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Factors Influencing Visitation and Revisit in some Zoos and Parks of Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated factors influencing visit and revisit to selected zoological gardens and parks in southwest Nigeria. Structured questionnaires were administered to 400 visitors at University of Ibadan Zoo, FUNAAB Zoo, Shodex Garden and LUFASI Park. Most (55.9%) of the visitors were first timers while 44.18% were revisiting. About, 73% of the visitors were not satisfied with the services while only 48% showed willingness to revisit. Identified factors leading to poor visit include exorbitant gate fee as well as inadequate information about the zoos and park in printed format and on internet and social media. For the poor revisit, identified factors include poor marketing strategy, poor customer relationship, paucity of exotic animals and poor recreational activities. To improve visit to the zoos and park, there is need for provision of incentives in the form of reduced entry fee, and introduction of membership card and volunteering services.

Keywords: Ex-situ conservation, recreation, wildlife management, zoo visit and revisit

INTRODUCTION

Keeping of wildlife in captivity has been a symbol of power and of religious significance ancient times. Animals were displayed for entertainment of royal dignitaries and the paying public at circus (Gusset *et al.*, 2014). Zoo as tourist attraction Centres have evolved from mere menageries to scientifically run and professionally managed institutions (Hutching & Conway, 1995). Due to growing realization and better documentation, modern zoos are now shifting their focus from entertainment of visiting public to education, research and conservation. They are now finding ways to help conserving wild animals and their habitat. (Gusset & Dick, 2011)

Zoos in the 21st century provide more than mere recreation (Tribe & Booth, 2003). They keep people aware of the beauties of nature and the need to preserve wildlife. Zoos serve as a classroom to educate the public on the

importance of conservation, animal care and environmental awareness (Moss & Esson, 2013; Adam & Salome, 2014). Zoo facilities provide children space to run around and develop their motor skill while making new friends Zoo visiting promote bonding between family members by providing a perfect way for family re-union, and unusual opportunity to attend a special function or event such as World Wildlife Day together (Anderson, 2003; Hazan & Azam, 2007). There have been tremendous increases in the number of zoo attendance over the past few decades and these visits are usually inspired in most cases by desire to see at close range real, live and exotic animals. (Mooney *et al.*, 2020).

Zoological gardens and parks, despite their huge potentials cannot survive on a long term except they meet the curiosity and satisfy the needs of their visitors, since they depend on the financial support provided by visitors for day to day running of their conservation projects (Jorden &

Du Plessis, 2014; Kohshaka *et al.*, 2016). It is expedient to know why visitors are in the Zoo, whether for recreation, educational, self-enjoyment or family engagement. Knowing the purpose of visit will enable zoos management to capture the needs of their visitors and plan for them accordingly (Jorden & Du Plessis, 2014). Nigerian zoological gardens and parks have great potentials to flourish and generate more foreign exchange for the country but unfortunately due to lack of funding, poor infrastructural development and lack of tourism culture patronage is usually lower than expectation (Yager *et al.*, 2015, Morenikeji, 2018) Most of the time, those who visit don't revisit due to lack of enjoyment and satisfaction with services rendered by Zoos and parks (Omonona & Kayode, 2011). Previous studies by Alarape *et al.* (2015) and Ogunjinmi *et al.* (2017) have identified some of the factors motivating zoo visit in Nigeria. This present study samples the opinions of zoo visitors with the view to determine the level of satisfaction and investigate factors influencing the visit and revisit in some Zoos in the southwest Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area

The study was carried out between April and July 2018 in four zoological gardens and park in the Southwest Nigeria. Data were collected from the University of Ibadan Zoological Garden, Ibadan, and Oyo state, Federal University of Agriculture (FUNAAB) Zoological park; Shodex Garden and Lekki Urban Forest Animal Sanctuary Initiative (LUFASI) Park, Lagos (Table 1). The studied zoos and parks were selected based on their popularity, accessibility and their track record of having high frequency of tourist influx.

The University of Ibadan Zoological Garden

The University of Ibadan Zoological Garden started as a teaching and research arm of the department of Zoology, University of Ibadan and metamorphosed into a full –fledged Zoo in 1974 (Adefalu *et al.*, 2014). The zoo is opened to visitors round the week and is devoted mainly to conservation, education and entertainment. The

zoo is rich in a wide collection of fauna consisting of herbivores, Avian, Carnivores, Primates and reptiles.

The Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Zoo Park

Federal University of Abeokuta Zoological Park is the first of its kind in Ogun State Nigeria. Situated on a 62 Hectares of land located about 200 metres away from the main gate of the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. The Park was established in a conserved lowland forest area interspersed by a derived savanna vegetation. The Zoo houses different fauna, including antelope, hyenas, Jackal, monkeys, bird of different species and reptile. The park was open to the public in 2010 (Yisau *et al.*, 2013)

Lekki Urban Forest Animal Sanctuary Initiative (LUFASI Park)

Lufasi Nature Park covers a large area of about 20 hectares of land at the Majek area (Km 41) along the Lekki-Epe Express Way. Located at 6.4646° N, 3.6546° E using coordinates on the world map, this park is home for the Ekki “Iron Wood” tree (*Lophira Alata*), the endangered Hooded Vulture (*Necrosyrtes Monachus*) and the African Pied Hornbill (*Tockus fasciatus*). The vegetation consists of pockets habitats of swamp forest and oil-palm plantation with large garden spaces and pond side landscapes for recreation and celebrations. Lufasi Nature Parks aims to help conserve native biodiversity, educate about Climate Change and the natural environment, and collaborate with the wider community of stakeholders.

Shodex Garden

Shodex Garden is a recreational centre located at 251/253, Ikorodu road, Anthony bus stop, Lagos, Nigeria. It is a garden that has its various services in event centers and venues. It offers a range of activities like swimming, sightseeing, relaxing etc. It also has a mini-zoo for tourists and visitors.

Table1: Description of the Study Area and distribution of questionnaires (n=400)

Study Site	Location State	Coordinate	Description	Ownership	Number of respondents per Zoo
University of Ibadan	Oyo State	7.4437° N, 3.8955° E	Zoological Garden	Institutional	100
Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	Ogun State	7.229° N, 3.4466° E	Zoological Park	Institutional	100
Shodex Garden	Lagos State	6.5714° N, 3.36759° E	Zoological Garden	Private	100
Lekki Urban Forest Animal Sanctuary Initiative (LUFASI) Park, Lekki, Lagos	Lagos State	6.446° N, 3.6546° E	Animal Sanctuary& Park	Private	100

Sampling and Data Collection Method

Sampled population comprises of the visitors encountered at the Zoological garden and parks during the survey. The respondents were randomly selected from the pool of visitors. Data were collected through self-administered structured questionnaires. One hundred (100) questionnaires were randomly administered to respondents in each zoo (University of Ibadan, Federal University of Abeokuta, LUFFASI and SHODEX garden respectively). All the four hundred (400) questionnaires administered in total were retrieved. The target group cuts across different socio-economic classes including students, private practitioners, civil servants and unemployed. The respondents' age were between from 18 years and >60 years. Sampling was carried out without bias for gender and nationality. Equal number of questionnaires were administered to both male and female. Respondents were selected based on willingness to participate in the survey. The survey takes into consideration the respondents independent variables (demographic profile) such as: age, gender, marital status, educational background, Occupation. Dependent variables measured include accessibility to the recreational centres, source of information about the zoo, perception or opinion about the zoos and park, their views

on the hospitality and customer relation experience, perception on safety, quality of exhibits and animal welfare. Information gathered was used to compute the visitors' expectation, satisfaction and willingness to patronize or revisit the zoo thereafter.

Reliability of the test instrument

In order to test the reliability of the questionnaire used on field a small sample (n=40) which was 10% of the total questionnaires to be administered on field was initially tested among the staff and students and casual workers in the university of Lagos. The resultant response obtained (pretest) was then compared with the response generated on field by the authors (post field) as a small sample test of reliability.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as mean, mode, frequencies, percentages as well as Tables, graphs and charts were used. Primary data generated through the structured questionnaire were analyzed with Microsoft Excel version 2016

RESULTS

The demographic characteristics of the respondents interviewed were recorded and shown in Table 2 below. Most (53.7%) of the

respondents surveyed were female while the male population were just 46.3% in all the studied population. It was also revealed that seventy-six per cent (76%) of the respondents were adults with age ranging from <20-60 years and above. The literacy level was high (as about 77% of the respondents attained either tertiary education

(polytechnic and university education). The survey also revealed that most (57.5%) of the respondents are gainfully employed. The frequency of zoo visit is reported in Table 3. The study showed that most (55.9%) of the respondents are first time zoo visitors while the remaining 44.1% are repeat visitors.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of respondents encountered at selected zoos and parks

Description		Shodex garden (n = 100)	University of Ibadan Zoo (n = 100)	FUNAAB Zoo (n = 100)	LUFASI Park (n = 100)
Gender	Male	52%	33.3%	52%	48%
	Female	48%	66.7%	48%	52%
Age range (in years)	< 20	24%	16.7%	36%	20%
	21 – 30	36%	83.3%	36%	56%
	31 – 40	0%	0%	24%	16%
	41 – 50	36%	0%	4%	8%
	51 – 60	0%	0%	0%	0%
	> 60	4%	0%	0%	0%
Highest Education attained	Primary Education		4%	12%	0%
	Secondary Education		40%	0%	12%
	Polytechnic		20%	88.2%	28%
	University		36%	0%	60%
Occupation	Self employed	40%	6.7%	16%	12%
	Private sector	16%	0%	20%	60%
	Unemplo yed	0%	0%	16%	4%
	Civil servant	8%	3.3%	4%	20%
	Student	36%	90%	44%	0%

Table 3: Frequency of visit among the respondents

Type of visit	Location				
	Shodex Garden	University of Ibadan zoo	FUNAAB zoo park	LUFASI Park	Cumulative percentage (%)
Revisit	40%	44%	40%	52%	44.1%
First-time visit	60%	56%	60%	48%	55.9%

Sources through which the respondent learnt about the zoos are illustrated in Figure 1. Close to thirty-three percent (32.4%) claimed to have learnt about the zoo through television,

newspaper advertisement and social media/internet while the majority (67.6%) learnt about the zoos through friends and family.

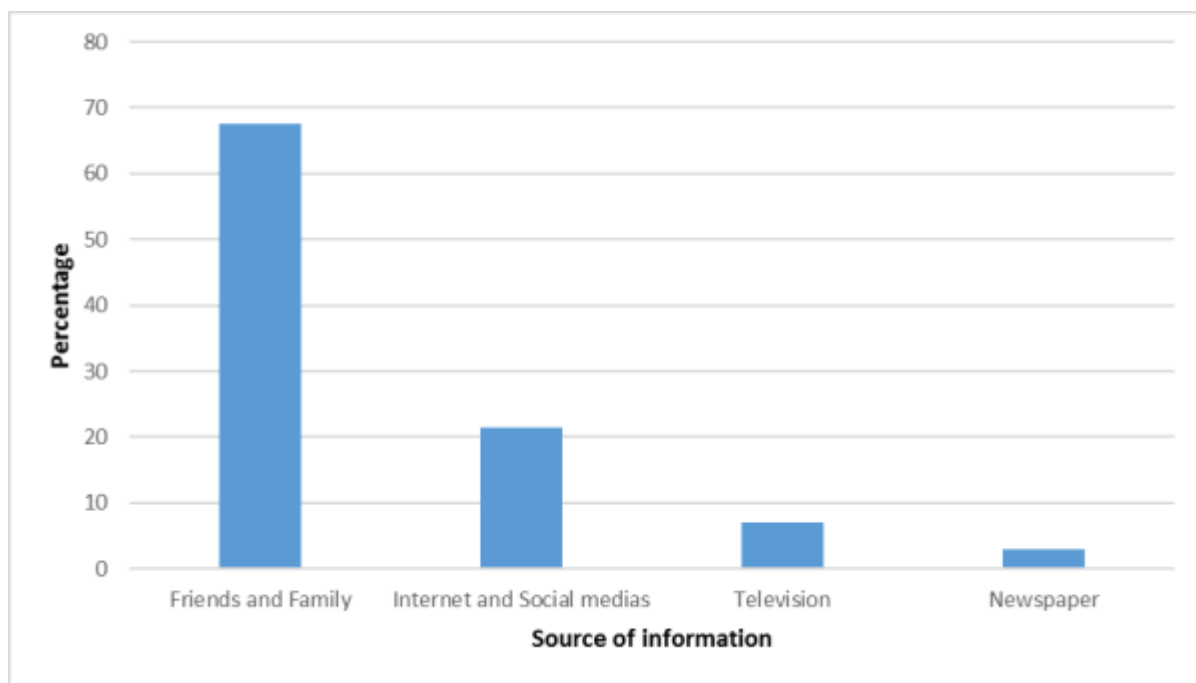


Figure 1: Visitors' sources of information about the zoos

The opinion of respondents on the amount of money charged by the zoos as gate fee is shown in Table 4. Entry fee varied with children paying between 300 – 1000 and adults paying between 500 and 1000 naira. The perception of respondents on the activities and the level of satisfaction with activities at the zoo is showed in Table 5 and Figure 2. Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents believed that the entry fee charged was too exorbitant. Majority (93%) of the respondents said they enjoyed nature walk/sight-seeing, relaxation, animal viewing and animal

feeding time mostly while only a few (7%) said they enjoyed the education initiative /programs show- cased by the zoos (Table 6). Majority of the visitor (73%) considered their experience at the zoo to be either poor, fair or were indifferent in their opinion as regarding the level of satisfaction attained at the zoo. Only twenty-seven percent (27%) of the respondents rated their experience at the zoo as excellent

The opinion of the respondent about the services rendered by the zoos to the visitors is shown in Figure 3. Majority (81%) of the respondents rated

the customer service as either poor, fair while some are indifferent. Nineteen per cent (19%) of the respondents believed that the services rendered by the zoos are excellent. The desire of respondents to repeat their visit is shown in Table 4. Only 48% of the visitors indicated an interest to make a repeat visit. Fifty –two percent (52 %) indicated loss of interest in return trip following the dissatisfaction with their first visit. Some of

the factors perceived by respondents to be responsible for poor zoo visit in the southwest Nigeria are highlighted in Figure 5. Some of these factors include busy schedule (29%), poor customer relationship (21%), inadequate zoo marketing (21%), and lack of basic facilities (11%), paucity of animal species (10%) and poor zoo management / animal welfare (8%).

Table 4: Gate fee across the study location

Entry Fee per location					
Category of visitors	Shodex	University of Ibadan zoo	FUNAAB zoo	LUFASI park	
Children	500	300	500		
Adult	1000	500	1000	1000	
Group of 10	Negotiable	Negotiable	Negotiable	1000 per head	

Table 5: Respondents' opinion on entry fee

Opinion	Shodex	University of Ibadan zoo	FUNAAB zoo	LUFASI
Appropriate	24%	76%	36%	28%
Expensive	76%	24%	64%	72%

Table 6: Activities enjoyed by visitors at the study area

Activities	Shodex	University of Ibadan zoo	FUNAAB zoo	LUFASI park
Relaxation	40%	0%	20%	48%
Education	4%	0%	4%	20%
Animal view and animal feeding time	16%	23.5%	36%	12%
Nature walks and sight-seeing.	40%	76.5%	40%	20%

The respondents' opinion about the state of the facilities in the selected zoos is shown on Table 7. Respondents agreed that the zoos have the required facilities for visitors safety, however, majority (94.29%), complained of inappropriate

provision of safety barriers, warning signs(71.74%), solution to potential animal escape (66.67%) and maintenance of animal house and exhibit (57.63%) as well as inadequate staff training (73.47%).

Table 7: Perception of visitors on the facilities at the zoo

Facility assessment	Absent	Present	Present and appropriate	Present but inappropriate
Provision of barriers	10.77%	89.23%	5.71%	94.29%
Trained staff	23.53%	76.47%	26.53%	73.47%
Warning signs	30.9%	69.1%	28.26%	71.74%
Solutions to potential risk from escaped animals	42.62%	57.38%	33.33%	66.67%
Provisions to tackle future disease outbreak	43.08%	56.92%	25.71%	74.29%
Maintenance of animals house and exhibits	14.29%	85.71%	42.37%	57.63%

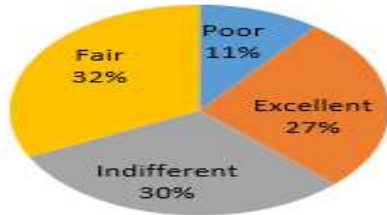


Figure 2: Visitors rating of experience at the zoo/park

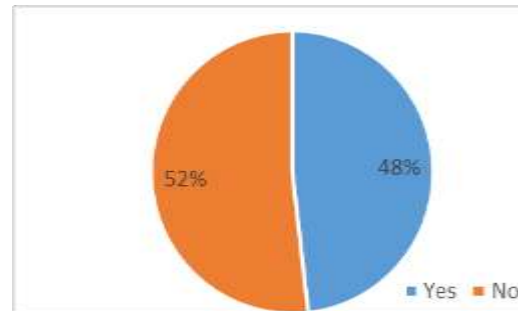


Figure 4: Willingness of visitors to revisit Zoos

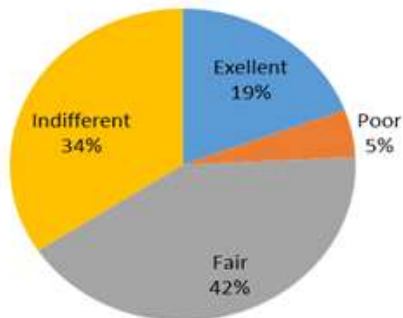


Figure 3: Visitors rating of customer's service rendered at recreational centers

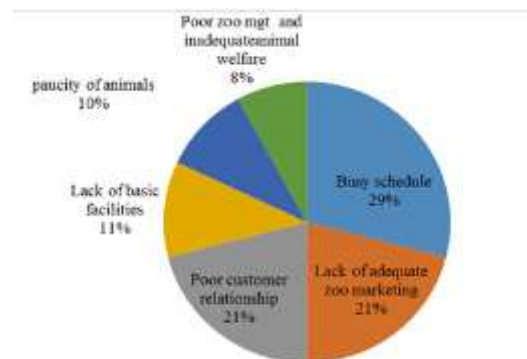


Figure 5: Perceived reasons for poor patronage at recreational centre

DISCUSSION

This study showed that about fifty-six percent (55.9%) of the visitors encountered during this study were first time zoo visitors. This implied that the number of people visiting for the first time was more than those revisiting. This shortfall in the number of second time visitors could be due to lack of interest as a result of unpleasant experience during their previous visit (Fennell, 1999). Studies have suggested that impression of visitor about zoo during their first visit influences their attitude, visitors' perception can be influenced by the type of animals, the type of exhibit displayed and how the visitor perceives the zoo keepers (Godinez & Fernandez, 2019). It is pertinent therefore that zoo managers should go extra mile in sensitizing their visitors (Borokini, 2013), helping them to make the best use of their time in the zoo (Catibog-sinha, 2008) and also to make the zoo environment conducive for them to stay and to revisit (Alarape *et al.*, 2015).

The study also shows that most of the respondents learnt about the zoo mostly through interaction with friends and families (67.6%) and Social media (21.4%) while only a few claimed to learn about the zoos through television and newspapers. This agrees with the findings of Alarape *et al.* (2015) who reported that the highest number of visitors sampled (35%) at Markurdi Zoological garden learned about the zoo through friends and family. This shows how important and effective inter-personal relationship could be in spreading information about zoo. However, zoos and parks owners should not stop at this level but leverage on the use of social media for more effective coverage and also intensify their marketing effort via television, newspapers, internet as well in order to remain visible and accessible to the public. The study revealed that ninety-three per cent (93%) of the visitors came to the zoos mainly for entertainment-related activities such as nature walk, sightseeing. Only seven per cent (7%) of the population claimed to visit for an educational purpose such as school excursion. This agrees with Turley (1999) who identified pleasure or desire to get away from busy work schedule as the primary motivation for zoo visit in the United Kingdom and Boyd *et al.* (2014) who in tandem with Knezevic *et al.* (2016) identified curiosity to see and watching of wild animals in captivity, and desire to relax, spending quality time to enjoy

nature as the main motivation for Zoo visiting. Adetola and Adedire (2018) also stressed that people come to zoos and parks to be entertained watching animals especially during the feeding times, spending valuable time with loved ones to strengthen the family bond. Consequently, for zoos to fulfil their conservative objective and meet their target there is need to incorporate both the social and the psychological needs of visitors while planning the zoo programs. Although zoo provides ample opportunity for relaxation and recreation, yet most of the respondents interviewed (73%) were not satisfied with either the facilities or the quality of services rendered in the Zoos. They considered the basic facilities provided by some of the zoos such as benches, toilet, parking spaces, warning sign and the play area to be inadequate. The respondents complained about the quality of services rendered, lack of tour guides, insufficient information about the zoos on the internet and exorbitant entry fee charged. As a result of the high level of dissatisfaction experienced by the visitors, only 48 per cent of the survey population was willing to make return trips. Hence in order to encourage visitors to keep visiting there is need for the zoo administrators to make the facilities more comfortable and appealing for the visitors to patronize.

CONCLUSION

The study thus identifies lack of motivation due to busy and tight business schedule coupled with inadequacy of zoo facilities, exorbitant gate fees, paucity of exotic animals, poor zoo management and animal welfare techniques, inappropriate marketing skill, lack of innovation and poor costumers' services as some of the major factors driving poor zoo visit and revisit in the southwestern Nigeria. In order to improve the current level of zoo patronage Zoo managers should step up their games by upgrading their zoos in compliance with the 21st century standard. Zoo management should ensure that basic facilities and need such as benches, shelters, parking space, catering services, zoo gift shops, convenience and play area are available for the use of visitors and also ensure that their day to day activities are publicized on social media and internet for potential visitors to see. Innovative and customer's friendly strategies should be adopted by zoos and while advertising their

products and services. This will go a long way to create a lasting relationship between the zoological parks and the public.

Safety is important to visitors and their loved ones while within the zoo environment, so, adequate protective structures and measures such as enclosure, stand-off barriers and restraint should be put in place as a matter of necessity to keep visitors away from a potentially dangerous animal and biohazard. In order to create a positive image about zoo and also motivate the public to visit, zoo staff members should be trained to be friendly, polite and to demonstrate high sense of professionalism while relating with visitors. The Zoo community should aspire to build profitable relationship by extending educational opportunities to schools and corporate bodies inviting them to participate in well-structured education program and activities on special events such as World Wildlife Day and World Biodiversity Day.

In order to augment the high entry fee which in most cases is one of the major deterrents to zoo visit. Zoological gardens and parks should do service and product promotion. This involves provision of incentives in the form of free entry or reduced entry fee for visitors at certain periods

of the year. Alternatively, the use of coupons could be introduced as a way to reduce entrance fee or promote free entrance. Certain days in the month could be declared free entry day for children and even adults. This on the long run will stimulate the recipients of opportunity or the coupons to come to the zoo over and over again. Zoo and park membership card is another vital tool that could be helpful in increasing influx, patronage and commitment to zoos visit. Regular visitors and sponsors should be encouraged to take membership card which allows them to have access to the park and zoo several times depending on their category without paying gate fee. This will encourage many more visitors to become card holders and be more frequent at zoos.

Opportunity for volunteering services should be made available to interested members of the public. This will allow the zoo management to save cost of paying salaries while the volunteering individuals will get the opportunity to visit the zoo at no cost. Such individual would be willing to pay on other days and would also serve as an agent in spreading good recommendation about the zoo.

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