
TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT: CASE STUDY OF INIKPI SITE

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable heritage management implies an approach that is aimed at balancing cultural objectives with sound management practices of cultural assets. The evaluation research design using reconnaissance survey and oral interviews generated data which revealed that Inikpi site is the grave of the daughter of Attah Igala, Ayegba Omo-Idoko who volunteered to be buried alive to save her father kingdom from deracination. The Inikpi site is a heritage site associated with Igala legend that has historical and tourism values. The stakeholders that are responsible for the site include Attah Igala, Traditional Chiefs in Council and Idah Local Government Council. To promote the site, the study suggested provision of site guides, regulatory signs, monitoring of the site and management committee members should include traditional Chiefs in the Attah Council, Idah local Government Council and representative(s) from the Kogi State Tourism Board and Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation. The Committee should also work toward listing of the site as United Nation Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Site (WHS).

Keywords: *Heritage, Site, Management, Sustainable*

INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognised that careful tourism planning and management must occur, because without appropriate planning and management, tourism products and sites will deteriorate and the very product that we are presenting to the world will lose its appeal. Tourism resource management has a significant impact in economic, social, cultural and political terms. Therefore it needs to be positioned as an integral element in planning and policy making to ensure the sustainability of resources and for the long-term economic benefits of the development. Sustainable heritage management implies an approach that is aimed at balancing cultural objectives with sound management practices of cultural assets. We must stress that sustainable heritage management is not necessarily synonymous with unlimited control and unrestrained cultural assets consumption (Nishiyama, 2003). Tourists are increasingly interested in other people's values, their attitudes and way of life as much as they are in the more significant cultural monuments of the society. A range of different elements of cultural tourism that must be explored in Nigeria include museum heritage sites, historic buildings, cultural landscapes, literature, language, folk tales, dances, traditional art, classical music, traditional activities, festivals and so on. For some tourists, cultural tourism is a learning experience either about themselves and /or about the other culture. Many people see cultural tourism as a way of being involved in cross-cultural exchanges that provides for contact with people from other places and cultures. For others it is the opportunities for celebration and pilgrimage. There are two major dimensions to Nigeria's cultural product; the well-recognised such as the Yoruba products, Hausa/Fulani Products and Igbo products; and the many other cultural product/culture that brings with it interesting potential as an attraction.

Cultural tourism presents a unique challenge to Nigeria that includes a number of objectives:

- i Conservation of the culture
- ii Accurately telling the story (interpretation) of the cultural artefacts and ways of life
- iii Gaining much – needed income from visitation to heritage sites.
- iv Participation in cultural tourism settings and events.

Tourism is dynamically growing worldwide with 4-5% annual increase in international tourist arrivals, and with arrival numbers expected to double during the next decades. World Heritage Sites (WHS) are iconic tourist attractions in most countries, experiencing a similar dynamic growth in tourism from international and domestic markets. Current pressures dare to unplanned and uncontrolled tourism are major concerns, including infrastructure development in and around WHSs that are not appropriate with the site's outstanding universal values. Long – term sustainable tourism at WHS is only possible through concerted actions and collaboration between the relevant ministries dealing with site conservation and tourism policy issues and the tourism private sector with its lengthy and complex supply chain (World Tourism Organisation, 2009)

The initial planning and research, which goes into the restoration and conservation of a monument, should always be done with, not for, the local community. In the same fashion, a tourism development plan for a potential heritage tour site should incorporate the interests of the community who live in close proximity to the site. Without careful planning and management, the pressure of tourism can damage and even destroy the very sources of attraction. Tourists walking on monuments can cause extensive wear and deterioration through time (Thoem, 2003). The above augment illustrate the fact that there is minimum standard that heritage sites should be manage. It is in recognition of the foregoing discussion that this study is interested in exploring the heritage site management of Inikpi site. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the potentials and management approach of Inikpi site and make recommendations on how to promote the site to national and international level.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study is evaluation design. An evaluation study according to Asika (2006) is one which determines the worth of an event or situation with the intention of making value judgement. This study dealt with analysis of data obtained from primary and secondary sources. Reconnaissance survey was carryout at the Inikpi site and oral interviews were conducted with the stakeholders that involved in the preservation and conservation of Inikpi site. These stakeholders include staff of Idah Local Government Council Cultural Unit and Traditional Chiefs in Council. The primary data from reconnaissance survey and oral interviews, and secondary data through sundry investigations from the stakeholders are edited to be suitable for research analysis. The descriptive analysis was used to discuss the data.

Findings and Discussions

Inikpi Site

The secondary sources revealed that Inikpi was the daughter of Attah Igala, Ayegba Oma-Idoko who surrendered herself for sacrifice to serve the integrity of the Igala kingdom. She was buried alive with nine slaves and ten volunteers. This was part of the sacrifice needed by the community (Igala) in order to defeat the Jukun in the great Igala-Jukun war. Her volunteer to die to save her people brought victory, honour and respect to the Igala people. Inikpi celebration normally occurs on the 18th day of Ocho festival, which before the commencement of the celebration; the Attah Igala would go to the site to pay respect to the heroine. This is ideal heritage site for tourists/ visitors.

Site Location

Reconnaissance survey shows that Inikpi Site is at Ega market square, on the bank of River Niger, Idah. Idah is 7 05N and 6 45E, Kogi State Nigeria. See Figure 1 below.**Figure 1:**

Map of Kogi State showing Idah, the Inikpi Site.



Tourism Potentials of Inikpi Site

Reconnaissance survey also revealed that the location of Inikpi site on the bank of river Niger is a tourism asset to the site. The scenic view of the River Niger will provide a good

play ground and recreation centre for the residents/ tourists delight, if developed. Inikpi site is located at Ega market of Idah. Ega market is a local market where various farm produce, bush meats, fish, ingredients for the traditional menu and snacks are sold. The local market is an important attraction at Inikpi site. A visit to the every four days market reveals a typical African market scene which will be of interest to foreign tourists /visitors. The host resident's handcrafts around Inikpi site is an important attraction to tourists/visitors. The host resident can make available their handcrafts for patronage. According to Yunis (2006) handcraft is a growing interest of tourists in appreciating traditional cultural expressions, such as handcraft and purchasing such object during their trips. He also added that, tourist appreciated the local residents, handcrafts and they often buy local clothes and other products as souvenirs during their trips.

Managerial Approach of Inikpi Site

Oral interviews with the stakeholders mentioned earlier indicated that at present, there is no managerial approach adopted for the management of the site. The stakeholders are responsible for the site. The stakeholders are Attah of Igala, Traditional Chiefs in Council and Idah Local Government Council. The responsibilities of stakeholders as revealed during the oral interviews are as follows:

Attah of Igala and Traditional Chiefs in Council

They provide all traditional protection and rights that will ensure the continuity of all forms of values, norms, and myths as recognised by tradition of Igala people. They also co-operate with Idah Local Government Council to uphold all the forms of authority of the Site and maintain its integrity at all times.

Idah Local Government Council

The Local Government Council contributes financially to the maintenance of the site through annual subventions from their budgets. The Local Government Council assisted in the maintenance of site and the Ega market on a regular basis in order to attract tourists/visitors.

CONCLUSION

The Inikpi site is a heritage site associated with Igala Legend. It has historical and tourism values to the tourists/visitors. At the present, the heritage site is maintain by the stakeholders; Attah Igala, Traditional Chief in Council and Idah Local Government Council. There is also the need to improve conservation of the site to enhance the historical and tourism values.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve adequate conservation and promotion of Inikpi site the following ways are suggested:

Provision of Site guides

There is need to introduce heritage site guides who will conduct tourists/visitors round the site. There should be also chief guide who will also conduct very important dignitaries as the case arises.

Provision of Regulatory Signs

The heritage site is located at Ega market. There are market activities round the site. Regulation signs will help tourists/visitors located the site with much easy.

Monitoring of the Site

Monitoring is an activity mainly aimed at regularly accessing the condition of sites and progress made or difficulties encounter to implement activities proposed. This allows the record of changes and enables the understanding of progress of decay, threats, and damages. It is also pertinent to ensure proper integration of conservation and visitors related activities at the site environment, and also that those activities would benefit the local populations. To this end, the inspection of the site regularly by stakeholders is suggested.

Constitution of Management Committee

In order to execute appropriate conservation strategies at the site, there is need for management committee of the heritage site. The committee members should include Traditional Chiefs in the Attah Council, Idah Local Government Council and representative(s) of the Kogi State Tourism Board and /or Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation. The main functions of the committee are to use local materials, craftsmen and indigenous technology to conserve the site. The committee should also work toward listing of the site as United Nation Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Site soonest.

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