


Awareness Evaluation of the Tourist Attraction of a Typical Nigerian University Zoo Park

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Abstract

Basically, attractions are the most important element of tourist destinations as they provide the main reason or motivation for tourists to visit a destination. The study was conducted to evaluate the awareness of the tourist attraction in a typical University in Nigeria. In carrying out the study, a review of zoo and zoo parks in the some Universities in Nigeria was conducted. Also, a survey structured questionnaire was designed and administered on the study area. A total number of 242 respondents were sampled using a purposive sampling method. However, only 238 respondents properly completed and returned the questionnaire. The data gathered was analyzed and the hypotheses were tested using chi square statistical method. The findings revealed that there was significant difference ($X^2=32.75$, $P=0.67$) between the Zoo Park and the level of awareness of the park. The result further revealed that there was significant difference ($X^2=21.00$, $P=0.56$) between the available facilities and the level of patronage of the Zoo Park. It was however, recommended that the management of the park should intensify more efforts by providing additional facilities and also embarks on aggressive publicity to create more awareness for better patronage of the park.

Keywords: *Tourist Attraction, Tourist, Visitor, Zoo Park, University, Nigeria*

Background to the Study

Tourist attractions are regarded as a key component of the tourism market and key element in the tourism system for they stimulate interest in travelling to a destination and provide people visiting these sites with satisfaction (Kruczek, 2012). Attractions are the most important element of tourist destinations as they provide the main reason or motivation for tourists to visit a destination (Ho and Ap, 2009). Tourist attractions are magnets which attract tourists to a region, while at the same time stimulating demand for other tourism services (Swarbrooke, 2002). According to Ho and Ap, 2009, attractions usually have certain characteristics such as; attractions are set out to attract visitors, including locals and tourists, they provides pleasurable and enjoyable experiences for visitors to spend their leisure time, they are developed to make it attractive and inviting for the use and enjoyment of visitors, they are managed as an attraction to satisfy visitors and they provide facilities and services to meet and cater to the needs of visitors.

Zoo means any park, building, cage, enclosure or other structure or premise in which a live animal or animals are kept for public exhibition or viewing, regardless of compensation (Rees, 2011). Large collections and displays of animals in zoos in many cases serve as attractions that draw visitors. There are some successful zoos that have created a great deal of public interest and visits because of unusual exhibits, collections of animal species and efforts to recreate the natural setting found in the wild (Ho and Ap, 2009). Zoos have become big business in recent years and in order to enhance the visitors' experience, the management commonly provides opportunities for visitors to participate in interactive activities (Rees, 2011).

As sited by Yisau, Onadeko, Jayeola, Osunsina, Arowoogun (2013), Turley (1999) Identified recreation, education and conservation as the three main reasons of establishing zoos of which conservation is the least that influence the desire of the public to visit. Zoo providing form of informal learning has benefits it offers and based on this, Connell (2005) emphasized importance of zoo considering public interest in eco-tourism and wildlife experiences which are on increasing side and its ability to influence and encourage change in society. Smith-Jackson and Hall (2002) revealed that every year wilderness areas and recreation centers are visited by millions of visitors. The World Association of Zoo and Aquarium in 2011, (as sited in Lancaster, 2013) stated that zoos around the world host around 700 million visitors every year and its equivalent 10% of the global population. It is In view of these enormous benefits that zoos offer, that this study was conducted on awareness evaluation of the tourist attraction in of a typical Nigeria University Zoo Park. It is expected that the information obtained from this study will serve a veritable guide on the management of the zoo park as a tourist attraction.

Area of the Study

The study area was conducted at the FUNAAB Zoo Park belonging to the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. The zoo was established by the University on 62 hectares of land situated along Alabata Road off Abeokuta – Ibadan Express Road. The zoo is 200 meter away from the University main campus gate. The zoo vegetation is a derived savanna. The zoo is the first in Ogun State and was commissioned

and opened for public view in the year 2010 (Yisau et al., 2013).

Objective of Study

The broad objective of this study is to conduct awareness evaluation of the tourist attraction in of a typical Nigeria University Zoo Park.

The specific objectives are to;

- i. investigate the level of awareness of FUNAAB Zoo Park in Abeokuta?
- ii. examine the available facilities at the FUNAAB Zoo Park in Abeokuta?
- iii. assess the level of patronage of FUNAAB Zoo Park in Abeokuta?

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, a desk review and quantitative research methods were employed. A detailed review of information about the FUNAAB zoo park was conducted. The quantitative method involved the use of structured close ended questionnaire. *A total number of 242 respondents were sampled using a purposive sampling method. However, only 228 respondents properly completed and returned the questionnaire.* The respondents were provided with the questionnaire to fill during their visit. This was to enable the respondents to account for the attributes mentioned in the questionnaire. The research questions were projected toward asking visitors about the FUNAAB Zoo Park, the level of awareness, the available facilities and the level of patronage of FUNAAB Zoo Park in Abeokuta? Two null hypotheses were postulated. These include; there is no significant difference between FUNAAB Zoo Park and the level of awareness of the park as an attraction in Abeokuta; there is no significant difference between the available facilities and the level of patronage of FUNAAB Zoo Park in Abeokuta.

The research instrument employed for the study was the questionnaire. The questionnaire covers the demographics of the respondent such as sex, employment status and marital status; level of awareness of FUNAAB Zoo Park; the available facilities at the FUNAAB Zoo Park and the level of patronage of FUNAAB Zoo Park. The data collected was analyzed by determining the mean, standard deviation and the hypotheses were tested using Chi-Square statistical method. The analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Science, SPSS, (Statistical Package for social Science), version 20.0.

Zoos in Nigerian Universities and Zoo Importance

Some universities in Nigeria have zoos or zoological gardens with a significant number of conserved animals. Universities such as University of Ibadan Zoo (1948), University of Lagos Zoo (1962), Ahmadu Bello University Zoo (1967), Obafemi Awolowo University Zoo (1968), University of Nigeria Zoo (1972), University of Ilorin (1976), Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta referred to as FUNAAB Zoo Park 2012) and many other Universities with Departments of Zoology, have over the years, developed their zoological gardens as well.

Zoological parks have evolved from being menageries to educational as a means of promoting knowledge not only of the animals in collection, but also of the ecosystem conservation and preservation (Dawet, Yakubu & Butu 2013). Zoos provide an opportunity to open up a whole new world of curiosity and interest in the natural world and sensitize visitors to the value and need for the conservation of wildlife. Zoos are of great importance as they protect and preserve a number of endangered species of animals and birds. Zoos were initially started for the entertainment of people. Gradually over the years, they have come to play an important role in conservation. The ultimate goal of zoos is the conservation of animals that are endangered in the wild. Zoos play an important part in education, recreation, and conservation.

The Funaab Zoo Park

FUNAAB Zoo Park is owned and directly managed by the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun State. The zoo park was established in the year 2012 in a conserved forest that is about 200 meters away from the main gate of the University. It is located on 62 hectares of land and the vegetation is a derived savanna. The zoo which is the first zoo in Ogun State was established for research and recreation purpose. The zoo park is a rich conservation area for many species of animal and plant. The zoo park offers a balanced mix of nature's gift to man. The Zoo Park combines forestry and other wildlife all in a natural habitat. The park serves as a leisure garden to the general public to appreciate nature and see different animals in their natural habitat. A tour guide is made available at the request of a visitor.

At the entrance of the zoo is a massive gate where the name of the park is fixed. On entering the zoo, there is a building housing the reception, a museum and a room where the Juvenile reptiles are kept in a secured plastic containers. The animals in this building include; Gabon Viper (*Bitis gabonica*), Royal Python (*Python regius*), Puff Adder (*Bitis arietans*), Rabbit (*Pantalagus brachylagus*).

Located outside the building are different directional signposts showing the different locations of the animals. The directional signs are met to guide the visitors while inside the park. The labels of each animal are well interpreted on their cages. The various segments are well designated. There are different sections for various classes of animals such as; Avifauna, Reptiles, Rodents, Primate and Mammals. All the animals are kept in cages made of metal wire except for the Baboon that is kept in a separate brick cage.

There is an area meant for birds in their various cages. These birds include; African Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*), Rose-Ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*), Mallard Duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*), White Geese (*Chen caerulescens*), Common Ostrich (*Struthio camelus*) a male and female. The reptiles in their natural habitat on both land and water is replicated in the upland and the pool encasement are made for them. The reptiles include; Nile Crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*), Monitor Lizard (*Veranus niloticus*), Tortoise (*Testudo graeca*).

The rodents are kept in thick metallic cages. They include; Crested Porcupine (*Hystrix cristata*) and Giant Rat (*Papagomy armandvillei*) The primates sections include; Patas Monkey (*Erythrocebus patas*), Anubis Baboon (*Papio anubis*), Mona Monkey (*Cercopithecus mona*), Velvet Monkeys (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*) and Red Capped Mangabey (*Cercocebus torquatus*). Other Mammals found in their own cages are; Common Jackal (*Canis aureus*), Maxwell Duiker (*Philantomba maxwellii*), Crown Duiker (*Philantomba monticola*), Thompson Gazelle (*Eudorcas thomsonii*).

Findings

A total of 242 survey questionnaire was distributed to the respondents. A return rate of 98.35% was achieved as only 4 survey questionnaire was either not returned or not properly filled. In all, 238 questionnaire was useful for this study.

The table below shows the results of the respondents with respect to the demographic distribution of the visitors.

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	112	47.1
Female	126	52.9
Total	238	100
Age		
18-25	97	40.8
26-35	63	26.5
36-45	46	19.3
Above 45	32	13.4
Total	238	100
Education Qualification		
Primary	6	2.5
Secondary	26	10.9
ND	45	18.9
HND/Bsc.	130	54.6
Post graduate	31	13.1
Total	238	100
Occupation		
Civil/public servant	33	13.9
Artisan	6	2.5
Business	9	3.8
Clergy	3	1.3
Student	180	75.6
Total	238	97.1

Source: Field survey, 2015

The table above, the result revealed that majority of the visitors are female with 126 which represents 52.9% of the respondents. Also, the students with 180 constitute the majority of the respondents which represents 75.6% of the respondents.

Level of Awareness of Funaab Zoo Park

Table 2: Awareness of FUNAAB Zoo Park

	YES	NO	Mean	S.D	Remarks
Are you aware of the FUNAAB zoo park before?	116	122	2.71	.600	No
Are you aware of any publicity about FUNAAB Zoo Park before?	47	191	1.03	.960	NO
How did you hear about FUNAAB zoo park?					
Media/Advert/Internet	18				
My institution	27				
Friends	52				
No response	186		1.465	.398	Undecided

Source: Field Survey, 2015

From the above table, the findings revealed that majority of the respondents do not have prior knowledge of the Zoo Park. However, most of the respondents claimed that there are no adequate publicity about the Zoo Park. Majority were undecided on the source of information about the zoo park.

Level of Facilities in Funaab Zoo Park

Table 3: Facilities in Funaab zoo Park

	YES	NO	MEAN	S.D	REMARKS
Are there enough facilities in the zoological park?	41	197	1.15	.673	No
Are there enough activities to attract tourist to the zoological park?	53	185	1.36	1.488	No
Are the facilities present effective and efficient?	217	21	2.790	.390	Yes
Are the displays of animals fascinating enough?	180	58	1.910	.439	Yes
Is the zoo serene enough to attract tourist?	156	82	4.989	2.018	Yes
Are the activities of the animals the same as in there wildlife?	150	88	5.113	3.309	Yes

Will inadequate facilities limit the patronage of the zoological park?	159	79	1.553	.368	Yes
Other Facilities to be provided					
Refreshment kiosk	23				
Restroom	43				
Accommodation	9				
Relaxation center	86				
Restaurant	53				
Clinic	18				
No response	6		4.825	2.377	

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The above table revealed that there are not enough facilities in the zoological park and there are not enough activities to attract tourist to the zoological park. However, the facilities present are effective and efficient. The displays of animals are fascinating and the environment is serene enough to attract tourist to the zoo park. Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that inadequate facilities will limit the patronage of the zoological park. The respondents suggested inclusion of relaxation centre, restaurant and restroom as the major additional facilities required at the zoo park.

Rate of Patronage of FUNAAB Zoo Park

Table 3: Patronage Rate of FUNAAB Zoo Park

	Frequency	Mean	S.D	Remarks
Frequency of visit?				
Once				
Twice	116			
Thrice	69			
More than thrice	46			
	7	1.903	.493	Once
Period of visit?				
Week days	44			
weekends	71			
Holidays	102			
Official visit	21	1.814	.466	Holidays
Likely to re-visit				
Very Likely	179			
Likely	59			
Unlikely	29			
Not decided	21	1.465	.398	Undecided

Source: Field survey, 2015

Source: Field survey, 2015

From the above table, the analysis on the frequency of visit, 116 respondents are first timer visitors and 69 respondents have made the trip twice while 46 respondents have made the trip to the zoo park thrice. On the period of visit, the table show that majority of the respondents do make their trip to the zoo park during holidays and weekends. On the Likelihood to re-visit, majority of the respondents 179 are very likely to re-visit the zoo park.

Test of Hypotheses

H_{01} - There is no significance difference between the FUNAAB Zoo Park and the level of awareness of the zoo park.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	32.75	4	.67
Likelihood Ratio	22.92	4	.00
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.22	1	.01
N of Valid Cases	18		

Source: Field survey, 2015

The above table shows the Chi-square test of significant relationship between the FUNAAB Zoo Park and the level of awareness of the park. The result shows that the Chi square calculated value of 32.75 is more than the chi-square tabulated 0.67 value at 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is also accepted implying that there is no significant relationship between the FUNAAB Zoo Park and the level of awareness of the zoo park in Abeokuta.

H_{02} - There is no significant difference between the available facilities and the level of patronage of FUNAAB Zoo Park.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.00	6	.562
Likelihood Ratio	19.76	6	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.87	1	.003
N of Valid Cases	18		

Source: Field survey, 2015

The above table shows the Chi-square test of significant relationship between the available facilities and the level of patronage of FUNAAB Zoo Park. The result shows that the Chi square calculated value of 21.00 is mores than the chi-square tabulated 0.57 value at 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is also accepted implying that there is no

significant relationship between the available facilities and the level of patronage of FUNAAB Zoo Park in Abeokuta.

Discussion

The result of the first hypothesis calculated value of 32.75 revealed that there is no significant relationship between the FUNAAB Zoo Park and the level of awareness of the zoo park in Abeokuta. According to Ho and Ap, 2009, there are some successful zoos that have created a great deal of public interest and visits because of unusual exhibits, collections of animal species and efforts to recreate the natural setting found in the wild. Attractions are the most important element of tourist destinations as they provide the main reason or motivation for tourists to visit a destination. The findings show that the level of awareness of the zoo park is inadequate. There is therefore the need by the management to create enough awareness that will facilitate adequate publicity about the zoo park.

Furthermore, the second hypothesis calculated value of 21.00 revealed that there is no significant relationship between the available facilities and the level of patronage of FUNAAB Zoo Park in Abeokuta. The findings show that the available facilities do not affect the level of patronage of the zoo park. Connell (2005) emphasized the importance of zoo considering public interest in eco-tourism and wildlife experiences which are on increasing side and its ability to influence and encourage change in society. Smith-Jackson and Hall (2002) revealed that every year wilderness areas and recreation centers are visited by millions of visitors. The World Association of Zoo and Aquarium (WAZA, 2011, as cited in Lancaster, 2013) stated that zoos around the world host around 700 million visitors every year and its equivalent 10% of the global population. In order to improved the public interest towards the zoo park, there is the need to make adequate provisions for other essential facilities/services at the zoo park. These facilities as suggested may include relaxation center, restaurant, refreshment kiosk, restroom and others essential services.

Conclusion

The FUNAAB zoo park was established for the purpose of research and recreation. For most potential visitors as well as tourists to get to know the existence of the FUNAAB zoo park as a tourist attraction met for research and recreation, adequate awareness should be created about the zoo park. Furthermore, other essential facilities and services should be provided to compliment the already existing facilities for improved interest in the FUNAAB zoo park.

Recommendations

From the literature evidence, Zoos have become big business in recent years (Rees, 2011). There are some successful zoos that have created a great deal of public interest which serves as a source of motivation for visitors to visit zoos. It is therefore, recommended that:

1. The management of the FUNAAB zoo park should intensify more efforts to create aggressive awareness needed to adequately market the FUNAAB zoo park as a tourist attraction of choice in Abeokuta. This can be achieved through adequate publicity in both print and electronic media at the local, state and national levels and even at international level. This will no doubt propel both domestic and international visitors/tourists to visit the FUNAAB zoo park.
2. The management should make necessary provisions for additional facilities that will enrich the zoo park and also further encourage public interest towards the FUNAAB zoo park. Additional facilities such as relaxation center, restaurant, refreshment kiosk, restroom and others essential services should be provided for the visitors' use.

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