



ANALYSIS OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES PROVISION IN THE GURARA WATERFALLS

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Abstract

The ambience of the Gurara Waterfalls presents potentials for different kinds of recreations including swimming, canoeing, mountain climbing, boating and aerial recreations such as the cable car to view its landscape and scenery. This study was prompted by the fact that the Gurara Waterfalls ought not to exist in isolation, but built to serve humanity by providing enabling recreational facilities, which are presently unavailable at the destination. The purpose of the study was to assess the effect of recreational facilities provision on patronage and development of the Gurara Community. The instrument used for the study was validated questionnaires, which were administered on the staffers of the Niger State Ministry of Land and Housing as well as visitors at the Gurara Waterfalls. Using the SPSS and EXCEL packages, data were coded and presented in statistical tables, while the frequency count and percentage were used to describe the variables in the study. The alternative hypothesis, which states that there is significant relationship between the provision of recreational facilities and the rate of patronage at the Gurara Waterfalls, was accepted. The implication of this finding is that the provision of recreational facilities at the Gurara Waterfalls will impact positively on the rate of patronage, thereby facilitating high tourists' arrivals at the destination. The study also observes that not only will recreational facilities enhance tourists' choice of the Gurara Waterfalls; it will also improve the destination image. The study recommends that the Niger State Government should provide and maintain adequate and standard recreational facilities at the Gurara Waterfalls for the benefit of both domestic and foreign visitors.

Key words: *Recreational facilities, Gurara Community, Waterfalls, Sustainable tourism, Tourism development.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourists are, usually attracted to nature in their pursuit for adventure, recreation and pleasure. No doubt, waterfalls represent one of these amazing centres that attract visitors that want to connect with nature. According to The National Geographic Society (2019), waterfalls are a river or body of water's steep fall over a rocky ledge into a plunge pool below. BASICS (2019) assert that water, particularly from a stream or river, falling from mountains or hills to a lower place, is known as a waterfall or cascade. From their coolness to sound to aroma, they make perfect sites where one can spend hours to feel the real beauty of the natural world. As Maguire (2016) explains, waterfalls are one of nature's magical creations. Ajayi (2012) discovered that recreational facilities construction will increase tourists' influx and contribute to the economic and social welfare benefits of residents. One of the ways to achieve tourists' traffic to a destination is by providing what visitors want in terms of infrastructure and services that enhance memorable leisure trips. Gomezelj and Mihalic (2008) discovered that tourist preference is usually evaluated by the number of visitors, satisfaction degree, and awareness of visitors toward a destination. The essence of providing recreational facilities at falls is to add value and satisfy visitors. Tourist satisfaction is a business philosophy that seeks to create value for tourists, provides and manages their expectations and demonstrates the ability to meet their needs (Curakovic, Sikora, Garaca, Curcis and Vukosav, 2013). The results of this study, therefore, will provide government with requisite leverage for transforming the undeveloped Gurara Waterfalls in order to attract tourists, investments, generate revenue for government and develop the Gurara communities.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Famous waterfalls do not exist in isolation. They sell mostly because there are other services they provide to meet the holiday or pleasure needs and preferences of visitors. Some of these needs include but not limited to provision of recreational facilities. The Gurara Waterfalls is one of the amazing natural endowments in Gurara Local Government Area of Niger State. Though undeveloped, the Gurara Waterfalls holds the potentials to match the standard of the Niagra and Victoria Falls owing to its capacity for swimming, canoeing, boating and aerial recreations such as the cable car to enjoy beautiful landscape and scenery. However, observation at the Gurara Waterfalls confirms the absence of recreational facilities for the enjoyment of day trippers and visitors (see plates 1, 2 and 3). Corroborating, Godabe (2019) reports there are no organized recreational facilities and activity present at the Gurara Waterfalls

that span about 200 metres high and a depth of about 50 metres. This development could have occasioned the little patronage and meagre revenue generated from the falls because according to Beardsley (2020), tourism can be economically important where potential or existing recreation attractions can encourage tourists' spending in amounts large enough to offset lower per-dollar impact. Contributing, Ononogbo and Habeeb (2020) report that because of the infrastructural inadequacies of the Gurara Waterfalls, there are but only little number of visits by lovers of nature, mainly on excursions. It is in the light of these gaps that this study seeks to assess the influence of recreational facilities provision on the Gurara Waterfalls.

Research questions

1. To what extent does a recreational facility provision impact on the rate of visitors' patronage at the Gurara Waterfalls?
2. How does the lack of recreational facilities impact on the development of Gurara community?

Research objectives

1. To determine the impact of recreational facilities provision on the rate of visitors' patronage at the Gurara Waterfalls.
2. To ascertain the effect of the deficiency of recreational facilities in the Gurara Waterfalls on the development of Gurara Community.

Research hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the provision of recreational facilities and the rate of patronage at the Gurara Waterfalls.
2. The absence of recreational facilities in the Gurara Waterfalls does not have any significant impact on the development of Gurara Community.

Review of related literature

Waterfalls and sustainable tourism development

Staying close to nature is increasingly becoming a culture among tourists with passionate inclination to natural attractions. Waterfalls offer one of those amazing opportunities to relax and enjoy the pleasures of nature. Ononogbo and Habeeb (2020) confirm that today, many tourists travel to destinations just to experience beautiful landscapes including spectacular waterfalls. The Gurara Waterfalls is one of the several waterfalls adorning the Nigerian landscape and in need of sustainable development. The Gurara Waterfalls presently could be classified as an attraction and not a destination because according to Mutuku

(2013) tourist destinations are places that have constructed an amalgam of tourist products and services whose consumption is under the brand name of the destination. The foregoing assertion is in tandem with Benur and Bramwell's (2015) report which states that tourism destinations rely on their primary tourism products as mechanisms to pull and motivate tourists to visit them. Therefore, a destination that is deficient in tourism products will hardly be visited by tourists. The provision of recreational facilities at the Gurara Waterfalls will enhance the prospects of organized recreation which in itself is one of the main products of tourism. Like Saarinen (2003) discovered, tourism remains an important policy tool dedicated to the change, development and reconstruction of the social and physical environment.

According to Atta (2018) sustainable tourism development requires participation of all stakeholders and a strong political leadership. Achieving sustainable development is a continuous process, which requires proper and effective monitoring of impacts and necessary preventive measures needed to be introduced. Quian, Shen and Law (2018) while reflecting on the World Tourism Organization's explanation of sustainable tourism, describes sustainable tourism as tourism development that can meet the demand of both tourists and host communities whilst preserving and improving the opportunity for future development.

Imperative of recreational facilities provision at waterfalls

The Imbeccable Images (2018) asserts as follows: Waterfalls around the world attract tourists. Angel Falls brings in about 900,000 people a year, and it is very difficult to access. Yosemite National Park in California, which is the home of several famous waterfalls, brings in close to four million people a year. We are drawn to waterfalls for health benefits- the sound of the waterfalls is soothing to us. The most interesting benefit of waterfalls is the balance of ions. Our bodies tend to carry more positively charged ions called cations. The earth is full of anions or negatively charged ions. Moving water, such as cascades, carry an abundance of anions as it travels through the earth, and with the force of water landing into the pool at the bottom of the fall, a lot of these negative ions are released, causing a spike in serotonin. Serotonin is also known as the dream hormone, and essentially speaking, makes us happier. The Niagara Falls Tourism (2020) reports that the Niagara Falls provides trails and gardens that are accessible to biking, hiking, whirlpool aero car, and walking. These recreational facilities no doubt, are responsible for the unprecedented visitor attendance at the falls. For example, the TripAdvisor (2020) claims that more than 17 million tourists visit the Niagara Falls Canadian side every year.

According to Ajayi and Ayodele (2014), improved recreational facilities construction will increase tourist influx and contribute to the economic and social welfare benefits of residents.

Methodology

The study was conducted at the Gurara Waterfalls. This waterfall is situated in Gurara Local Government Area of Niger State, in North Central Nigeria. The Gurara Waterfalls emanates from the River Gurara, and located on Latitude 7⁰E and Longitude 9⁰N. The study employed both reconnaissance survey of the study area and administration of two types of structured questionnaires to obtain data from visitors at the falls and staff of the Niger State Ministry of Land and Housing. Frequency count was used to analyse the data collected and the Chi-square analytical technique adopted in the testing of the hypotheses at 0.05% level of significance.

Results and discussion

Recreational facilities provision attracts more visitors and increases patronage for destination products and services

An analysis of the impact of recreational facilities provision on visitors' patronage is vividly captured in table 1. The analysis shows a consensus among visitors at the Gurara Waterfalls which indicates that providing recreational facilities will enhance more visits and purchases of destination products. This finding shows good congruence with that of Sangpikul (2008) and Bui and Jolliffe (2011) as cited in Ononogbo (2017) indicating that one of the greatest motivation for travel are shopping, leisure and recreation. The recreation facilities therefore should be of standard in order to attract sufficient tourists. For example, Deeniham and Caulfield (2015) discovered that tourists are willing to double their cycling time if proper infrastructure is provided. An infrastructure such as recreational facilities actually enhances destination attractiveness. According to Kresic and Prebezac (2011), destination attractiveness connotes the mental image of the destination that is formed on the basis of the physical attractions available in the destination. Similarly, Hu and Ritchie (1993) defined destination attractiveness as encompassing the reflection of the feelings, beliefs and opinions that an individual has about the destination's perceived ability to satisfy the special vacation needs of that person. Vengesayi, Mavondo and Reisinger (2009) found that in order to attract visitors, destinations should develop facilities and services to enhance its attractiveness and appeal.

Recreational facilities provision enhances tourists' choice of the Gurara Waterfalls

In able 2, analysis shows that the staff of the Niger State Ministry of Land and Housing in a unanimous reaction voted that providing recreational facilities at the Gurara Waterfalls will enhance tourists' choice of the destination. This finding corroborates that of Ibimilua (2009) which states that a major factor affecting participation in tourism is the provision of infrastructural amenities. Destinations are now providing these needs in order to satisfy their visitors. In fact people travel today for participation in recreational activities. One of the most important needs model is the Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see figure 1). According to Halloway (2002), Maslow conveniently grouped people's needs into hierarchy, arguing that the more basic needs should be satisfied before people seek to satisfy the higher level needs. Howell, Wright, Reynolds, Ellison and Ellison (2006) emphasized that vacation and leisure travel is often called discretionary travel. There is no obligation and they satisfy their needs when taking part in leisure and recreation activities.



Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Source: Burton (2012)

Unavailability of recreational facilities hampers the patronage of visitors at the Gurara Waterfalls

In table 3, the analysis shows that while 59 respondents representing 59% of the respondents concurred that the absence of recreational facilities in the Gurara Waterfalls is a barrier to patronage by visitors with passionate interest for waterfalls, 41 respondents looked to the contrary. In their study, Igbojekwe, Okoli and Ugo-Okoro (2013) found that lack of funds and access to recreational facilities limit individuals from engaging in leisure based activities. Not only should recreational facilities be provided to enhance destination competitiveness, the quality of the facilities also matters. For example, MacDougall, Cooke, Owen, Wilson, and Bauman, (1997) discovered that low

satisfaction ratings of recreation facilities were associated with greater inactivity among adult men. Supporting the foregoing assertion, Vernon, Kirtland, Evans and Wilsom (2004) contended that barriers to physical activity include a lack of available facilities and structured exercise programs and unsafe environmental features. Where no recreation facility or substandard facility exists, it further exacerbates non-participation in destination recreation. This observation is supported by the findings of Nadume and Akahome (2017), which identified poor facility aesthetics of the destination, poor supply of electricity and lack of consumers' interest in recreation and leisure as challenges facing customer patronage of tourism destinations.

Improvement of destination image

In table 4, 15 staffers of the Niger State Ministry of Land and Housing (37.5%) agreed that the provision of recreational facilities will improve the destination image while 25 respondents (62.5%) strongly agreed. This implies that providing recreational facilities at the Gurara Waterfalls will be an important intervention in boosting the image of Gurara community because as Hou, Lin and Morais (2005) observe, certain perceptions of the attractiveness of a tourism destination may lead tourists to develop an attachment to the place. Destination image is defined as tourist's overall perception of a specific destination (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991) or as tourist's mental portrayal of the area (Alhemoud and Armstrong, 1996; Gallarza, Saura and Garcia, 2002). There is no doubt that the inclusion of recreational facilities at the Gurara Waterfalls will greatly enhance the ambience and attractiveness of the destination. An appealing and attractive destination is crucial because Beerli and Martin (2004), Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez (2001), Birgit (2001), Castro, Armario and Ruiz (2007), and Chen and Tsai (2007) have reported that destination image is widely considered as a key aspect of tourist decisions. In fact the development of tourism infrastructure and recreational facilities according to Heath (1992), UNWTO (2007) and Sharpley (2009) is associated with tourism development.

Chi-Square Tests for table 1			
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	76.726 ^a	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	78.885	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	45.921	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	400		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 42.50.

$\chi^2 = 76.726$, degree of freedom=3, p-value=0.000

Hypothesis of interest:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the provision of recreational facilities and the rate of patronage at the Gurara Waterfalls.

H₁: There is significant relationship between the provision of recreational facilities and the rate of patronage at the Gurara Waterfalls

Decision Rule: since p-value=0.000<0.05 we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is significant relationship between the provision of recreational facilities and the rate of patronage at the Gurara Waterfalls. This implies that the provision of recreational facilities at the Gurara Waterfalls will impact positively on the rate of patronage. That is the provision of standard facilities and infrastructure will trigger off high arrivals of tourists to the destination. According to Ajake and Amalu (2012), Uwadiogwu (2002) and Ryan (2003), the development of ecotourism has been recognised as a major source of foreign exchange, increase in family income, cultural pluralism, investments, business opportunities and in most cases, it is seen as a catalyst for international and national integration and relations.

Chi-Square Tests for table 2

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.672 ^a	2	.263
Likelihood Ratio	2.684	2	.261
Linear-by-Linear Association	.000	1	1.000
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 47.67.

$\chi^2 = 2.672$, degree of freedom=2, p-value=0.263

Hypothesis of interest:

H₀: The absence of recreational facilities in the Gurara Waterfalls does not have any significant impact on the development of Gurara Community.

H₁: The absence of recreational facilities in the Gurara Waterfalls does have significant impact on the development of Gurara Community.

Decision Rule: since p-value=0.263>0.05, we do not reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant impact between the absence of

recreational facilities and development of Gurara community. This implies that the absence of recreational facilities will not adversely affect the development of Gurara Community.

Conclusion

Recreation has become an essential motivation for travel that places on planners of tourism centres the responsibility of developing such destinations to satisfy the needs of tourists with passions for recreational activities. It is crucial that the right quantity and quality of recreational facilities are provided in order to meet visitors' expectations. The results of this study have shown that while unavailability of recreational facilities hampers visitors' patronage the provision of recreational facilities enhances tourists' choice of the Gurara Waterfalls. The provision of recreational facilities indeed improves both the attractiveness and image of the Gurara Waterfalls.

Recommendation

It is advocated that the Niger State Government should provide and maintain adequate and standard recreational facilities at the Gurara Waterfalls for the benefit of present and future generations. This is necessary because as the Sports Advisory (2017) observed, no one wants to visit an outdated, dirty, or rundown recreation centre that takes on a worn and torn look that will alienate athletes or guests from your facility.

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Appendix

Table 1: The provision of recreational facilities attracts more visitors and patronage of destination products and services.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	70	70.0	70.0	70.0
	strongly agree	30	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 2: The provision of recreational facilities influences visitor's decision to choose Gurara Waterfalls as their destination

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	10	25.0	25.0	25.0
	strongly agree	30	75.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 3: The lack of recreational facilities hampers visitors' patronage at the Gurara Waterfalls

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	59	59.0	59.0	59.0
	strongly agree	41	41.0	41.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 4: The provision of recreational facilities at the Gurara Waterfalls improves the destination image of Gurara Community.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	15	37.5	37.5	37.5
	strongly agree	25	62.5	62.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field work (2020)

Appendix 2



Plate 1: Top view of the Gurara Waterfalls



Plate 2: Main spot of the Gurara Waterfalls.



Plate 3: Another top view of the Gurara Waterfalls.