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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Asimiyu M. JUNAID Olatunde F. ADEDAYO Richard A. JIMOH Luqman O. OYEWOBI

☐ Morenikeji, G., Popoola, N. I., Alfa, M., and Adeleye, B.M	1453
DISASTERS, RESILIENT CITIES AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY	
Post-Resettlement Changes And Adjustment: A Case Study Of Sabon Wuse In Niger State,	
Nigeria	
☐ Sulyman, A.O And Kudu, S.E.	1464
Institutional And Community Awareness On The Environmental Impact Of Municipal	
Solid Waste Management In Bida Metropolis, Nigeria	
☐ Yahaya, U.; Abd'razack, N.T.A. & Mohammed, M.	1475
Development Control: A Strategy For Flood Vulnerability Assessment In Suleja	
\square Adeleye, B.M ¹ , Zitta, N ² , Popoola, A.A. and Ayangbile, O. A.	1489
Towards resilient In Design and Construction Of Housing In Coastal Area Of Lokoja, Nigeria	
☐ Abdulmutalib Ohinoyi Ibrahim & Ochepa Yahaya Sadiq	1497
Preference And Compatibility: Ageing In Place Limitations In Nigeria	
☐ Onanuga Omotayo Adebayo And Oviasogie Collins O	
SUSTAINABLE GEOMATIC TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES	
A Method For Assessment Of Optimal Choice Of Parametric Model In Least Squares	
Collocation	
☐ Odumosu, J.O., Onuigbo, I.C., Nwadialor, I.J. And Kemiki, O.A.	1520
Investigation Of The Robustness Of Different Contour Interpolation Models For The	
Generation Of Contour Map And Digital Evelation Models	
☐ Kuta A. A., Ajayi O. G., Osunde T. J., Ibrahim P. O., Dada D.O. & Awwal A. A.	1527
Geospatial Information Systems Solutions To The Consequences Of Modernization And	
Technological Advanvements On The Built Environment	
☐ Onuigbo, Ifeanyi Chukwudi	1542
Evaluation of Rainfall Trend in North – Central Region of Nigeria	
☐ G. H. Ntat, S. Ojoye, Y. M. Suleiman, A. A Adenle &S. D. Francis	1548
A Review of Geographic Information Systems Applications to Election Mapping in Nigeria	
Okolie, C.J., Adesina, E.A., Irivbogbe, H.E., and Umar, A.A.	1557
**Assessment of the Tourism Potentials of Gurara Waterfalls, Niger State, Nigeria	
☐ Musa, U,G., Mohammad, A.M., Abubakar, S. , & Abdulrahman, B.I.	1566
Performance Evaluation of Outsourced Facility Management Services at Baze University Abuja	
□ Bajere, P. A. & Akor, V. O.	1575
Structural Integrity of Hollow Sandcrete Block Walls in Federal University of Technology, Minna using Rebound Hammer Test	
-	1584
☐ Sule, Bandagi Ahmed, Abdullahi Mohammed., Alhassan Mohammed	

ASSESSMENT OF THE TOURISM POTENTIALS OF GURARA WATERFALLS, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Tourism has become one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world. In Nigeria it is centered largely on events, due to the country's ample amount of ethnic groups, but also includes rainforests, savannah, waterfalls, and other natural attractions. Gurara Waterfalls is one of these tourism sites located in Niger State, Nigeria and it has enormous potentials that can be harnessed for tourism development. This research carried out an assessment on the tourism potentials of Gurara Waterfalls, through identification and analysis of its features and surrounding environment. Interviews, site analysis checklist, observation and Questionnaires were used as primary sources of data collection, and Niger state ministry of lands and housing, internet, google earth technology and Niger state culture and tourism corporation were the sources of secondary data collection. Results shows that Land allocated by Niger State Government for the development of Gurara Waterfalls is 1,105 hectares. The Area is characterised with thick Forest, Animals, combination of undulating and flat topography. The Waterfall is at its peak during the months of June to October in rainy season when the water covers the whole cliff and off-peak period of the Fall is between the month of October and May in dry season. Down the Fall span about 200 metres and a depth of about 50 metres, there are no organised recreational, facilities and services or activity present at the Fall, and some management challenges such as unavailability of tourists' statistics. SWOT analysis conducted showed that the Location has numerous Strengths, Weaknesses that can be controlled and the Opportunities outweighs the threats making the site a viable location for development of tourism destination

Keywords: Economic, environment, housing tourism, waterfall

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the totality of the phenomenon arising from the travel and stay of strangers, as long as the stay does not imply the establishment of a permanent residence for the Purpose of Leisure, Business and entertainment (Bhatia, 2002). Tourism is a very potent driver of economic growth and employment creation all over the world. The Sector of Tourism is accountable for 8.8 percent of the world's Jobs (258 million jobs); 9.1 percent of the World's GDP (US\$6 trillion); 5.8 percent of the world's export (US\$1.1 trillion); and 4.5 percent of the World's investment (US\$652 billion) (Iain, *et al.*, 2013). In Nigeria, Tourism is centered mainly on events as a result of the Country's large number of various ethnic groups, however also include rainforests, waterfalls, savannah and various natural attractions, however, the industry suffers unfortunately due to the country's poor infrastructure such as; roads, electricity, and potable water (Maurice, 2004).

Gurara Waterfalls holds the potential to become a world-class Tourist destination by virtue of its pleasant weather, beautiful sceneries, and conducive vegetation; and can be conceivably developed to the standard of the Niagra Falls, and Victoria Falls. These have remained potentials and not harnessed. An access road, a hut and an observation spot are the only developments existing at the Falls over the years till present.

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Nigeria is a country in quest of economic diversification from Crude Oil to maximize employment and income generating opportunities. In view of the dwindling oil revenue and endemic uncertainty in the global oil market, it has become imperative for Nigeria to find other more sustainable sources of income. Developing Gurara waterwalls as a turist destination in Niger State will boost the economy of the State. To carry out development at the fall, it is of an utmost importance to carry out an assessment of the tourism potentials within the falls and its environ. This study therefore assessed the tourism potentials of Gurara Waterfalls so as to propose measures for its development.

The Study Area

Gurara Waterfalls is found in Gurara Local Government Area of Niger State with Its Headquarters Located at Gawu-Babangida. Gurara Local Government Area has 10 Wards which includes; Bonu, where Gurara Waterfalls is found, Diko, Gawu, Izom, Kabo, Kwaka, Lambata, Lefu, Shako and Tufa. It has a total Land area of about 1,126.3km² and an estimated Population of about 90,974 people in 2006 (Niger State Department of Budget & Planning, National Population Commission, 2015)

The Falls originated from River Gurara which is a large tributary of the famous River Niger. It is located in Gurara Local Government Area at Latitude 7°E and Longitude 9°N. This impressive waterfall, is located 2km off Minna-Suleja Road, about 68km from Minna by road and 35km from Suleja by road (see figure 1.1) (Niger State Culture and Tourism Corporation, 2015). The Niger State Government allocated a total of 1,105.759 hectares for the development of the Falls (Niger State Culture and Tourism Corporation, 2015).

The Falls is located in a tropical climate characterised by annual two distinct seasons; the wet or rainy season and dry season. The area has an annual rainfall of less than 1000mm, which occurs between April and September having a peak period between July and August. The dry season Occurs within a period of six months, between the months of October and March (see figure 1.2).

The Temperature of the Study area differs within seasons. Through the dry season, temperature is relatively high because, the sun is in the southern hemisphere. High temperature of between 30OC and 40OC are recorded within December to April while the Wet season experiences lower temperature of between 26OC and 30OC highest within the season occurring at middays between May to July.

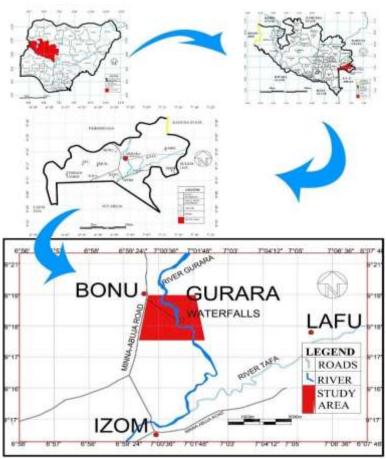


Figure 1: Locational Map of Study of Gurara Waterfalls showing the Study Area Source: Niger State Ministry of Lands and Housing (2015)

Conceptual Clarification

Tourism is a concept that has emerged with several definitions from various authorities in time past. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (2007) defined Tourism as comprising the activities of a person or persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for either leisure, business and other purposes Bhatia (2002) defined tourism as the totality of the phenomenon arising from the travel and stay of strangers, as long as the stay does not imply the establishment of a permanent residence and is not connected with enumerated activity.

Ajayi and Lawal (2010) viewed tourism to be anything that possess the natural ability or potential capacity to stimulate people's interest and move people from place to place. This implies that any voluntary and temporally activity that takes a person away from his or her usual place so as to satisfy a need either for relaxation, excitement and pleasure experience can be called tourism. The The key elements worthy of note from the definitions of tourism are: travel, tourist, leisure, destination, temporary stay, voluntary activity and attracting ability. All these key elements therefore make up the entirety of Tourism as a concept whether locally or globally.

There are six different types of tourism from the country of reference perspective presented by Statistics South Africa (2009) which includes the following:

- i. Domestic tourism: This consists the movement and activities of a visitor who's the economic region of the country of reference is owns residence. It is a kind of outbound trip or domestic trip;
- ii. Inbound tourism: Include the activities of visitor's non-resident within the economic region of the country of reference;
- iii. Outbound tourism: This include the activities of visitors out of the pecuniary area of the reference country, either basically as an outbound trip, or a domestic trip;
- iv. Internal tourism: Internal tourism encompasses the activities of both resident and non-resident visitors within the economic region of the country of reference as part of domestic or international trips;
- v. National tourism: This refers to the resident visitor's activities within and outside the pecuniary region of the reference country, either as part of outbound trips or domestic; and
- vi. International tourism: denotes the resident visitor's activities outside the economic territory of the country of reference, either as outbound trips or domestic trips, and the activities of non-resident visitors within the pecuniary region of the country of reference on inbound trips.

Tourism in Nigeria

Nigeria has abundant attractions, climatic and geographical diversity, including; the Atlantic Ocean in the south the confluence at the Middle Belt region to the far North Sahara. One can travel within few hours, from the Sahel to Sudan to snowing mountains in the North - East and Jos Plateau also to luxuriant forests in Calabar, Tinapa Resorts and Obudu mountain resort to areas of exclusive cultivation in warm waters of the coast (Ajadi, 2012). Nigeria has diverse potentials for ecotourism and marine tourism in attractive shores due the Country's geographical location and condition. Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) is the apex tourism agency of the Federal Government of Nigeria charged with the general responsibility of marketing, promoting, and coordinating Nigerian tourism activities. The Nigerian succeeding governments took some policies influenced by social, political and economic forces that formed and developed the tourism activities. However, the Government has been the sole managers, promoters and sponsors of tourism in Nigeria until recently. (Ajadi, 2012).

The challenges of tourism in Nigeria includes the following:

- i Superstitious belief: Onwuejeogwu, (1992) asserted that Nigerians see a piece of African art as a bronze object or a piece of juju wood which Europeans only admire out of curiosity. African dances or dramas are inaccurately perceived as nothing better than forms of incoherent or incongruous display of paganism and African traditional music are seen as a discord of barbarous pagan noise. The local communities in most cases are often regarded as unimportant in related matters as to tourism planning thereby neglected, which contributes to poor attitude and poor perception of the communities towards tourism (Enemou, Anozie and Otta, 2012).
- ii Inadequate Statistics: There is a lack of reliable Tourism statistics and Market in formation in Nigeria. The 2006 report of The United Nations show that the figures of revenue from

- domestic tourism travel in Nigeria is not known, but the substantial amount of the population of Nigeria places an increasing demand on tourism services (UNWTO, 2006).
- iii Security Issues: Another depressing Challenge in the Nigeria tourism industry is the security unrest and issues, although there is a reduction in militancy in the Niger Delta owing to the amnesty declaration by the Nigerian Federal Government since 2009, the recent insurgency by Boko Haram in the North and North-Central parts of Nigeria Leading to the bombing of central areas, United Nations headquaters and Police
 - headquarters within Abuja, and many other calculated attacks launched at places of worship, military formations and public offices has become a serious concern for potential tourists (Enemou, Anozie and Otta, 2012).
 - i. Challenge of Neglect: Majority of the elites in Nigerian spend summer holidays in Europe and America, having holidays at parks, gardens, squares, and even museums. They lack interest in visiting the nearby village or a traditional play staged in the neighbourhood in their home country (Nigeria) (Onwuejeogwu, 1992). Although there exist numerous tourism potentials in Nigeria, many of these attractions are still lying fallow and even at their undeveloped states, they are still being enjoyed by few foreigners, such as wealthy visitors looking for exoticism or adventurous people, also in search of new experiences and challenges (Bisina and John, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from Primary and Secondary Sources. The primary Data collected are through direct field survey while the secondary data were collected from published materials relevant to this research. Interview was conducted with the Staff of Niger State Culture and Tourism Board which include the General Manager of the Corporation, two clerical officers, the Site Manager of Gurara Waterfalls and the gate keeper of Gurara Waterfalls. Site analysis checklist was used to derive the site analysis report which include; Site analysis and inventory of facilities and attractions, on-site and off-site infrastructures within and around the study area. Direct field observation was also conducted to obtain data on the physical characteristics of the fall and facilities existing and the potentials the Fall holds. A total of 200 Questionnaires were administered to the visitors the fall in April 2015 to ascertain the tourism characteristics of visitors and complementary facilities that can give maximum satisfaction and attract more tourists both locally and internationally. The Questionnaires were administered on daily basis to the visiting Tourists who were willing to respond. Data were presented and analysed using descriptive statistical method through the use of tables, graphs and simple charts e.g. bar charts and pie charts, picture plate presentations and map presentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was observed that Gurara waterfalls is an example of Block/Sheet Ledge Waterfall as Water descends from a relatively wide river at a height maintaining partial contact with the bedrock. Result indicated that the Waterfalls is at its peak during the months of June to October in the rainy season. At this period, the water covers the whole cliff and tumbles down the rock to the bed bellow forming a massive water flow (Plate I). The off-peak period of the Falls is between the month of October and May in the dry season when the water flow reduces and the falls are at points from the cliff which flows gently downstream (Plate II).



Plate I: Gurara Waterfalls during peak period in August Source: Field Survey (2015).



Plate II: Gurara Waterfalls during off-peak period in April Source: Field Survey (2015).

Results shows that the vegetation of study area is characterized by thick forest including broad trees, shrubs, and grasses of several species which serves as good green space that supports biodiversity and ensures neutrality of the environment without distortion. The management also reported that there are animals existing within the study such as monkeys, pythons, birds, antelopes, and other wild animals. The River itself is rich with different species of Fishes.

Infrastructural facilities present at the study area includes; Paved Road of 14 metres width that creates accessibility to the Falls, a shed for food and soft drinks services and a nonfunctional 33KVA Transformer for providing electricity to the Falls. There is no organized water supply infrastructural facility within the Falls as observed and from the interviews. People tend to create the kind of activity that best satisfy them such as swimming and picnicking. However, there is an animal cage intended to be used for a mini zoo which is empty at present, 2 concrete sit outs for relaxation and 2 seesaw swings bar without the swings as observed.

Table 1: Statistics of Tourists Traffic for the Months of March and April in Gurara Falls

MONTH	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
March	537	56.7	
April	410	43.3	
Total	947	100.0	

Statistics from the Niger State Culture and Tourism Board shows that the tourists who visited Gurara Waterfalls in March 2015 is 537 Tourists and in April 2015 is 410 Tourists.

Table 2: Age distribution of Tourists

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
less than 18	35	17.5
18-30	97	48.5
30-45	58	29.0
45-60	5	2.5
above 60	5	2.5
Total	200	100.0

Field survey shows that the majority of Tourists (48.5%) that visited Gurara Waterfalls within this period of research are within the ages of 18 and 30 while the elderly has the lowest percentage (2.5%).

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents according to Employment Status

Employment	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Civil servants	16	8.0	
Private	20	10.0	
Self employed	12	6.0	
Unemployed	40	20.0	
Student	112	56.0	
Total	200	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2015).

Students are having the highest percentage of Gurara falls patronage as shown in table 3. They usually visit in groups from secondary schools and universities as part of school excursion or group parties and picnics. The self-employed (6.0%) and Civil servants (8.0%) have the lowest percentage, and one of the respondents explained that is as a result of busy work schedule and the

only opportunity in the public service is annual leave. He further explained that the existence of the Falls alone cannot attract people of busy schedules and therefore suggest provision of attractions such as recreational facilities and amusement parks for children.

Table 4: Factor that determine Tourism visit to Gurara Waterfalls

Determinant	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Increased income level	20	10.0
Tourism destination availability	155	77.5
Easy Access to the Fall	25	12.5
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2015).

Result shows that of the tourists (77.5%) visits Gurara Waterfalls because of its mere existence, but stated that they will visit more often if it is fully equipped with facilities and services that gives them maximum satisfaction of tourism experience. This portrays that the tourism potential alone cannot attract tourists compared to when its accessibility, facilities,

attractions and services are fully developed to accommodate tourists' behavior.

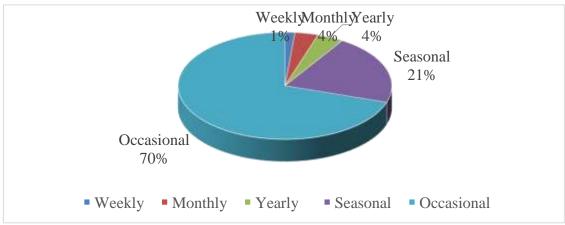


Figure 4.6: Respondents Frequency of visit

Source: Field Survey (2015)

About 70% of tourists visits Gurara Waterfalls sporadically which is however as a result of its underdevelopment without any motivation and attractions that has pool effect apart from a special event or occasion that requires their presence. However, about 21% of tourists visit the Falls seasonally especially during the festive seasons and some people visit at least once in a year to notice developmental changes and for recreation.

Table 5 shows that 91% which is majority of respondents stays at the fall less than a day this is because there are no much recreational activities to carry out apart from passive sightseeing and swimming or those who are able to do so. About 0.5 % stays for more than a day but less than a week, those are the respondents that came for other activities apart from visiting Gurara Waterfalls.

Table 5: Tourists Duration of stay

Duration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
less than a day	182	91.0
a day	7	3.5
more than a day but less than a week	1	0.5
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey (2015).

Management of Gurara Waterfalls

Gurara Waterfalls is under the management of Niger State Culture and Tourism Corporation However the inhabitants of Bonu Village are the Custodians of the Fall and also serve as security to the Falls. Means of revenue generation from the Falls is the entrance fee of ₹500 (US\$2.5) paid by visitors before they are allowed to go in. From the tourists' statistics of March and April which is 537 and 410 respectively, the average income Gurara Waterfalls generates at present per head in a month is ₹240,000.00 (US\$1,212).

Management Challenges in Gurara Waterfalls include the following:

i. Lack of required Manpower

There is shortage of qualified and relevant staff strength that are directly concerned to the Falls. What the Niger State Culture and Tourism Corporation have is mostly hospitality personnel In terms of hotel management organization and cultural activities within the state. They believe what they have and manages at present are just tourism potentials as such needed more of promotion to attract investment. Employment of high skilled manpower is therefore of lesser priority since revenue generated might not self-sustain the falls management.

ii. Inefficiency in Management

The Niger State Ministry of Culture and Tourism who is in charge of management of Gurara waterfalls could not provide a precise statistics of tourism visits and incidence of death cases over the years and attributed the inability to lack of requisite personnel present at the Location.

i. Death cases

At the entrance within the Fall there is a sign post that prohibits swimming within the Falls and disclaimer for the security of people who swim. From the interview results, some tourists have drowned as a result of negligence of tourists with 2 records of such cases in 2014.

Table 6: SWOT	Analysis of	Gurara	Waterfalls
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STRENGTI	HS	WEAK	NESSES
ConduciProximitTerritory	ve Features of the Fall ve vegetation around the Fall ty of the Fall to the Federal Capital v (FCT) I of becoming the "Cash Cow" of Niger	•	inefficient management Inadequate Solid Waste Management Absence of recreational facilities and attractions Underdeveloped Infrastructure
OPPORTU	NITIES	THRE	ATS
 activities New Res Destinat New Ma The Fall Increase Growth Attraction 	search into Travel Trends That Favor ions in Niger State trkets Emerging Around s Destination Marketing of Ecotourism Market on of investments in Niger State's Internally Generated	:	Political Instability Security issues as a result of Insurgency within the country Ongoing Environmental Degradation Weak Naira Exchange rate

Source: Field Survey (2015).

The SWOT analysis as shown in Table 6, portray the internal influences of Gurara waterfalls as a tourist destination which includes; its strength and its weaknesses that either supports its development or militates against its development these however are within the confides of internal control measures. It also includes; opportunities which are positive impacts of the Falls development and Threats which could militate against the growth of such positive impacts that may be derived. These are however external influences outside the confides of Destination control measures. From the SWOT analysis, the Strength and Opportunities far outweigh the Weakness and Threat. This makes the project of developing Gurara Waterfalls a viable one.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the research conducted, Niger State can become a hub of international tourism with its abundant natural land features, historical monuments, historical relics and Cultural attractions. However, mere potentials cannot turn the State's economic position around. Gurara Waterfalls can be called Niger State's potential tourism economy which has been left untapped over the years adjudicating from the Fall's lack of infrastructures such as circulation, water and functioning power supply, absence of other facilities and services for more Tourists' attraction and Tourism activities, absence of accommodation facilities and inefficient management.

The following are therefore planning recommendations which would be most appropriate towards achieving the development Gurara Waterfalls.

- i The need for adequate infrastructural facilities and utilities such as transportation and communication facilities like telephone services, internet services, electricity and water supply is vital and an important ingredient in any tourism market. Therefore, the provision of such infrastructures is very vital in this plan.
- i. Any tourist destination that is not properly linked with the outside world would have less than expected patronage. It is therefore important to improve upon the MinnaSuleja Road that links Gurara waterfalls to other parts of Nigeria to ensure easy access and encourage visit.
- I. In development, Resort facilities should be sited in such a way that there will be integration between natural and manmade facilities within the site creating a balance and continuity which are the major criteria for a sustainable tourism.
- II. There is need to motivate the field staff and encourage them to understand the need to explore innovative ways of generating revenue, discouraging corrupt practices such as embezzlement which is supported by current economic trend.
- III. Actions such as uncontrolled fishing, bush burning, hunting of animals and refuse dumping in the river should be highly prohibited and enforced.
- IV. The ongoing campaign about urban governance is a right direction to follow in emphasizing the importance of private sector participation in tourism services delivery to the interest group of the society. The habitat agenda adopted by the world's Governance in Istanbul (1996) affirmed that policies and programmes for the development of human settlements require strong, open and accountable local Government institution working in partnership with all interested private sectors.
- V. Tourism policy is very vital in development of tourism activities in Nigeria. It happens that few States in Nigeria has a genuine tourism policy such as Nassarawa State. It is important to establish a policy which provides guideline in tourism Development in the state which must be reviewed and strengthened from time to time. This policy should incorporate all recommendations made in this project.

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