

VISITORS AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF REGULATORY AND SITE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS IN MINIMIZING RECREATION IMPACT AT IKOGOSI WARM WATER SPRING IN EKITI STATE

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Abstract

This paper examined the visitors' awareness and perception of the role of regulatory and site management actions put in place at Ikogosi Warm water spring in Ekiti State to minimize recreation impacts. Sixty- six well-structured questionnaires were administered to randomly selected visitors. The demographic characteristics, visitation patterns, satisfaction as well as awareness and perception of effectiveness were critically examined. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the result obtained from the study. The results revealed that 66.7% which is a majority were first time visitors while, 22.7% of the 33.3% who were repeat visitors were revisiting for between 2 to 5 times. Majority (97%) of respondents were satisfied with their visit experience. Result obtained further showed that 87.9% of the visitors were aware of the regulatory and site management actions at the study area; with all (100%) the visitors acknowledging that they know that the issuing of tickets at the entrance was a regulatory action. The most recognised site management action by 77.3% of the visitors was regular waste disposal, while 81.8% believed the actions were important and 92.4% indicated that the actions were effective. In order to maintain a clean, organised and well monitored environment it is recommended that management of the study area ensure that the regulatory and site management actions are enforced especially through effective communication of the various regulatory and site management actions put in place.

Key Words: *Ikogosi warm spring, Regulatory, Site Management, Visitors*

Introduction

Activities at recreational sites impact natural resources which include vegetation, soil, wildlife, and water. Whether these impacts are considered to be positive or negative will depend on the management objectives and effective regulatory acts put in place in the area affected. (Cole, 2004). The severity of the

positive or negative response, which dictates the acuteness of the need for mitigation or regulatory measures, is also influenced by management objectives.

Few studies in recent times that have examined the spatial distribution of impact have found it to be highly concentrated in tourist's recreational sites which makes regulatory and management

acts a matter of high urgency (McEwen and Tocher, 2001). The role of regulatory and site management acts is to reduce the negative effects of tourist visitation to recreational sites such as Ikogosi warm spring. This act ranges from using instructional signs and leaflets to enforce rules and prohibitions. Every recreational site has the tendency to be over populated and misused and so many recreational sites have adopted this system for its effectiveness and regulatory solutions.

According to Robert (2008) visitor's impacts will always be felt at every recreational site but it is the role of management staffs to enforce regulatory rules and regulations to bring these impacts to the barest minimum. Failure to regulate impacts can affect the resource of attraction, the community, the soil, flora and fauna and so many others which will gradually bring a once unique and attractive site to a degraded area of recreational ruins (Pearson, 2002). Activities to be managed and regulated include visitors' entry and exit, carrying capacity of the area to avoid pressure on resource, recreational activities being carried out especially the how and where it is being done and where. Site management acts play a significant role in habitat monitoring in wildlife and site monitoring in recreation (Pearson, 2002).

In wilderness and nature preserves, impacts compromise the objective of preserving natural conditions. Elsewhere impacts can make recreational areas and facilities less attractive, desirable, or functional. Loss of tree cover on campsites, erosion of trails, and attraction of pest wildlife species are examples. These impacts can substantially increase maintenance costs. Finally, onsite impacts can damage offsite areas, such as where erosion of off-road vehicle (ORV) trails

causes siltation of streams (Marion and Leung, 2001)

An accumulating body of research dating back several years (Marion, Roggenbuch and Manning, 1993; Baldwin and LaPage, 2003; Abbe and Manning, 2007) documented the variety and severity of impacts that visitors can have on parks, including trampling of fragile vegetation, soil compaction and erosion, water pollution, and disturbance of wildlife.

In Nigeria, most of the tourist attraction centres did not have regulatory act that guide them and visitor, likewise most of them has but do not actively enforce it. The purpose of this research is to identify the regulatory and site management action that are put in place for the management Ikogosi warm water spring. The research will help us to know if these regulations are being adhered to and their effectiveness.

Methodology

Study Area

Ikogosi-Ekiti is in Ekiti State, Nigeria. It is located in the western part of Nigeria, it is situated between lofty, steep-sided and heavily wooded, north-south trending hills about 27.4 km east of Ilesha (Osun State), and about 10.5 km southeast of Efon Alaaye-Ekiti. It is located just north of the 7° 35'N latitude and slightly west of the 5° 00' E longitude. The elevation of the general area is between 457.0-487.5m1. There are rainy season (April - October) and the dry season (November-March). Temperature ranges between 21° and 28°C with high humidity. Ikogosi is a small community in terms of size and population. The 1991 national population census puts the population of Ikogosi-Ekiti at 6,984 persons with 3,314 male and 3,670 female. The estimated population in 1996 was put at 7,863 persons. The

projected population in 2014 was put at 13,386 persons (NPC, 1996).

Data Collection

Two types of data were collected for this study; the primary and secondary data. The survey research method was used to collect the primary data for this study. This was carried out through questionnaires administration and personal observations. A reconnaissance survey was carried out to observe the physical regulatory and site management actions put in place at the study area, while a total of 66 structured questionnaires were administered to randomly selected visitors. The questionnaires were validated using context and face validity by giving it to experts in the field. The secondary data was collected from past records of the Ikogosi warm spring, relevant journals and books (Arowosafe and Oladeji, 2017)

Statistical Analysis

The data collected for the study were subjected to analysis using descriptive statistics.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The result of the demographic characteristics of respondent based on their gender, age, marital status, religion, education and occupation is represented in Table 1. The result indicate only a 3% difference in the male to female ratio with the highest age range of the visitors being between 18 to 29 years. Also shown in the result is that the single visitors were 31.9% more than the married and 63% higher than those that were divorced. Visitors with formal education were more (72.7%) than those without formal education, and there were more student visitors at the Ikogosi warm spring than those who were self- employed by 13.7%. The result shown in Table 1 also revealed that visitors from outside Ekiti state were 57.6% more than those resident in Ekiti State.

Table 1: The demographic characteristics of visitors to the Ikogosi warm spring

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-29	47	71.2
30-39	6	9.1
40-49	12	18.2
50-59	1	1.5
60 and above	0	0
Sex		
Male	34	51.5
Female	32	48.5
Marital status		
Single	43	65.2
Married	22	33.3
Divorced	1	1.5
Widowed	0	0
Educational status		
Secondary	19	28.8
Tertiary	28	42.4
None	18	27.3
Others	1	1.5
Occupation		
Students	32	48.5
Self employed	23	34.8
Civil servant	6	9.1
Trading	5	7.6
Place of residence		
Within Ekiti State	14	21.2
Outside Ekiti state	37	78.8

Visitation Pattern

The result presented in table 2, shows the visitation pattern of visitors to Ikogosi warm water spring revealing a 33.4% difference in the number of first time and re-visiting visitors. Results also indicated that a higher percentage of visitors (22.7%) had visited from between 2–5 times while those who had visited for more than 10 times were about 1.6% less than those who had visited for 6 to 10 times.

Visitors’ Satisfaction

The results shown in Table 2 reveal a difference of 94% in favour of visitors

who were satisfied with their visit to the warm spring.

Table 2: Visitors visitation pattern and satisfaction

Visit Pattern	Frequency	Percentage
First time		
Yes	44	66.7
No	22	33.3
No of Visitation		
2-5 times	15	22.7
6-10 times	4	6.1
Above 10	3	4.5
Satisfaction		
Yes	64	97.0
No	2	3.0

The result showed that 87.9% of the visitors were aware that there were regulatory and site management actions in place at the study area. Multiple responses were obtained in the choice of the different regulatory actions known to the visitors of which, 100% indicated that issuing of tickets at the entrance was a regulatory action to control the number of visitors entering the study area at any particular day. The least known regulatory action was the directional signs which 68.2% knew were part of the regulatory actions. Majority of the visitors (77.3%)

knew that regular waste disposal to keep the site neat and clean and inviting to visitors was a site management action and the least known site management action was facility monitoring and security with 16.7%. Of all the visitors 71.2% kept and obeyed the rules and regulations while 16.7% did not obey them citing the instance that they were not aware that the walkway was a regulatory action, and also the waste bins were not in all the places and so sometimes they throw litter on the ground around the site.

Table 3: Awareness of Regulatory and site Management action at Ikogosi Warm water spring

	Frequency	Percentage
Are you aware of the regulatory and management action at this recreation site?		
Yes	58	87.9
No	3	4.5
Not sure	5	7.6
Regulatory action known		
Issuing of tickets at the entrance	66	100
Provision of waste bins around the site	52	78.8
Construction of walkways to prevent vegetation trampling	48	72.7
Tourist control using directional signs	45	68.2
*Site Management Action known		
Regular Waste disposal	51	77.3
Effective communication of rules and regulations	35	53
Facility monitoring and security	11	16.7
Do you always obey the rules and regulations		
Yes	47	71.2
No	11	16.7
No response	8	12.1

*Multiple responses obtained

Results shown in Table 4 revealed that 81.8% of the visitors believed that the regulatory and site actions were important with 92.4% indicating that the actions were effective in minimizing recreation impacts.

Table 4: Visitors perception of the effectiveness of regulatory and site management actions

	Frequency	Percentages
Importance of regulatory and site maintenance actions		
They are important	54	81.8
They are not important	5	7.6
Am not sure	7	10.6
Are these actions effective		
Yes	61	92.4
No	5	7.6
Suggestion for improvement		
Create more awareness	58	87.9
Don't know	3	4.5
No response	5	7.6

Discussion

Highest proportion of the respondents are within 18-29 age range which explains why majority are single rather than married or divorced. The prime ages of these visitors suggests that they are economically viable to spend money on leisure and recreation as opined by Ogunbodede (2012). Most of the respondents were recorded to include more males than females. This supports the findings of Cohen *et al.* (2007) that more males are seen in public parks than female. Majority of the respondents are students. This is consistent with the study carried out by Adetola and Oluleye (2014) at some recreational sites where majority of the visitors were students and youths. The highest proportion of respondents with tertiary education which is the highest educational level further validates this research and is consistent with the study by Sangsun (2010) that visitor responses to physical conditions were highly influenced by education levels and income. Most of the respondents live far away from the recreational site which could be as a result of the location of the site being a rural setting. This is inconsistent with an earlier research by Ridgway *et al.* (2005) where majority of

visitor groups lived in the same city as the recreational site they were visiting.

The result also shows greater percentage of the visitors are satisfied with the recreational site facilities which is why a great number of re-visits have been recorded. This is consistent with assertion by Zabkar *et al.* (2010) that tourists' satisfaction is one of the important elements for a superior advantage, distinctive image, and market destinations success, as it influences the choice of destination, consumption of products and services, decision to return, maintain long-term relationships and improve destination reputation.

Majority of the respondents are aware of the site and management regulation actions inherent at the recreational site. They also support these actions and thus, most of them obey the rules and regulations. This is key to minimizing negative impact on the environment considering that people who are more aware of future consequences are more likely to make sustainable choices given that sustainable behaviour is behaviour by individuals who act with more sustainable considerations as asserted by Meijers *et al.* (2011).

Issuing of tickets at the entrance in order to control the in-flow of visitors as well as generate funds to combat the negative impacts of recreation, Provision of waste bins around the site, Construction of walkways to prevent vegetation trampling, Tourist control using directional signs, Regular Waste disposal, Facility monitoring and security, Effective communication of rules and regulations were all identified by the tourists as management actions geared towards minimizing recreational impacts at the site. Identification and adoption of these environmentally friendly actions is important in the sustainability of the recreational site and is consistent with findings by Lee *et al.* (2013) that Tourists who adopt an environmentally responsible behaviour are aimed at supporting a more sustainable use of natural resources, mitigating negative environmental impacts of their home and tourism activities, and contribute to environmental preservation efforts.

Conclusion

This study determined the awareness and perception of regulatory and site management actions of visitors to Ikogosi Warm water spring in Ekiti State. A high number of the visitor were aware of the regulatory and site management actions and believed they were important and effective. Also not all the visitors could identify all the different regulatory and site management actions while a few do not obey the regulations. Part of the suggestions made by the visitors for improvement was the need to create more awareness of the different regulatory and site management action put in place at Ikogosi warm water spring.

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