road from Abuja to Kaduna off Madala, and is sometimes referred to as the "Gateway to Abuja from Suleja". Zuma Rock rises 725 metres (2,379 ft) above its surroundings.

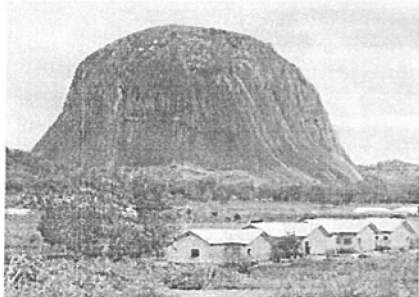


Plate 3: showing the Zuma Rock. Source: travelhubnigeria.com

Zuma is depicted on the 100 naira note. It was used for a defensive retreat by the Gbagyi people against invading neighbouring tribes during intertribal warring. The rock offers good environment for picnic relaxation and fresh air.

b) Gurara Waterfalls

Gurara waterfalls in Niger state is also one of the major tourist centres in Nigeria. It is located in Gurara, a local government area of Niger State, North Central Nigeria. The waterfalls is approximately 30 metres in height and it lies on the Gurara river along the Suleja-Minna Road



Plate 4: showing the Gurara waterfall. Source: travelhubnigeria.com (2018)

Myth and folklore

According to oral history, Gurara Waterfalls was discovered by a Gwari hunter called Buba in 1745 before some Europeans discovered it in 1925 after they found it as a recreation centre. Prior to the discovery of the waterfalls by the Europeans, Gurara Waterfalls was worshipped by people living in communities around it. Oral history also has it that Gurara Waterfalls and Gurara River were named after two deities called Gura and Rara

Asides the waterfalls outstanding and spectacular view, the surroundings makes it a beautiful place for bird watching. The falls and the river have what it

takes for sports fishing and wildlife viewing, as it's been said that there's a part of the river where one can discover crocodiles living in their natural habitat. Gurara environment is pristine, surrounded by trees providing a therapeutic renewed oxygen, which livens up the brain.

c) **Kainji National Park**

This is a national park in Niger State. Established in 1978. It covers an area of about 5340.82 km² in total. The park includes three distinct sectors: a part of the Kainji Lake in which fishing is restricted, the Borgu Game Reserve to the west of the lake, and the Zugurma Game Reserve to the southeast



Plate 5: kainji



NationalSource:travelhubnigeria.com

Development Strategies of promoting Tourism

While exploring the importance of landscape features to tourism, the act must commence with an understanding of the landform features that are most appealing or that attract tourists to a particular landscape. An overview of the characteristics of the environments, origin and destinations of tourists suggests that one underlying concept can be used to explain the tourist search for a place to visit is environmental contrast (Ozo, 1993). Tourists tend to adventurously search for environments that offer them tremendous pleasure and mental stimulation and this not far from what nature has to offer. Some fascinating physical sceneries, such as hills, valleys, mountains, rivers, waterfalls, lakes, beaches, springs and forest still require modification and improvement upon to increase the level of attraction of the features the reason is because some

of the best and most attractive tourist attractions in the world not only depend on the natural attraction, but in-cooperates some additional landscape design techniques to bring out the most out of these places. Some of the landscape design techniques include grading system, plants and plantings, storm water management and pedestrian circulation.

a. **Site grading** - Land grading is a component of surface stabilization and entails reshaping the surface of the land. This reduces surface runoff, prevents erosion, and creates a more stable landscape. In many cases the grading scheme is a primary determinant in the design of a site. Deep gullies, narrow ridges, or steep slopes can be modified to create more useful and attractive landforms. Relatively flat gradients apparently make the site visually pleasing and attractive because of the Different level features are place.



Plate 6: showing the different grading systems Source:www.naturalisticlandscape.com

b. Plants and planting - Soft landscape comprises of natural plants, such as flowers, trees, shrubs, hedges in diverse colour, providing quality and integrated green areas for recreation and relaxation. Environmental control: landscape elements such as trees, shrubs serves as wind

breaker, a guide against sun glare and are used as shading devices. Plants also reinforce the existing native ecosystem and work as bioengineering agents for soil retention and restoration.

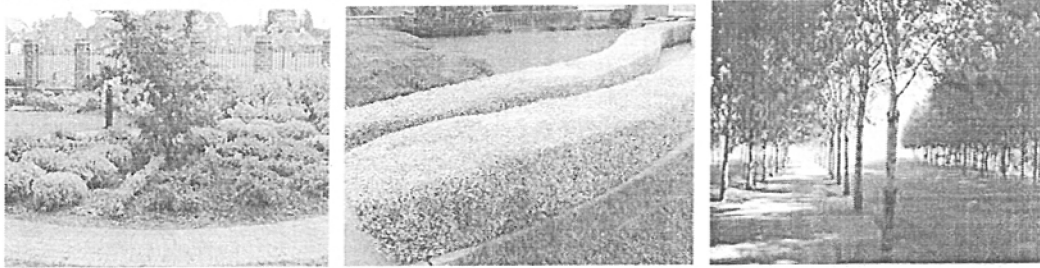


Plate 7: showing different plants and plantings. Source:www.naturalisticlandscape.com

c. Pedestrian circulation – The quality of this functional aspect is measured in terms of the "convenience" offered by the system. The activity of watching other people is appealing to many, spaces to gather with ample opportunities to sit are crucial to the success of most places. Pedestrian circulation is an experience and a characteristic representative of park systems and other recreational open spaces.

issues. It includes long-term regional planning concerning land areas measured in square kilometres. It also includes site design where land areas are more appropriately measured in square metres. At every level, storm water management is the prediction and direction of the movement of storm water runoff and employing the use of pervious paving with underground drainage/channelling and employment of green roofs.

d. Storm water management - In landscape architecture, it includes a broad range of applications and



Plate 8: showing storm water flow. Source:www.wikipedia.com

3.0 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The following observations were made on the use of the different landscaping techniques which could improve the attractive nature of this tourists' attraction sites

a) Plants and plantings

Types of plantings found on the site visited.

Attraction	Shrubs	Trees	Flowers
Gurara water fall	0	0	
Zuma rock		0	
Shiroro power dam		0	
Kainji national park	0	0	0
Total	2	4	1

Source: Author's fieldwork. (2018)

Deduction: Each tourist centre had plantings on the site, most of them were not planted by anyone. 57% of the plants were trees on all the sites arranged in a scattered order, because they are not planted along a defined path, they could not serve as a proper sun shading device on walk ways except when someone is close.

b) Storm water management

Attraction	pavement	Gutters	Grading
Gurara water fall		0	
Zuma rock			
Shiroro power dam	0	0	
Kainji national park	0	0	
Total	2	3	0

Source: Author's fieldwork. (2018)

Conveyance may include pavements, curbs, gutters, roofs, downspouts, catch basins, pipes; even lawn areas and grading are designed to remove or direct run off water, since circulation is crucial to the tourists. Gutters seem to be the most common in the study carried out maybe because it is less expensive of which it is not the most effective.

c) Pedestrian circulation

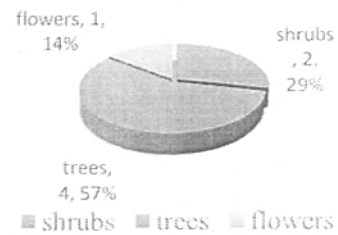
Efficiency of walkways

Attraction	Covered	Open	Tarred	Seating
Gurara water fall		0		
Zuma rock		0		
Shiroro power dam		0	0	
Kainji national park		0	0	
Total	0	4	2	0

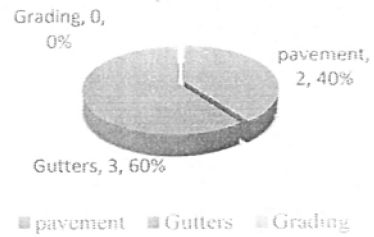
Source: Author's fieldwork. (2018)

As earlier mentioned, the quality of functional pedestrian circulation is measured in terms of the convenience offered by the system. When there are ample opportunities to sit after a long walk people tend to enjoy walking at the thought of it and will walk long distances if the walkways are covered shading them from direct sunlight.

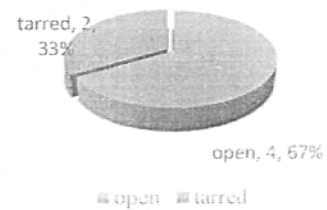
types of plantings



Storm water management system



pedestrian system



Another important observation was that tourists came all the way from outside of the state and some from within the state with few occasional visits from other countries and after their visits to these destination sites they return immediately. This was due to the lack of adequate facilities such as hotels, restaurants and tourist centres.

Physical Planning of the sites visited was haphazardly done, no allocation of spaces for varied uses and no evidence of landscaping except for the trees and ill maintained shrubs seen.

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4.0 CONCLUSION

The results show that Niger State has not fully harnessed its potentials through its landscapes, to fully participate in tourism and enjoy the dividends that come with it. The combined works of nature and man could make our environments and the walk through tourism more intriguing by applying the many landscape techniques aforementioned and taking advantage of the ideas behind them. The paper has elaborated on the need for tourism to be developed sustainably in local communities these principles also could be applied in other communities nationwide.