

ATTITUDE TO RECREATION: A HINDERANCE TO DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is endowed with tourist resources, both natural and man-made, yet it has not been able to adequately satisfy the demands of modern tourists. Studies show that Nigeria's domestic tourism is weak due to the fact that a greater percentage of Nigeria's population lacks recreation culture. Domestic tourism is the bedrock for international tourism. Domestic tourism cannot thrive in a country where majority of its population is poor and has poor attitude to leisure. In this paper we present the major factors responsible for poor attitude to leisure, its implications and suggestion with regards to how to inculcate recreation culture in a population.

Key Words: Recreation culture, organized recreation, recreation education/training, recreation setting.

INTRODUCTION

Concept of Recreation and Leisure

Recreation is defined by Elmer (1973), as an act of experience selected by the individual during his leisure to meet a personal want or desire, primarily for his own satisfaction. Recreation is referred to as leisure-time activities. Recreation is the major reason why people engage in touristic movement. Burkart and Medlik (1988) say "all tourism involves recreation, but not all recreation is tourism". Recreation habit if developed and nurtured leads to the development of tourism culture.

Leisure refers to a time frame, that is a time when an individual is not working, studying; the time that can be spent as one pleases, one's free time, the time that is left after formal duties and the necessities of life have been cared for, the time beyond existence and subsistence (Bucher and Bucher, 1974; Kraus, 1966). Recreation is concerned with the re-creative – that is activity that will bring about a renewal of spirit and the body; activities that have the potentialities for enrichment of life through the development of the intellect. It is opposed to activities that are harmful to a person or to the society, physically, socially and otherwise (Bucher and Bucher, 1974; Kraus, 1966). The aim of recreation is to rest and rejuvenate, and

rebuild the body up from a breakdown situation. The rebuilding up process through leisure-time activities does not end with the physical body but extends to the mental component of the individual, thereby enabling him to achieve a balanced life. It is a common knowledge that a greater percentage of the Nigerian population lacks recreation habit/tourism culture. Okorafor (1993) says "by definition and its contemporary concept and practice, tourism is alien to Nigerian primal culture..." Omorogbe-Osagie (1995) says "Nigerians have not come to realize as yet the significance of taking a break from their normal jobs or business via recreation and leisure pathways." The habit of saving towards going to other places of tourist importance has not yet been formed by most Nigerians whether the most affluent ones, through the average affluent ones to the low income brackets. Nimenibo, (1993) says "this (tourism) culture being alien has its own problems but it is the foundation for a steady growth in tourism."

Implications of Lack of Recreational/Tourism Culture on the Growth of Tourism

A lot have been said and written on the economic benefits of a developed tourism industry, such benefits as infrastructural development, revenue and employment generation, international peace and understanding and so on. Also, a lot have been written about the facilitating factors necessary for tourism growth, such as good road network, steady supply of water and electricity, good communication network, efficient security system, hospitable destination and so on (Oduyoye, 1994). It is generally agreed that with all or most of these infrastructures put in place, tourism will grow. But the question that one may ask is, to what height would tourism grow if the greater percentage of the population of a potential tourist destination lacks recreation/tourism culture?

The quality of life of residents in and around a tourist site has a great impact on the quality of the visitor's experience. The attitude of national residents of the host community, country or region towards visitors in general, and towards visitors from specific countries in particular has been identified as an important factor determining tourism flow (Holloway, 2001). Many countries that heavily depend on tourism have had to mount political campaigns and training programmes aimed at their residents to improve their politeness and friendliness towards visitors. The Caribbean, USA and Britain have long recognized this important factor in tourism. Someone's leisure trip can be ruined if he (tourist) is not accorded the type of hospitality he deserves from the residents of his host destination. Such a tourist would not like to make a return trip to a destination where the residents were hostile rather than being hospitable.

Recreational attitude surveys reveal that 70 percent of the people interviewed who indicated little or no interest in recreation also expressed apathy towards tourist activities, tourist products and services, and government programmes on tourism (Igbojekwe, 2009). Such finding suggests that those respondents are less likely to show hospitality towards visitors, particularly tourists whom they may consider as frivolous spenders and intruders who have come to share their infrastructures with them. Prejudice may arise. The erstwhile secretary general of United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Savignac (1990) in his address presented at the National Conference on the Tourism Development in Nigeria writes "tourism development requires a full review and simplification of all aspects of tourism including...and letting the natural warm and friendliness of the host people shine through".

There is a common belief that most Nigerians naturally possess hospitable disposition. Those who support this view may not be wrong, however, it is one thing to possess hospitable disposition (by nature) and it is another thing to reflect it in one's way of life and attitude towards recreation, tourists and tourist attractions. A one time Culture and Tourism Minister, Chief Ojo Maduekwe (1999) in his address at the World Tourism Day celebration says "our attitude to nature and environment is to say the least, very hostile. This manifests our inability to turn these resources into revenue generating ventures by developing them as tourist attractions". The attitude described by Maduekwe (1999) is a true manifestation of lack of

recreation/tourism culture and its resultant apathy towards preservation of tourist attractions and the industry at large.

When someone lacks tourism culture/recreational habit, holiday making to him is a means of wasting one's resources, time and energy. Such a person is likely to see leisure-time activities as "blotting paper" that has come to absorb the untapped energies of man. His contribution towards the growth of tourism, (if any) would be negligible and he will find it difficult to appreciate government's efforts towards tourism development; he can hardly make efforts towards preservation of potential tourist products, neither can he serve as source of information and guide to tourists.

The major economic impact of lack of recreation habit/tourism culture is that it discourages investment and private sector participation in tourism industry. It is responsible for the under-utilization of tourist and recreational facilities abound in Nigeria. The result is that private investors are frustrated because of low patronage received by their investments. The Vanguard tourism writer (1999) reports the frustration voiced by the CEO of Webisco Travels and Tours who lamented that despite the efforts that her company and competitors (tour operators) were making to boost tourism, turnover was still low. Omorogbe-Osagie (1995) says "...that most of the tourist and recreational facilities such as Bar-Beach in Lagos, the Yankari Game Reserve just to mention but a few are under-utilized; other tourist attractions...are seen from a distance by Nigerians." The Nekede Zoological and botanical garden in Imo State, Nigeria has been under-utilized, hence, it has not been able to generate sufficient revenue for adequate up-keep of the animals in the garden. Consequently, a good number of the animals have died and the garden has lost its attractiveness (Igbojekwe, 2009).

The situation described above also discourages influx of foreign investment. It is wise and widely accepted that before anyone concludes investment decision he must consider among other factors the availability of potential market for his products and services. Tourism investment is not an exception to the above view. Tourist market is described by reference to the composite product, the sellers (providers) who supply it and the buyers (tourists) who exercise the demand for it (Burkart and Medlik, 1988). With the low level of the inclination to recreation/tourism, one can rightly assume that there is low level of demand for recreational/tourism products and services. The result is that, the market for these products and services is not large enough to attract both local and foreign investments into Nigeria. Besides, the tourism industry is capital intensive and is said to have relatively slow rate of return on investment. As most tourist products and services cannot be transported and are consumed at the place of production, market for them must exist in the country or region within the country where they are produced. Also observed is the abuse of recreational facilities, especially parks and playgrounds that have been converted to refuse dumping sites and toilets by residents, particularly in urban cities. This attitude is a clear manifestation of lack of recreational habit.

FACTORS AFFECTING RECREATION/TOURISM CULTURE DEVELOPMENT

Availability of funds and Access to Recreational Facilities

Lack or unavailability of funds has been identified as one of the major factors militating against the development of recreational/tourism culture. Recreational attitude surveys reveal that over 60 percent of Nigerians interviewed indicated that they are hardly meeting up with the provision of basic needs (food and shelter) for their families (Igbojekwe, 2009). Basic economic principles tell us that most consumers have a limited income over any period of time, they must, therefore, balance their needs and the costs of various products and services. Leisure is regarded as one aspect of "good life", hence, it is not on the priority list of most Nigerians. Omorogbe-Osagie (1995) says "in Nigeria today, where the average family can hardly

provide three meals in a day, the question of saving towards visiting places of historical importance and tourist attractions is not a priority”.

Level of Economic Development

The poor national economy denies most Nigerians accessibility to recreational facilities. In Nigeria, the poor economic condition in which the citizen survives just at subsistence level does not augur well for tourism development. Over 60 percent of Nigerians live below the poverty level of US\$1.00 per day (Okorafor, 2005). Okorafor in a paper presented at the National Seminar on “the Need for Statutory Holiday Calendar Towards Development of Tourism in Nigeria” stated thus; “the major trammels to the development of domestic tourism in Nigeria include low purchasing power of the Nigerian worker arising from the weakness of the national economy... and general lack of vacation culture in Nigeria”. A general improvement in the wealth and earning capacity of the people is relevant to tourism development. Individual income and basic expenditure must leave a sizeable disposable income for meeting traveling costs. Income level should be above subsistence level.

Lack of Awareness of the Essence of Recreation

Lack of knowledge of the essence of leisure has also been identified as a factor contributing to low level of development of tourism culture. A greater percentage of Nigerians are not really aware that recreation can help someone improve the quality of his/her mental and physical well-being. As recreation provides payoffs for the individual, he is redeemed from routine and fatigue through his participation in recreational activities particularly those activities that assist the person exhibit creative ability and achieve self-fulfillment, thus, relieving the individual from day-to-day stress. This lack of knowledge of the essence of recreation is reflected in the general attitude of Nigerians with respect to the provision of recreational facilities. Urban planners hardly remember to incorporate recreational facilities in the urban development plans.

Akinola-Arikawe (1985) says, “In the third world (the developing countries) such as Nigeria there is lack of awareness of the contribution that leisure-time activities can make to the quality of life of urban residents and visitors, hence, the issue of providing recreational facilities is not taken seriously by urban planners and public officials”. This situation is diametrically opposed to what obtains in more developed countries such as the U.S.A., and Britain where the provision of recreational facilities have long been made a routine component of plans for urban cities and the society at large.

Value Conflicts: Work Ethics versus Leisure

Work ethics has also been identified as one of the factors influencing the development of recreational/tourism culture. Work ethic according to Elmer (1973) has its central theme that the individual’s moral duty is to be industrious continuously “to earn his salt”, and the harder one works, the more moral he is supposed to be, in other words, hard work is the means of demonstrating worthiness in terms of self-discipline, rejection of worldly pleasures and righteous success. For some individuals who are strict adherent to work ethics, work is the only way to use their time. Such people lack the psychological capacity to constructively utilize their leisure time. These individuals experience difficulties in detaching themselves from work ethics and are unable to distinguish work from leisure.

Individuals, who find it difficult to break away from work ethics are described by Elmer (1973) as homogenizing toilers. Homogenizing toilers (workaholics) are persons who take the office home with them and continue to focus on their specialized work career without regard to recreation and even family roles. For the homogenizing toiler, leisure time is practically nonexistent. Saturday and Sunday find him engaged

in the same activities as the rest of the week. He spends his total energy, both emotionally and physically in the very act of survival for himself and his family, as commitment to work ethic deprives him the contentment in activities other than work. To the homogenizing toiler says Elmer (1973), the enjoyment of “unearned” leisure for its own sake is inhibited by guilt feelings that the pleasure is “sinful” or wasteful unless earned through work. Many Nigerians are caught in the web of value conflict, hence, they claim that they do not have time for engaging in leisure time activities. Igbojekwe (2009) reports that 70% of those interviewed responded that they do not have time for recreation. This orientation tends to affect the cultural, economic and political stability. Omorogbe-Osagie (1995) quotes Dr. B.U. Nzeribe as saying “A society where everyone is working hard to make a living will never have stability”. “But society needs a leisure class that is tired of material things, that can devote its time to think, plan and organize the society.

Personality and Social Class

Engagement in and choice of leisure time activities is related to personality and social variables such as age, sex, educational attainment and social class (Elmer, 1973). It is believed that the personality qualities of an individual are particularly crucial in determining choice of leisure-time activities which is one of the ways in which an individual expresses his personality needs. These needs may range from socialability, cultivation of personality growth and business relationships to maintaining prestige (both social and political) in a particular peer group. Today in Nigeria it is observed that the most likely social class that are consistent and are regularly engaging in recreational activities are the affluent (or the upper-class). The upper-social class (about 20%) represents a very small percentage of the total population of Nigeria. Even if these upper class individuals have developed recreational/tourism culture, the number is too small to boost (domestic) tourism and encourage investment in this sector.

Occupational Orientation

Engagement in and choice of recreational activities is influenced by the tempo of ones occupation. In a study of professors, advertising agents and dentist reported by Elmer (1973), it was found that the work hours of the professor are extended by tasks he can perform at home, whereas the dentist cannot perform his tasks at home. For the advertising agent he has little spill over of office work.

Government Policies and Attitudes towards Recreation

Some government policies and attitudes are favourable towards recreation and tourism. The provision and use of land for recreational purposes involves for the most part outdoor activities on sites consciously developed and equipped with facilities that permit both active and passive recreational involvements. Unavailability of recreational space (land) and facilities is confronting both urban centres and rural communities particularly where every piece of land is owned by someone. In such cases, government policies such as the Land Use Act of 1978, the 3rd and 4th National Development Plans are favourable towards recreation.

The Land Use Act placed all unused and undeveloped land in the hands of various state governments, while the 3rd and 4th development plans recognized that the rapid increase in the urban population of Nigeria demands adequate provision for the development of various urban and rural infrastructures and amenities including parks. The 4th National Development Plan prescribed that each state of the federation should establish a modest tourist village and also a medium holiday camp to provide rest and relaxation for citizens (Ifedi, 2009). Unfortunately, above government policies did not receive priority attention from the governments, hence, they were not satisfactorily implemented. Most unfortunately, a good number of recreational spaces provided during urban planning programmes have been converted to

commercial, industrial and residential plots by unpatriotic government officials. Recently, the most popular urban recreation park in Imo State, Nigeria, has been converted to a commercial plot. The failure of the government to provide recreational spaces for use by the citizens is hindering the development of recreation culture. Well equipped government parks would offer the citizenry opportunity to have access to inexpensive recreation facilities.

Strategies for Inculcating Recreation/Tourism Culture

Recreational habit/tourism culture is not acquired from birth, but learned through recreation education, exposure and participation. Being a learned behaviour it does not appear suddenly one day. Therefore, it requires a long term participation in recreational activities for one to inculcate such habit. Recreation education campaign can be launched and emphasis should be on teaching Nigerians the essence of recreation and how they can constructively utilize their leisure hours. Achievement of the above objective requires an integrated approach whereby the tourism stakeholders and the three tiers of government work together.

Some remarkable suggestions as to how to develop recreation culture in Nigerians have been made by Chief Charles Okorafor and Asso. Prof. C.I.C. Okoli in their papers presented at the seminar on “The Need for statutory Holiday Calendar, Towards Developing Tourism in Nigeria.” Both Okorafor (2005) and Okoli (2005) recommend that there should be a statutory holiday calendar in Nigeria and that annual vacation should be made compulsory for workers. Annual leave should be granted to workers at their request at a time when it is convenient for them to embark on holiday tour with their family members. Okorafor in his presentation suggested that the Nigerian worker be empowered financially to enable him participate in touristic/recreational activities. He recommended that leave allowance to Nigerian workers below Grade level 12 should be increased to twice their monthly salaries, and such leave allowance should be paid to the workers at the beginning of their annual vacation. Also recommended is that workers in the public and private sectors who perform at superlative level should be sponsored to spend weekends with their families at prime tourist destinations in the country as staff motivation strategy. This recommendation is similar to what the Japanese practice whereby a holistic approach to human resource management ensures adequate and fair compensation, compatibility between work and non-work activities and social needs. The Japanese go to the extent of subsidizing vacation for their workers.

Incorporating tourism education into the secondary school curriculum will go a long way in inculcating recreation/tourism culture in the younger generation. It is a thing of joy to have read from newspapers that the Cross River State government has made a pronouncement of its intention to incorporate tourism education into the secondary school curriculum.

Social tourism is practiced in some countries. Social tourism is defined as the furtherance of the economically weak or dependent classes of the population; and is designed to provide aid for low-income families, single-parent families, the elderly, handicapped and other deprived minorities within a population (Holloway, 2001). Aid may be offered in the form of finance (grants, low-interest loans and the like) or in direct support through the provision of free transport or holiday accommodation. Social tourism is practiced in Belgium, France and Britain. The Brussel-based international Bureau of social Tourism (IBST) has been active since 1963 as a base for the study and debate on social tourism. In Britain the responsibility for providing this service is delegated to local authorities (the chronically sick and disabled authorities to fund holidays for the disabled). In the UK, the English Tourist Board, with the full support of the travel industry (Private sector) set up the Holiday Care Service in 1981. Holidays are organized and sponsored by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Trade Unions (Holloway, 2001)

The ambivalence to recreation observed in Nigerians is diametrically opposed to the habits of people in the developed countries such as the United States of America (U.S.A.), where people consciously save towards leisure trips. It is, therefore, not surprising to see American tourists visiting places of tourist interest and attractions within the U.S.A. and in different parts of the world. Pleasure trips by the Americans within their country have contributed immensely to the growth of the U.S.A. domestic tourism. Tourism industry is described to be the fastest growing industry in the U.S.A. (Sun and Uysal, 1994). As reported by these authors at least two out of three (2/3) Americans visit a particular tourist site, a Walt Disney Park sometime in their lives. These authors say “Disney-Watchers estimate that more than 15 percent of the 28.4 million people who went there in 1990 were from overseas” indicating that about 85 percent of the visitors were domestic tourists. The report made by Sun and Uysal (1994) strongly suggests that a greater percentage of the Americans have imbibed recreational/tourism culture.

Raymond Turco and Associates (2002) conducted a survey of recreation needs and attitudes in Corpus Christi and reported that 84 percent of the city residents reported having visited a city park or park facility, while 72 percent reported visiting a city playground. The above study also revealed that fewer than one in ten Corpus Christi residents had an intense positive opinion about parks and recreation. By implication, residents of Corpus Christi have imbibed recreation culture.

Inculcating Recreational Habit: The United States of America’s (U.S.A) Example

It took the Americans several years and the application of several approaches before they were able to instill recreation habit in themselves. Some of the approaches as discussed by Bucher and Bucher (1974) are presented below.

Community Recreation Setting

In the years between 1900 and 1914, playgrounds were established. Recreation Association of America was formed at various communities. The main purpose was to stimulate the organization of recreation and community recreation services which provided a variety of free or inexpensive recreation services. Community recreation services offered such programmes as arts, drama, sports, music, camping and all types of social events. City parks were established and managed by various city administrations.

School Recreation Settings

As the need for recreation for children was recognized the thought that the schools were solely for formal education changed. The schools were therefore seen by the American public also as places for recreation. Recreation was made a compulsory component of the school curriculum, hence, the school became a major source of recreation settings which included park areas, playgrounds, swimming pools, gymnasium and track and field areas. For the purpose of using school facilities to the fullest, schools were kept open after school hours, during evenings and weekends.

Legislative Approach

Following the World War 1, there was legislation for recreational facilities and recreation taxes/levies were collected from the public. Levies collected were used to fund various recreation projects, school sports for children, the disadvantaged and the youths. Community recreation associations also benefited from the government funding of recreation programmes.

Education for Recreation

As the American nation prospered, the recreation movement gained momentum, seminars, workshops and conferences were organized. Presidents of the United States also recognized the importance of recreation. In 1924 President Coolidge called the National conference on out door recreation. Five years later, President Hoover's Research committee on Social Trends gave special consideration to recreation. In 1926 the National Recreation Association began one-year graduate course designed to train recreation leaders. Recreation leaders served in many capacities involving such functions as planning, supervising, teaching, organizing, counseling, researching and conducting special events. University and other tertiary institutions recognized that recreation leaders needed special preparation. A conference concerned with the training of recreation leaders was held in 1937 and it was sponsored by the University of Minnesota.

International Co-operation/Relations: As far back as 1956, the first international co-operation community recreation exchange programme was initiated, wherein America exchanged recreation personnel with foreign countries.

Organized Recreation Programme

Organized recreation programme is a public sector sponsored programme, constructively planned and carried out with the welfare of human beings in mind with a view to assisting the citizens have access to inexpensive recreation facilities particularly the disadvantaged individuals. The idea of organized recreation came into being with the hope that organized recreation would fill individual needs of all citizens of the U.S.A. wherever one lives and whatever one's physical, mental or social characteristics may have been. However, special attention was directed towards the needs of the disadvantaged as it was realized that the disadvantaged did not own cars, rarely took vacations, or attended spectator events, social functions and cultural events. The approach that was taken by the government to improve recreation for the disadvantaged include, involving community members in planning and staffing of recreation facilities, providing transportation to distant recreation sites, and encouraging them to join neighbourhood recreation association and so on.

The depression of the 1930 resulted in the downturn in business and some commercial recreation programmes had to be closed down which resulted in the shortage of recreation programmes. In light of this, the American national government through its federal agencies engaged in building new and refurbishing of old recreation areas and facilities, and provided funds for employing recreation leaders to provide leadership for recreation programmes throughout the United States. The programmes of the Federal agencies were aimed at increasing community involvement at the grass-root, to stimulate mass recognition of and action in community recreation/leisure programmes. The federal funds also financed school for children and youths. The federal programmes contributed immensely towards the development of out-door recreation.

Family Recreation Settings

In Sandiego, California U.S.A., family fitness concept was initiated. Family recreation programmes were arranged to occur on certain week-day evenings in the city recreation centers. Families were encouraged to come together to participate in music, exercise, drama, games, arts and sports and so on. Parents were urged to help their children plan their schedule to avail themselves of the services available at subsidized rates.

Industrial Recreation

Corporate bodies were urged to have recreation programmes administered by full time recreation leaders. As a result, corporate bodies began to sponsor sports competition/league, clubs and organized picnics, outings and parties for their workers.

Therapeutic Recreation Services

The physically/mentally ill, handicapped or disabled or retarded were not left out. Therapeutic recreation services are services provided in settings such as hospitals, nursing homes, and institutions for the mentally/physically ill. The objectives of the recreation programmes for the handicapped included helping patients to constructively use leisure time and to enable them carry on some of these activities upon leaving the health institution. Legislation were made in support of programmes designed for the disabled. First legislation was made in 1918. Still today in American nation, issues bordering on how to make travel and leisure more accessible for persons who have some kind of disability are being discussed. In January 1998 in Miami Beach, Florida, U.S.A., the second world congress of the Society for the Advancement of Travel for the Handicapped (SATH) was convened (Vladimir, 1998).

Conclusion/Recommendation

Having looked at the level of ambivalence towards leisure by Nigerians and its implications on the tourism industry, one can rightly conclude that Nigeria is yet to build a firm foundation for the growth of the tourism industry. It is apparent that the Federal, State and the Local governments and the private sector are yet to fully embrace their responsibilities and obligations to educate the masses on leisure. Inculcating recreation culture/tourism culture in the citizenry is a difficult task, however, it is not insurmountable.

We therefore, conclude that lack of recreation habit is the Bane of Tourism industry in Nigeria. It is a major constraint hindering the development of domestic tourism. We recommend that the three tiers of government should provide recreation services through their social programmes and publicize them so that people will know about them. We are also recommending that the American example be adopted. Recreation education should be carried out and park and recreation administration established in the country by various governments. For domestic tourism, the bed-rock of international tourism to thrive in Nigeria, conscious efforts must be made to inculcate recreation culture in the population. Until we have done these, the tourism industry in Nigeria will remain at infant stage in this millennium.

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