

Landscape Features and Tourism Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Tourism in Nigeria is still down the ladder in policy formulation for economic growth and development. Tourism sector needs advocates and researchers that would work towards repositioning tourism on the Zenith level of budgetary allocation to enable the sector contribute maximally to the economic development of Nigeria. Based on this, this paper examined landscapes and tourism development in Nigeria. Therefore, the objectives considered are: Some specific landscape features for tourism development across Nigeria, development strategies and relevance for promoting tourism and the sustainability of landscape features that are tourism based. However, suggestions were made on the need for library and research centers for tourism development, encouraging both private and corporate organizations to invest in tourism industry, the need for Federal, State and Local Governments to give tourism priority position in their economic pursuits among others.

Key words: Springs, Beaches, Relief, Waterfalls and Economy.

Introduction

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.

These landform features have potential attractions for tourism. The perspective of interpretation is to provide such landscapes with images and symbolic meanings to make them more visible and attractive to tourists while constituting a framework for preservation. A more holistic rather than reductionist view of tourism is also desirable both in context of developing the full potential of the industry and in meeting the diverse needs and ideas of contemporary tourists (Chokor, 1993).

Today, tourism has become one of the most viable industries all over the world. In Nigeria, the recent increase in the tourism industry is the outcome of several factors. This includes: increased leisure, higher standard of living, annual holidays, education, improved transport and communication systems and the need to improve on one's health. Government has equally realized that developing the tourism industry has greatly improved social economic development of the people, create job opportunities and help to open more lands. Beyond this are other advantages which are rather subjective than complimentary, such as enhancing understanding among people, promote international relations and community development. It is on this note that the improvement of the tourist industry has been recommended in Nigeria. This paper therefore discusses the relevance of landforms as a fundamental basis for the identification and development of tourist attractions.

Archibong (2004) delineated tourist sites in Nigeria to include festivals and cultural celebrations such as Durber Festivals, National Parks as in Old Oyo as well as other geographical sites such as Aso Rock. Some state Governors in Nigeria adopts tourism as a means of tapping the benefits of globalization especially in the area of attracting foreign investors to boost economic investments in their domain (Akpan, 2011).

Some Specific Landforms for Tourism Development in Nigeria

The application of geomorphic information in tourism development can undoubtedly help to identify areas that are good sites for tourism development. According to Odemerho, (2005) development planners are yet to take full advantage of geomorphic impact in the design and implementation of both small and large scale development projects in Nigeria. However, most of the landforms in Nigeria have been harnessed for tourism development while many others are lying fallow. Most of the tourist centers in Nigeria that are landforms related are examined in the subsequent paragraphs.

Oguta Lake Holiday complex located in Oguta Local Government Area of Imo State. This Lake is about 40 kilometers from Owerri. This Lake is the second largest lake in Nigeria after lake Chad. It has fresh water and a natural confluence of Oguta and Urashi River. In this resort center, facilities such as golf, boat cruising, hotel for refreshment, lodging and feeding about.

Confluence of River Niger and Benue in Lokoja. River Niger was never really understood by any one until John and Richard Landers passed through the confluence on 25th October, 1830. They completed the journey of Mungo Park. The Sildion Hill near the Nkpology campus of the Enugu state University of Science and Technology. The area is surrounded by hills, valleys, plains that are very good for breath taking views and

relaxation. We also have the Zuma rock located along the Abuja Kaduna highway, Niger state. The Gwari people used this defensive rock against external attackers during tribal wars. The rock offers good environment for picnic relaxation and fresh air. The Olumo rock is also a massive granite rock of primitive formation from which the name Abeokuta (meaning under the rock) came from. Olumo rock is located between Ikija, Ikeredu and Alatisé neighbourhood. The highest point is about 137 meters (Ogunlade, 1997).

Gurara waterfalls in Niger state is also one of the major tourist centers in Nigeria. The Ikogosi warm and cold spring located in Ekiti state and the Wikki spring located in Yankari National Park. These are the only spring water that come out hot in Nigeria. The condition necessary for spring water according to Chup, (2007) are: when a fault occurs across a sedimentary rock layer, when a dyke impounds water and forces the water to escape and when stream water that has gone underground upstream eventually resurfaces. What makes the water hot is usually because of volcanic gases embedded in the rocks. Exposed aquifer on the surface can as well lead to spring water.

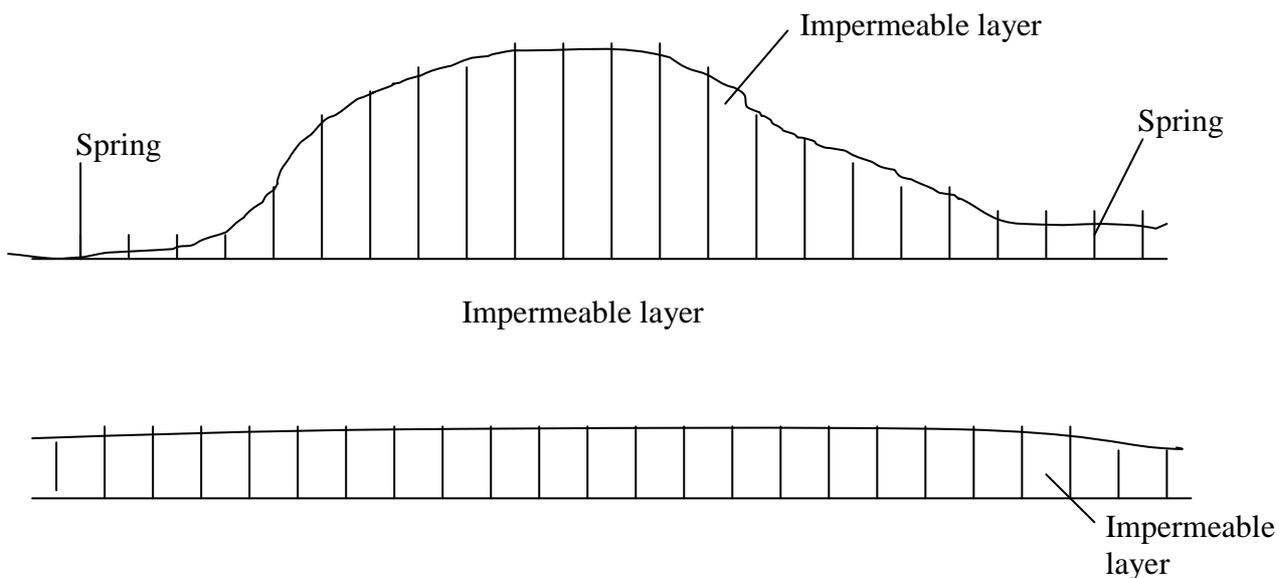


Fig.1: Explanation of a Spring

We also have the Owu water falls in Owa Kajola, in Ifelodun local government area of Kwara state. The water is very cold and the surrounding is covered with evergreen vegetation. The Maiyegun Beach in Eti Osa local government area of Lagos State and the Badagry Beach also in Lagos state. We also have the Port-Harcourt beach located in an artificial sand beach along Kolabi creek is one of the water front tourist resorts in Port Harcourt.

Idanre Hills situated in Idanre town about 20 kilometers from Akure is in Idanre Local Government Area of Ondo State. Idanre Hills look like an ancient castle. The top of one of the hills is 600 steps which must be climbed before a tourist can appreciate the beauty of the area. Idanre Hills or Oke Idanre and the surrounding areas provided shelter for the entire Idanre people for between 800 and 1000 years. Except for minor internal wars, Idanre people enjoyed a relative peace during their long years of Sojourn on the Hills. Then in 1928 because of the will to enjoy the benefits of modernization, they decided to move once again to a new settlement down the Hills. (Akinde, 2010). Other notable hills in Nigeria are the Mandara Mountains, Udi hill, Biu mountain, Mambilla plateau Kabba highlands, Kukuruku Hills and Obudu Ranch. Obudu Ranch is a popular holiday destination for adventurous tourists wishing to explore the remote corners of Nigeria. Situated in the North East of Cross River State only 45 miles from the Cameroon border, a tourist can enjoy the country side of both Nigeria and Cameroon at the same time. The landscape is spectacular with rolling grasslands, deep wooded valleys and water falls. Other areas of tourist interest in Nigeria are – Ibeno beach in Akwa Ibom, Eleko Beach, Tarkwa beach and Coconut beach in Badagry, Lagos.

Development Strategies and Relevance of promoting Tourism

An exploration of the importance of landforms to tourism must commence with an understanding of the features that attract tourists which are landscape based. An overview of the characteristics of the environments or Milieu of the origin and destinations of tourists suggests that one underlying concept that can be used to explain the tourist search for a place to visit is environmental contrast (Ozo, 1993). Generally, tourists seek environments that offer them pleasure and mental stimulation. In practice, the environments that provide these experiences are

usually those that are to the tourists, exotic, unique and ideal (Ozo, 1993). However, geomorphic features have played significant roles in terms of environmental contrast between and among Nations of the World. Most tourists today seek for places that are exotic, warm climatic regions, some fascinating physical sceneries, such as hills, valleys, mountains, rivers, waterfalls, lakes, beaches, springs, forest, zoo, parks and reserves. These are some of the best and most attractive tourist attractions in the world. In most cases, the physical landscapes are in contrast to what is obtainable in the tourist places of origin.

However, physical and legislative measures have been used in many countries of the World to preserve natural features. In Nigeria, the planning Authorities and the laws are there but the problem is implementation. Most of the landforms in Nigeria especially the highlands and water bodies are harnessed by local communities for other socio-economic uses. The government that is supposed to be the sole custodian of these resources is less concerned about developing these potentials to the fullest. In 1976, government set up Decree 54 which established the Nigerian Tourism Board and it was charged with the responsibility of promoting tourism and providing tourism facilities for both local and international tourists.

Restoration is also very necessary as a means of redressing past neglect and mistakes. This is one of the 4^{Rs} of resource utilization in sustainable development, which is the use of a particular resource to meet the present needs without jeopardizing the needs for future generation. For landscape features to contribute greatly to tourism development, restoration would need to go beyond the physical features per se but provision of infrastructures for tourists use. With restoration, continuous use of landscape features for tourism development would be guaranteed from generation to generation. Restoration provides means through which most of our resources used for tourism are protected against extinction. If the continuous use of a particular highland must be guaranteed, the means of protecting such a resource must be adhered to.

The identification and documentation of tourist attractions fall within the purview of the Board which also has some limited powers over the registration and standardization of hotel services and tariff. Under its capital development programme, the Board has ambition for physical development plans for tourist spots such as Ikogosi warm springs, Oguta lake resort, Erin Ijesha falls, International Youth Tourism Centre at Kurra falls, Mambilla Tourist project, confluence zone of Rivers Niger and Benue, Owu falls in Kwara State and a host of others (Aloba, 1987).

As an export activity, tourism has one great advantage over other forms of exports. It is not faced with tariff or quota barriers. However, most countries now attempt to limit the travel propensity of their citizens and their exports of currency to go with. This is very unusual feature which obviously makes tourism, relative to other exports, an attractive option for many developing countries.

Today, tourism is an employment intensive activity. Many governments support tourism in order to create jobs for the masses. However, this now is not holding in every country because tourism is essentially a service oriented and it tends to create more jobs per unit of investment than other more capital intensive activities. Also, at the initial entry level into the industry skills and training requirements are limited and therefore the employment costs of creating jobs can be relatively low. Richards and Hall (2003) stressed that tourism industry has become a significant provider of employment in countries of Asia and Pacific regions, thereby improving the economic situation of the people. This is very much unlike Nigeria where we have failed to properly develop the tourism sector.

Sustainability of Tourism based landscapes

There are plethora of definitions of sustainable development in the literature of development and environment, which take their bearing from the United Nations World Commission on Sustainable Development as development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development has three major components viz the management of both human and natural resources so that as human population increases, most of the landscape features that are tourism based are harnessed for development (Omofonmwan, 1998).

The need for resource evaluation and appropriate environmental assessment procedures as well as the preparation of environmental gains and losses. In order to enable tourism and facilities developers to reach the right decisions there is need to focus on communities and places that have potentials for tourism development. This is important because today in Nigeria, no proper land use zoning system for all the towns and cities. Most of the landscape features that have potentials for tourism development are mainly located in the villages and undeveloped zones.

For landscape based tourism potentials to thrive and meet the test of time, environmental degradation especially in forest and landforms through human activities could be tackled using better natural resource pricing strategies and disincentives. Nonetheless, developing programmes on environmental education, limiting population growth and meeting basic needs are also desirable in such cases. Combined with environmental impact assessments, tourism could be promoted and sustained and the landforms conserved for future generations.

Summary and Suggestions

The complexity of interrelationship between landscapes and tourism reflects various ecological, social, cultural and economic issues. Tourism is a social activity which involves travel by individual or group to stay outside their usual environment within a period not too long, for the purpose of satisfying leisure business or other needs. Tourism has become a popular global activity. Tourism can be developed to boost the image of a country and project the people's cultural heritage nationally and internally.

Tourism Board should embark on the enlightenment programme with emphasis on tourism potentials. This will create awareness and remove ignorance on the part of the public. This can be done in form of TV and radio shows, seminars, symposium, newspaper and exhibition. The creation of congenial and enabling environment to facilitate private, domestic and foreign capital investment required in the industry.

The current condition of the funding schemes for the sector needs to be amended as they are too complicated for the investors. The amendment will stimulate investment, efficiency and effectiveness in the development of tourism. The Federal, State and Local Governments are to give tourism priority position in their economic pursuits. This can be done through allocation of resources and time. This will help to raise development at all level of the economy. The private individuals and corporate bodies are encouraged to invest their resources in the lucrative and profitable venture. Also rural dwellers are called to take the advantages of their revealed way of developmental focus by participating in tourism activities. This will help to improve the living standard, welfare and revenue of governments, corporate bodies and the inhabitants. And the building of library and research centers will undoubtedly enhance the growth of tourism in Nigeria. This will help to keep records straight as far as data are concerned.

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