

Boosting Hospitality Business through Tourists Flow: an Evidence Based Assessment of the Tourism Environmental Aesthetics of Bauchi City, Nigeria

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The Hospitality and tourism industries have been identified as veritable options of economic diversification of the nation as these possess numerous gains economically, socially as well as environmentally. The hospitality and tourism industries are two interrelated and highly complementary industries. While the tourism industry sources for and bring in the tourists market, the availability of tourism support services offered by the hospitality industry has been described to be a major determinant in tourist's choice of tourism destinations. Nigeria is an international tourism destination blessed with abundant natural and built tourism potentials so also is Bauchi state naturally blessed with tourist sites and attractions, colourful festivals, recreational facilities, indigenous arts and crafts, cuisines as well as both luxury and budget hotels. One of the pull elements which influence tourist's choice of where to visit is the physical environment which plays a very important role in the success of any tourism destination. In Nigeria, much emphasis is often on the provision of infrastructure such as accessibility, power, water, transportation and communication systems, establishment of modern hotels, resorts and recreational centres and game reserves. However, there is an all important and salient aspect that is being overlooked, with less attention paid to it as regards tourism. This is the aspect of tourism environmental aesthetics or environmental beautification. It is assumed that perceived lack of performance of the tourism industry and by extension the hospitality industry may not be unconnected with the fact that both domestic and international tourists do not yet consider the Bauchi city's tourism physical environment, rather than the tourism attractions, enticing. The aim of this research was to examine the attractiveness or otherwise of Bauchi city, as crucial component that forms part of the ensemble tourism environment. The study area was Bauchi city which is the administrative capital of Bauchi State, situated in the North-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Photographic survey of the city's major streets was used to gather qualitative data from different sites across the city in order to ascertain the current situation of the tourism environmental aesthetic of the capital. Discoveries made were reported in an analytical and interpretative manner. It was discovered that the tourism environment of Nigerian cities leaves much to be desired in terms of aesthetics and scenic beauty. It was noted that most of the environmental aesthetic infractions captured in the photographs taken can actually be attributed to human factors. The images revealed that improper waste management culture, unappealing and unkempt landscape of public areas with houses along major streets which are not beautified to improve the aesthetic view of the city all contribute to defacing the city's physical environment. It was thus concluded that tourism in Bauchi city lacks aesthetic appeal to a visitor. This could partly be responsible for the low tourist patronage reportedly being experienced in Nigeria, with the negative domino effect on hospitality business. This research recommends that in order to improve the tourism competitiveness of Bauchi city, there is need for community awareness, attitudinal change and an inclusive communal participation in environmental beautification effort and that local authority take advantage of both the natural and built tourism edifices within the city to attract both domestic and international tourists.

Keywords:

*Tourism, Environment,
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Background to the Study

The World Tourism Organization defines tourism as the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (Tourism Society, 2017) while the word “hospitality” according to Rusu, Isac & Cureteanu (2014) and Lashley (2015) is a term connoting friendly and generous attitude and is used to describe a variety of sectors prominent among which are the accommodation, entertainment and other tourism support activities. The accommodation sector comes in the forms of hotels, guesthouses, inns, motels and campgrounds while entertainment sector include clubs, restaurants and fast food restaurants. The commercial tourism support activities include activities such as travel agencies and airline staff.

Hospitality according to Rusu, Isac & Cureteanu (2014) is a relationship that is established between hosts and guests. Hospitality and tourism are two interrelated and highly complementary fields (Rusu, Isac & Cureteanu, 2014). According to Roh (2017) and Tisca, Dumitrescu, Cornu & Istrat (2015), while the tourism industry source for and bring in the tourists market, the availability of tourism support services offered by the hospitality industry has been described to be a major determinant in tourist's choice of tourism destinations. Quality products and friendly service as noted by Tisca, Dumitrescu, Cornu & Istrat (2015) are the tourist's needs which when fulfilled motivates the tourist into spending more, to make a return visit and also has the capability of increasing tourist flow. Thus, while complementing the tourism industry, the hospitality industry directly and indirectly contributes immensely towards the socio-economic development of the Nation; directly through income generation, creation of entrepreneurial opportunities and jobs, while indirectly through the provision of support services to the tourism and other affiliated industries which keeps them viable.

Babalola and Oluwatoyin (2014), Crowford (2013) as well as Adeola and Ezenwafor (2016) assert that hospitality and tourism accounts for trillions of dollars in income generation globally while in Nigeria, about 75% of tourists spending are on hospitality related products and services. Considering the enormous demand for and the economic, environmental and socio-cultural benefits of tourism, many, especially developing countries consider tourism (and by extension, hospitality), as a cheaper, viable and preferred alternative for national economic diversification (Awodele & Ayeni, 2011). This has not only led to competitive development of, but also the aggressive marketing of tourism destinations by making the best use of technological breakthroughs (Dinnie, 2016; Nicoletta & Servidio, 2012). This provides the tourist a wide and varied range of destination options to choose from, which in turn places a demand on tourism destination developers and marketers to outstandingly develop and market own destinations.

The Hospitality and tourism industries have been identified as veritable options of economic diversification of the nation. In recent times, the Federal Government of Nigeria has been advocating for a diversification of the Nigerian economy away from petroleum and other non-oil sectors are being explored (Eko, Utting & Onun, (2013). Chief among these alternative sources of national revenue include agriculture, solid minerals, manufacturing, Tax and VAT and tourism. Tourism is listed among the veritable options in view of the fact that Nigeria is considered to be a land blessed with abundant natural and man-made tourist destinations,

presenting numerous economic, socio-cultural and environmental advantages (Abomeh, 2012) and capable of pulling both investors and tourists (Ndajiya, Muhammad & Muhammad, 2014).

Nigeria is an international tourism destination, blessed with abundant natural and built tourism potentials which are being developed to be harnessed as noted by Christopher (2011) and Suleiman (2006). Tourism potentials in Nigeria include heritage and cultural tourism; museums and preserved monuments, slave trade relics; wildlife resources, natural and physical attractions with temperate climate such as the Mambila Plateau, Obudu Cattle Ranch, waterfalls, springs, caves, beach tourism as well as art and craft centres (<http://www.onlinenigeria.com/travel/>). Bauchi state, popularly referred to as “pearl of tourism” is also naturally blessed with tourist sites and attractions, colourful festivals, recreational facilities, indigenous arts and crafts, cuisines as well as both luxury and budget hotels (NigeriaGalleria, 2017).

A tourist destination as defined by Edwards (2013) is basically a place of interesting features which attracts large numbers of travellers or tourists. A tourist destination explained by Daniel *et al.* (2012) contains tourist attractions, accommodation and other tourist facilities while an attraction is defined by Harris and Howard (2001) as a physical or cultural feature of a particular place that individual travellers or tourists perceive as capable of meeting one or more of their specific leisure-related needs. Such features may be ambient in nature, for example climate, culture, vegetation or scenery, or they may be specific to a location such as a theatre performance, a museum or a waterfall. What influences a tourist's choice of which destination to go is known as tourism determinant and this is entrenched in two concepts known as the 'push' and 'pull' factors.

The push factor refers to the motivation of the individual tourist's level of desire to undertake tourism activities. Some motivations for travel as described by Brady (2013) include business, educational, medical as well as visiting friends and relatives. Other motivation could be just pleasure travel, fun seeking or an avenue to “escape” even if it is temporarily, the routine constraints and stresses of everyday life. The pull factor on the other hand is the attractiveness (or 'magnetism' attributes) of a destination that draws the tourist to itself (Mohammed and Som, 2010). While the business, educational or visitation motivated tourist has little or no choice over the travel destination, the 'escapist' or fun seeker makes meticulous selection of the destination which is perceived to be capable of satisfying their desires. Fischer and Eastwood (2016) and Holloway, Humphreys & Davidson (2009) hold that the enticement quality of a tourism destination serves as a pull element which influences tourist's choice of where to visit. One of such enticement qualities according to Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert, and Wanhill (2008) is its physical environment which plays a very important role in the success of any tourism destination.

Nigeria is unarguably endowed with great tourism potentials as agreed to by Christopher (2011) however, it is noted, and concurred to by Esu (2016); Oghojafor & Ogunkoya (2016) that concerning tourism development in Nigeria, much emphases are often on the provision of infrastructure such as accessibility, power, water, transportation and communication systems, establishment of modern hotels resort and recreational centres and game reserves. Bhatia

(2002) holds forth that these may not be over emphasised since the success of a tourism development programme largely depends on the provision these life support infrastructural facilities, utilities and services necessary for the operation of a tourism destination. Conversely, there is an all important and salient aspect that is being overlooked, with less attention paid to it as regards tourism. This is the aspect of tourism environmental aesthetics or environmental beautification, the qualities and resources of which Oghojafor & Ogunkoya (2016) agrees are underexploited in Nigeria.

The quality of the environment, both natural and manmade is remarked by Housman (2012), Rajesh (2013) and Brady (2013) to be the most fundamental ingredient of the tourism product and visual beauty according to Rajesh (2013) is often where aesthetic valuing begins. Aesthetics according to the online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2017) is connected with beauty and aesthetic perception is usually described in visual terms as made known by Berleant (2013). Destinations are expected to provide both a welcome and a rich experience for the tourist. The most successful tourism physical environment is captured by Fischer and Eastwood (2016) as those whose aesthetics could successfully appeal to visitors. As pointed out by Brady (2013), tourists may shun a destination as being “environmentally unacceptable to visit”.

Tourism environment is beyond just where an attraction is sited. Any location where a tourist is at any point in time in the course of his or her tourism expeditions-be it the airport and its environ, the hotel and its environ, the streets where the tourist plies, the market and any other place of interest where the tourist visits and their environs, these all form the tourist's tourism environment (Danaci, 2012). This is so because wherever the tourist is at any moment, he or she sees and feels the things that goes on in and around those places, internalizes things and makes up an opinion based on his or her perception of what is happening around him or her. The totality of what the tourist goes through, sees and savours constitute the tourism experience.

The aim of this research was to examine the attractiveness or otherwise of Bauchi city, as crucial component that forms part of the ensemble tourism environment. It is assumed that perceived lack of performance of the tourism industry and by extension the hospitality industry may not be unconnected with the fact that both domestic and international tourists do not yet consider the Bauchi city's tourism physical environment, rather than the tourism attractions, enticing. It is expected that the outcome of this study will serve as guide to Bauchi state tourism planners and developers in this direction.

Methodology

The study area was Bauchi city which is the administrative capital of Bauchi State, situated in the North-East geopolitical region of Nigeria. Bauchi is located at 10.3103 (latitude in decimal degrees) and 9.84388 (longitude in decimal degrees) (Bauchi State Government, 2014). Bauchi State was selected because as at the time of this study, the state was considered the most secured of all the six states which make up the North-East region, as it is not being constantly attacked by the “boko haram” insurgency, which had forced all tourism activities in the North-East to be diverted there as noted by Bauchi State Government (2014).

Photographic survey of the city's major streets was used to gather qualitative data from different sites across the city. This is because according to Berleant (2013), aesthetic perception is usually described in visual terms. This research design was adopted in order to have firsthand information about the scenic and 'environmental beauty' of the city's major streets. Observable aesthetic areas of concern which were particularly considered included sceneries such as the horticultural beautification of the city's major streets, buildings and walls as well as streets' aesthetic views. Photos taken were labelled as "Plates" and each assigned a numeric identification. Discoveries made are reported in an analytical and interpretative manner.

Results and Discussion

A tour around the major streets of the city reveals that improper waste management culture as well as defective sanitary system allows for the gradual accumulation of municipal waste on the streets. This is evident from Plates 001 to 008. Picture on Plate 001 shows evident of a heritage tourist site (the Wunti Gate) where garbage is dumped indiscriminately. Plate 002 shows of trash piled and left in front of a petrol filling station, a place where tourist vehicles may refuel. Plates 003, 004 and 005 are pictures of residents emptying their trash onto parts of the road turned garbage areas at different major streets of the city. Picture in Plate 003 showing unsanitary public environment was taken in front of a shopping centre, a place where tourists could be taken for shopping. The drainage there is also filled with litter. Picture in Plate 004 is of a garbage area on an undeveloped piece of land along a major street while picture in Plate 005 is shows part of a major street turned garbage area and set on fire, creating environmental pollution. The picture in Plate 006 shows of trash piled along a major street. The picture in Plate 007 shows of trash piled along a major street, which is very close to a roundabout. Picture in Plate 008 shows of a clean street with well trimmed flower bed but with rubbish piled along the street.

Tourism should ideally be an opportunity to showcase the nation's rich cultural, vegetative, innovative as well as historic endowments. As observed by Burkat and Medlik (1990), tourism which takes many forms, may involve travel ranging from a few miles to several thousand miles and include one or more forms of transportation. Typical tourist activities normally include among others, movement from one place to the other which may be from the airport to hotel or resort, a tour around the city, visit to attraction sites, to the local markets, curio or souvenir shop and so on. As the tourist makes these trips, naturally wants to savour all of what is going on around his or her environment. For this reason, as the trips are made, the tourist will naturally see common sights such as buildings, both residential and commercial, factories, streets, people, people's activities; appreciate things like indigenous and ingenious architectural designs, the uniqueness of landscapes, cleanliness or otherwise of the streets, the types and level of sophistication of residents' lifestyle, dressing, the types of cars they ride and so on.

Photographic images gotten during the course of this study however gives a negative sanitary and hygiene picture and reflection of the residents' poor waste management practices and character. This is evidenced in Plates 001 and 002. Poor waste management not only result in unsightly scenes, but also become sources of environmental health hazards and pollution, blocked roads and drainages resulting in flooding, municipal roads deterioration, prevention

of attractive landscape as well as the erosion of touristic values of the environment, which have been described by Sulaiman (2006) as being anti-tourism. This fact is buttressed by Abraham, Sommerhalder & Abel (2010) who noted that the re-emergence of diseases such as cholera and malaria in Nigeria can hinder inflow of tourists. Christopher (2011) reports that overwhelming heaps of municipal wastes are visible sights on the Nigerian streets and market places, the environmental perturbation arising from which Nnaji (2015) describes as being perennial problems. Over 3.2 million tonnes, equivalent to about 27kg per capita of garbage are generated per annum in Nigeria. Of this quantity, only about 30-50% of urban waste is collected (Ministry of Environment, 2017). The remainder of these is cumulatively accumulated indiscriminately in the open. Evidence of this can be seen in Plates 001 to 008.

Physical factors and natural landscape have played significant roles and have been emphasised in environment contrast (Bankole and Odularu, 2006). Pictures shown in Plates 009 to 019 depict of unappealing landscaped sights within the Bauchi city. Plates 009 and 010 show of an unsanitary road divider of a major street, with untrimmed flowers. Plate 011 shows the picture of untidy front area of a Bureau de change, a place where tourists could change their money into local currency. A roundabout is expected to be beautified to serve as tourist attraction but in Plate 012, an unkempt roundabout landscape can be seen while in Plate 013 is an untidy roundabout, littered with ragged posters. In Plate 014 is a roundabout with heritage sculptural design but the landscape is unkempt and Plates 015 and 016 have the pictures of an unkempt landscape of a public area along a major street with untrimmed flower walls. Plate 017 has picture of grass in a public area along a major street not maintained green while the picture in Plate 018 is of a beautiful architectural wall design but with untrimmed flower beds and the picture in Plate 019 shows houses along a major street not beautified to improve the aesthetic view of the city.

One of the factors which may influence the tourist's selection of a destination is the environmental friendliness of the destination. (Miller, Merrilees & Coghlan, 2015) Environmental friendliness necessarily encompasses the scenic and 'environmental beauty' of the destination however, inscriptions on walls as well as ragged printed materials pasted on walls (Plate 014), old peeling wall paints (Plates 013, 019), untrimmed flowers and street plants (Plates 015 to 018), wreckages of old cars littering the roadside, as well as pot-holed street roads all do not add up to a beautiful scenic tourism environment.

A way of showcasing the rich cultural and ancient or indigenous and even modern architectural and decorative ingenuity of a people is by taking tourists round town on a ride. This unvoiced information is however concealed from tourists by the high, sometimes unappealing and uninteresting walls erected to protect inhabitants of private homes from intruders as can be seen from Plates 008, 018 and 020. This is capable of giving the tourists the psychological impression of 'not welcomed' rather than the psychological welcome prescribed by Cooper et al, (2008). It is noted that most of the environmental aesthetic infractions captured in the photographic images taken during the course of this study can actually be attributed to human factors. This conforms with the assertion by Christopher (2011) as well as Ayeni (2012), that poor public attitude to environmental health is the major challenge to environmental aesthetics in most Nigerian cities. Residents' culture of

environmental cleanliness and neatness will not only prevent filth accumulation, but will also bring to bear on every other aspect of residents behaviour and reflect in the way certain things are carried out or executed such as residential home building design and construction and even how public utilities and facilities are handled with cautiousness and discretion.

A similar study conducted by Ayeni (2012) on landscaping for sustainable tourism within the North central and Southwest regions of Nigeria indicate that aesthetic does not describe many of the Nigerian cities, and that they are not tourism friendly. The cities do not depict a psychological welcome as repulsive sites are a common place. Another outcome of Ayeni's research was the implication that if landscaping is not made to be at the centre of tourism policy, tourism is likely to fall short of expectation in Nigeria.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that tourism physical environment in Bauchi city lacks aesthetic appeal to a visitor. This could partly be responsible for the low tourist patronage being experienced in Nigeria and Bauchi state in particular as reported by Omon (2014); Oghojafor & Ogunkoya (2016). This naturally has a negative domino effect on hospitality business as hospitality and tourism create complementary entrepreneurial opportunities for each other. As noted by Rusu, Isac & Cureteanu (2014). The tourism industry needs the welcome and care of the hospitality industry while the hospitality industry needs the tourism industry to attract its patrons, the guests. It is however evident that the tourism industry is "shaking" in its own part of the collective responsibility for the overall development of the nation.

Another conclusion of note is that the physical environment of Bauchi city is a tourism resource yet to be developed. Built tourism edifices such as the various roundabouts within the city have not been developed into income generating tourists' sites and heritage sites such as the Wunti gate are ill maintained. Bauchi city is blessed with grassland which are not landscaped to form roadside gardens which if developed could have been a source of attraction even to local tourists.

Based on the evidences of the pictures taken from different locations of the city showing improper waste disposal practices and indiscriminate dumping of refuse on major streets of the city, this study concludes that residents within the city are yet to be conscripted into the collective responsibility of building and maintaining a beautiful tourism city. The implications of the current environmental aesthetic situation of Bauchi city if not addressed and reversed include inability of the government to effectively diversify the nation's economy through tourism by which the nation is naturally endowed with. It also implies that the hospitality industry will continue to lose out on the possible revenue and other opportunities derivable from a booming tourism in Bauchi state.

Recommendations

This research believes that a resulting improvement in the tourism environmental aesthetic holds innumerable potentials for improved tourists flow into the city, guarantee a healthy society, assure of job creation, contribute to poverty eradication, impact on economic growth of the nation but more importantly, boost economic activities for hospitality business within

the state. This research advocates that in order to improve the tourism competitiveness of Bauchi city, there must be an inclusive environmental conservation and beautification effort which combining local authority and residents. Residents must be encouraged to consciously engage in proper waste disposal practices. There is need to work on changing residents' environmental and tourism psych. There may be need for authorities of cities and towns to sensitise residents about the tourism importance an aesthetic environment as well as compel residents to show more concern and respect for the environment.

There is need to take advantage of both the natural and built tourism edifices within the city. Edifices such as the various roundabouts and grasslands within the city may be beautified, landscaped and be transformed into tourists attractions. These have the capability of becoming job creating and income generating avenues as both domestic and international tourists can now find these locations useful for occasional photo shoots at reasonable fees.

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Plate 001: Garbage dumped at one of the heritage tourism sites of the city – The Wunti Gate



Plate 002; Trash piled and left in front of a filling station. Tourist vehicles may refuel here



Plate 003; A resident dumping refuse on one of the major streets and the drainage also filled with litter. This is also in front of a shopping centre, a place where tourists could be taken for shopping



Plate 004; A woman just finished emptying trash from her wheelbarrow to a garbage area on an undeveloped piece of land along a major street



Plate 005; Part of a major street turned garbage area and set on fire, creating environmental pollution



Plate 006; trashed piled along a major street



Plate 007; trash piled along a major street, very close to a round-a-bout. A roundabout is expected to be beautified to serve as tourist attraction



Plate 008; A clean street with well trimmed flower bed but with rubbish piled along the street



Plate 009; dirty road divider of a major street, the flowers are untrimmed



Plate 010; Untidy road divider of a major street



Plate 011; Untidy front area of a Bureau de change, a place where tourists could change their money into local currency



Plate 012; Unkempt roundabout. A round-a-bout is expected to be beautified to serve as tourist attraction



Plate 013; Untidy roundabout, littered with ragged posters. Roundabout is expected to be beautified to serve as a tourist attraction



Plate 014; A roundabout with heritage sculptural design but unkempt



Plate 015; Unkempt public area of a major street with untrimmed flower walls



Plate 016; Unkempt public area of a major street untrimmed flower walls



Plate 017; Grass in a public area of a major street not maintained green



Plate 018; Beautiful architectural wall design but with untrimmed flower beds



Plate 019; Houses along a major street not beautified to improve the aesthetic view of the city



Plate 020; Clean street, beautiful walls, but the architectural designs of the buildings behind the walls cannot be appreciated because they are hidden by the walls