
WATER-BASED RECREATION AREA: CASE STUDY OF RIVER NIGER IN IDAH, NIGERIA

¹Orga, D. Y., ²Kolawole, O. B. and ³Ato, E.S.

¹Department of Tourism, The Federal Polytechnic, Idah, Nigeria

²Department of Architecture, The Federal Polytechnic, Idah, Nigeria

³Department of URP, The Federal Polytechnic, Idah, Nigeria

E-mail: yinaorga@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The study examines the potentials of the Niger as water-based recreation area to provide useful information with regards to user recreational pursuits. The primary data were developed through the use of reconnaissance survey. The secondary data were drawn from development plans and other published works on recreation. The data revealed that the potentials of River Niger as a water-based recreation area in Idah included river banks, 5km land and water sport. The potential recreational uses are sport fishing, picnicking, boating, swimming, beach sports, etc. In assessing the development potential of resources in relation to the provision of recreational facilities, at present no facilities have been developed in Idah. It is anticipated that Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation and Kogi State Tourism Board with Idah Local Government Council will as public tourism development agencies developed these potentials to provide opportunities for all recreationists and accrue economic benefits to governments and the people.

Keywords: *Recreation, models, Potentials, Activities.*

INTRODUCTION

Among all classes of people in any society, there are variations in time during which individuals are free from their daily routines of work and domestic chores. Such a time may be used for relaxation, recreation or self development. These opportunities may be limited by personal constraints (time, age, sex, income or education background) or environmental constraints (lack of facilities, lack of physical accessibility and awareness) Veal cited in Olorunfemi and Olanrewaju (1993). Rapid urbanization and improved transportation, political decisions such as a change to a five-day working week or declaration of public holidays have further increased the desire for recreation and consequently the demand for tourism and recreational facilities (Olorunfemi and Olanrewaju (1993:162). Recreation is a basic need of man. It appears in increasing demand as urban sprawl and industrial development mar the natural landscape. A combination of the natural qualities of an area the ability and desire by man to use them for recreation provides the basis for recreational area. Recreational areas have values accrued from direct human use of the resources. Recreation areas are considered as resources that have values acc from direct human use of the resources. Recreation areas refer to places with surroundings, services and/or facilities that allow people to conduct recreational activity that brings enjoyment. Water-based areas that usually made up a variety of landscape, faunas and floras are appropriate for most outdoor recreational activities. The River Niger area (portion) in Idah, Nigeria provides water-based area that is suitable for recreational purposes. The participation of public in an area reflects its social function as a recreational area. However, the value of River Niger area in Idah in providing benefits to recreationists is yet to be determined. Therefore, the evaluation of

River Niger area in Idah as a water-based recreational area is important as the need for recreational area is increasing among the residents. The main purpose of the study is to examine the potentials and public demand of River Niger as a recreational area to provides useful information with regards to user recreational pursuits.

Conceptual Framework

Understanding the evolution of recreation they allows instructive dialogue on the recreation production process using Buckley's General System Theory (1964), recreation behaviour and generation of recreation products have been modelled. There are three recreation production models; the Activity-Based Model (ABM), the Experience-Based Model (EBM) and the Benefits-Based Model (BBM) presented here as adopted from Bruns, Driver and Hopkins (2000) and More and Driver (2005). The basic ABM portrays a system that aims to produce activity opportunity outputs through on-site management of the physical and operational settings of a green space and implementing actions of the green space manager. The limited EBM portrays an expanded system that incorporates ABM by considering recreation behaviour to provide activity as well as experience opportunity outputs through management of green space social setting in addition to physical and operational settings. The BBM further expands ABM and EBM by incorporating all Recreation System Components that:

- i. Target benefit outcomes as the ultimate product of the system;
- ii. Produces system outputs of benefit opportunities in addition to activity and experience opportunities;
- iii. Considers off-site adjacent community settings as well as green space settings of physical, operational and social;
- iv. Considers the influence of a network of recreation service provider (both on-site green space managers and community-centred service provider businesses, non-profits and other governmental agencies);
- v. Takes into account negative impacts and detrimental outcome from the system beyond that of just green space visitors to community residents, local economy and the regional ecological environment; and
- vi. Considers the public value and support of the green space beyond that of the on-site visitor and nearly community residents to that of someone far away that may incur off-site benefits without ever intending to visit.

Table I compares each model by system structure of inputs, through puts, outputs, and outcomes. Notice the evolution and progression from basic ABM, to limited EBM, to advance BBM in terms of system components and how each progressive model incorporates the components of lesser models. The advance BBM is a whole system approach which includes all components of producing recreation opportunity outputs while managing for attainment of positive benefits outcomes and mitigating negative consequences. In reality, all recreation system components operate regardless of the model implemented. However, activity-based and experience based managers elect not to assess or plan for or are even aware of detrimental outcomes and negatives effects to community settings in their management, monitoring and marketing actions as they do not account for those components.

Table 1: System Structure Comparison of Recreation Production Models.

	System Inputs (provider Actions)	System Throughout (settings)	System Output (opportunities produced)	System Outcomes (resulting outcomes)
ABM	Activities	Physical Operational	Activity Opportunities	No outcomes are considered
EBM	Activities Experience	Physical Operational social	Activity & Experience Opportunities	Experience outcome (+/-)
BBM	Activities Experiences Benefits	Physical Operational Social Community	Activity, Experience, & Benefit Opportunities	Experience outcome (+/-) Personal outcome (+/-) Social outcomes (+/-) Economic outcomes (+/-) Environmental outcomes (+/-)

Source: Moore and Driver (2008).

In Bruns, Drivers and Hopkins (2000) chart I displays system components to demonstrate the inclusive and progressive nature of each model as it incorporates the components of the lesser models.

Chart 1: System Components Comparison of Recreation Production Models.

Recreation System Components and Products	ABM	EBM	BBM
Recreation Visitors	*	*	*
Green Space Managers & Providers (on-site)	*	*	*
Green Space Physical Settings	*	*	
Green Space Operational Settings	*	*	*
Recreation Activity Opportunity Outputs	*	*	*
Green Space Social Settings		*	*
Recreation Experience Opportunity Outputs		*	*
Recreation Experience Outcomes (+/-)		*	*
Community Settings			*
Network of Recreation Service Providers			*
Off-site Recreation System Supporters			*
Recreation Benefit Opportunity Outputs			*

Source: Bruns, Driver and Hopkins (2000), Moore and Driver (2005)

The BBM thrusts recreation from a micro sole source provider world inside green spaces into the macro world of the greater community and society which established both for the greater public good. BBM makes the recreation community linkage by inclusion of community settings and allocations and funding for green spaces and green spaces management are critical in BBM to produce positive public benefits from recreation. Thus, implementation of the BBM is paramount to connecting the recreation system green spaces and recreation services with that of the greater community to which it is intrinsically linked.

STUDY AREA

The River Niger is the principal river of Western Africa, extending about 4,180km. Its drainage basin is 2,117km² in area. Its source is in the Guinea Highlands in South eastern guinea. It runs in a crescent through Mali, Niger, on the border with Benin and then through Nigeria, discharging through a massive delta, known as the Niger Delta into the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean (**Fig.1**). The Niger is the third-longest river in Africa, exceeding only by the Nile and the Congo River (also known as the Zaire River). Its main tributary is the Benue River. The River Niger is a relatively “clear” river, carrying only a tenth as much sediment as the Nile because the Niger’s headlands are located in ancient rocks that provides little silt. Like the Nile, the Niger floods yearly; this begins in September, peaks in November, and finishes by May. Many European expeditions to plots the river was unsuccessful. In 1788 the African Association was formed in England to promote the exploration of Africa in the hopes of locating the Niger, and in June 1796 the Scottish explorer Mungo Park was the first European to lay eyes on the river. After Mungo Park, three Frenchmen, Jean Sauvy, Pierre Ponty and Jean Rouch travelled from the very beginning of the river near Kissidougou in Guinea to the Ocean in March 25, 1947 (Oliver, 1948). Idah is 7°05N and 6°45E and a second order core town in Kogi State Nigeria



Fig.1: Map showing River Niger, Idah (after Lokoja), Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Data required for this study are these on resident population, River-Niger recreational area and potentials. Primary data were developed through the use of reconnaissance surveys. The secondary data were draws from development plans and published works on recreation. The analysis of the data was a process of tabulation and discussions of primary data from the reconnaissance surveys and documentary sources.

Findings

The Potentials of River Niger as a Water-based Recreation Area

The recreational potentials of River Niger in Idah as a water-based recreation area are river banks, 5km land, water sport centre and Idah- Oyedenga road (Table I). With these potentials, the River Niger water-based recreation area is endowed with promising recreational facilities.

The Potential Recreational Uses

The potential recreational uses of River Niger (portion) in Idah as water-based recreation area include fishing, picnicking, boating, water skiing, swimming, bird watching, beach sport (football, volley ball etc), rowing sport, sun bathing, etc (Table I1). Previous

studies, for example, Orga and Ato (2011) pointed out that Idah residents are active participants in outdoor recreation activities such as alcoholic drinking, picnicking, sightseeing, walking for pleasure, bicycling, boating, swimming, rock climbing, fishing, etc (Table III).

DISCUSSIONS

The three recreation production models; the activity –based model (ABM), the experience-based model (EBM) and the benefit-based model (BBM) portray recreation as a major leisure free activity, experience and benefit. These recreation production models further highlight that recreation stimulate the interest of local people and authority to appreciate the value of the environment and recreation may lead to the creation of attractive environment. The recreation production models sum up that recreation is less likely to damage the environment than many other competitive activities such as mineral extraction or agriculture.

However, cities/towns develop their basic facilities, allocate resources for operation and maintenance, and then develop programmes for recreation land and water uses. As use of facilities increases, problems with maintenance may appear, particularly in high-use recreational areas. This is not the case with River Niger recreation area in Idah. The situation here is that the potentials of River Niger as a water-based recreation area are not developed. The key potentials that require development in the study area include:

River Banks

The river side scenic value of the Niger is flat and interesting. A number of picnic /refreshment sports should be developed along banks or on islands of the Niger so that boat and fishing trips could be making from the town (Idah) for a day or half-day excursions. Ideally these would be combined with practical ferry routes. The river banks will obviously have a major effect on boating and fishing sports.

5km Land

The area Idah- Oyedenga road refers to as 5km land provides an access and picnic area should be developed. A number of economic benefits can be accruing to the Idah Local Government Council and the Kogi State Government when recreational facilities are provided in this area for all recreationists.

Water Sport

Idah at one end of the Niger confluence would be a very attractive and suitable location for this as it is easily accessible from the State capital (Lokoja), Federal capital (Abuja) and central Nigeria. The potential recreational uses of this sport centre will be swimming, rowing, water skiing, boating etc.

In assessing the development potential of resources in relation to the provision of recreational facilities, at present no facilities have been developed at River Niger recreation area in Idah. The only facility being currently undertaking for Idah is the dredging of River Niger. This discussion provides a setting for the consideration of the recreational strategy and indicates how development of these potentials may stimulate recreational pursuits of Idah residents and visitors. This also shows how water is a focal point of outdoor recreation with all attractiveness.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the foregoing discussions that river Niger recreation area in Idah has potentials that can generate recreational uses. The key issue is how these potentials are developed to provide opportunities for all receptionists and accrue economic benefits to governments and people. The economic benefits of recreation contribute to the community, regional and national levels. In respect of this, it is anticipated that Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) and Kogi State Tourism Board (KSTB) with Idah Local Government Council will as public tourism development agencies developed these potentials.

REFERENCES

- Bruns, K. Driver, M. and Hopkins, V. (2000) Recreation Theories and Outputs. *Canadian Geographer*, 30(2), 233-261.
- Buckley, O. (1964) Modelling of Human Responses to the Recreation System. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 2(1), 151-176
- Clawson, M and Knetsch, J. (1966) *Economic of Outdoor Recreation*. Baltimore: John Hopkins.
- Moose, O. and Driver, M. (2005) Recreation Models. *Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(2), 21-38.
- Oliver, J.O.T (1948) *History of Ancient Geography*. London; Bibio and Tannen Publishers.
- Olorunfemi, A and Olanrewaju, O.F.O. (1993) *A Case Study of Asa Lake as a Water-based Recreational and Tourist Centre*. Environment and Tourism in Nigeria. Ibadan: Femson Industrial Printers.
- Orga, D.Y. (2006) Environmental Impact of Outdoor Recreation at Tiga Dam, Nigeria. *International Journal of Environmental Issues*,4 (1 &2) 255-260.
- Orga, D. Y. and Ato, E. S. (2011) Outdoor recreation participation in Idah Town of Nigeria *Journal of Environmental Design*, 6(2) 128 – 133.

Table I: The potentials of River Niger as a water- based recreation area

River Banks
5km land
Water sport

Source: Author's Survey, 2012.

Table II: The potential recreational uses of River Niger

Fishing
Picnicking
Water skiing
Swimming
Bird watching
Beach football/volleyball
Rowing (sport).

Source: Authors Surveys, 2012.

Table III: Outdoor recreation participation in Idah town.

Alcoholic drinking
Picnicking
Water for pleasure
Play organized sport (football, tennis etc)
Bicycling
Boating/ canoeing
Bird watching
Swimming
Outdoor photography
Rock climbing
Jogging
Camping
Visiting theatre
Fishing
Hunting

Source: Orga and Ato, 2011.