

Visitors' Attitude and Behaviour Towards Conservation at Agodi Gardens, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Assessment of attitudes and behaviour towards conservation has become important in many studies as its long term success depends on it. This study sought to determine the attitude and behaviour of visitors towards conservation in Agodi Gardens. It was a questionnaire survey involving 100 participants. The results showed that 52.0% of the respondents were male, 56.0% were below 20 years. The prominent source of information on conservation was mass media (37.0%). A greater percentage of the visitors have also heard about endangered species and know some examples (89.0% and 85% respectively). Most significantly, 74.0% of the respondents claimed that they were not interested in conservation. However, 83.0% of the respondents perceived that biodiversity should be conserved. It is concluded that the attitude and behaviour of visitors in Agodi Gardens towards conservation is mostly negative.

Introduction

Conservation of biodiversity is the proper management of the biosphere by human beings in such a way that it gives maximum benefits for the present generation and also develops its potential so as to meet the needs of the future generations (Ayodele, Abe & Olaniyan, 1999, Corazon, 2008). It can be in-situ and/or ex-situ. *In-situ* conservation is the on-site conservation or the conservation of genetic resources in natural populations of plant or animal species, such as forest genetic resources in natural populations of tree species (Nengi, 1993). Examples are national parks, forest reserves, game reserves etc. *Ex situ* conservation literally means, "off-site conservation (Nengi, 1993). Examples are Zoological Gardens, Aquaria, Ranches, etc.

Botanical gardens and zoos are the most conventional methods of ex situ conservation, all of which house whole, protected specimens for breeding and reintroduction into the wild when necessary and possible (Avila, Guzman & Cespedes, 2004). They are the most publicly visited ex-situ conservation sites, with the WZCS (World Zoo Conservation Strategy) estimating that the 1100 organized zoos in the world receive more than 600 million visitors annually. Globally, there is an estimated total of 2,107 aquaria and zoos in 125 countries and approximately 2,000 botanical gardens in 148 counties, cultivating or storing an estimated 80,000 taxa of plants (Avila, Guzman, & Cespedes; Botanical Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), 2010). These gardens are more often than not located in urban areas (Sanders, 2007). It has also been estimated that there are over 250 million visitors annually to public gardens globally (Ballantyne, Packer, Hughes, & Dierking, 2008).

Visitation numbers in public gardens are important with an increasingly urbanized population. Ex-situ conservation attractions are in a unique position and according to World Association of Zoos and

Aquariums (WAZA, 2005), they are the incubators for the conservationists of tomorrow. The significance of zoos and botanical gardens through the ability to feel, smell, hear, and appreciate the value of nature through personal experience is of vital importance in supporting conservation (Falk, Heimlich, & Bronnekart, 2008). Their existence is also important considering that the demand for ecotourism and wildlife experiences is increasing and therefore such establishments can help encourage and influence such societal changes (Singleton, 2001). Zoos and botanical gardens can cover all aspects of conservation: ex-situ breeding, research, public education, training, influencing, and supporting in-situ conservation efforts, provide a public face for conservation activities and act as a base for NGOs (Zimmermann, Reeve & Bell, 2007).

The assessment of peoples' attitudes and perceptions towards conservation has become an important aspect in many studies of wildlife conservation (Newmark, Manyaza, Gamassa, & Sariko, 1994) as its success depends on the attitudes of people towards conservation (Katrina, 2000). This is based on the premise that people that become compassionate and informed about conservation are more likely to make lifestyle changes and change voting habits (Dierking, Burtnyk, Buchner, & Falk, 2002; Zimmermann *et al.*, 2007; WAZA, 2005). The people in context especially for conservation areas are the stakeholders' namely local residents, visitors/tourists, conservation area managers, government and nongovernmental agencies. According to Sanders (2007) visitors/tourists are more environmentally aware and will favour conservation to a higher degree than local residents. The majority of previous perception analyses and economic valuations of environmental goods have focused on investigating local communities' attitudes and perception of conservation areas (Szell & Hallett IV, 2013). This study thus sought to examine visitors' perception and attitude towards conservation in Agodi Gardens, a site

Visitors' attitude and behaviour towards conservation

that shares the features of both *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation areas in Ibadan city, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study is aimed at identifying the socioeconomic characteristics of visitors visiting Agodi Gardens in Ibadan, the visitors travel motives, visitors source of information about conservation and examine the attitude and behaviour of visitors towards conservation.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

Agodi Gardens is located in the city of Ibadan, the third largest city in Africa. The Garden is positioned North-East of Oyo State Secretariat, Southwest of the University Teaching Hospital, and North-West of the Premier Hotels (Omonona, 2015). It was established in 1967 as a major recreation centre and formerly known as Agodi Zoological and managed solely by the Western Region until the creation of Oyo State Government in 1976. It is an *ex-situ* conservation site on a wetland and it occupies about 13 acres (approximately 5.3 hectares) of land. The geographical coordinates are Latitude 7°25.01'N and Longitude 3°53'15.35"E with an elevation of 191m above sea level (Olubode, 2013). The Garden has a river called Dandaru River which runs through it. Oyo state in which the garden is located has an equatorial climate with dry and wet seasons and relatively high humidity. The dry seasons lasts from November to march while the wet season starts from April and ends in October. Average daily temperature ranges between 25°C and 35°C, almost throughout the year.

The garden had suffered some periods of neglect in the past but was resuscitated by the state government and opened in a grand style to the public in December, 2015 as a modern day tourist centre with a cosmopolitan mix of nature and funfair. Tourists, fun-seekers and holiday makers storm the garden everyday as the park opens to the public with the sum of ₦500 as entry fee. Agodi gardens has a lot of other attractions enclosed in it such as a playground for children, a restaurant, waterpark

and zoological garden. Some of the animals in the zoo are *Panthera leo* (lion), *Anas platyrhynchos* (White geese), *Crocodylus niloticus* (Nile crocodile), *Papio anubis* (Baboon), *Cercocebus torquatus* (Red capped mangabey) and *Psittacus erithacus* (Grey parrot).

Data Collection and Analysis

A reconnaissance survey was carried out prior to the administering of questionnaires to determine the inflow of visitors within the garden. The minimum daily number of visitors in the garden is 10 (weekdays) while the maximum is 150 (mostly weekend). This gives an average of 80 daily receipts. An estimated visitor's population for a two weeks period is 1120. This approach of sample size selection became viable following the unavailability of visitors' record. A ten percent sampling intensity was applied for sample size determination. One hundred and twelve copies of semi-structured questionnaire were administered using systematic random sampling technique (in which every fifth visitor to the garden was selected) within a two weeks period in November 2016, while one hundred copies were usable for analysis. The attitude and behaviour scales were adapted from Szell (2012) and subjected to a positive/negative rating. Descriptive statistical tools of mean, percentages, and frequencies were used to analyse the data received. It was analysed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.

Results

Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. It reveals that 52.0% of the respondents were female while 48.0% were male. In addition, 56.0% of the respondents were below 20 years, 38.0% of them were between the age of 21 – 30 years. It also shows that 89.0% of the respondents were single with 43.0% having B.Sc. certificate. This shows that majority of the respondents were well educated, 71.0% were students with 61.0% earning below ₦20,000.

Table 1: Demographic profiles of the visitors

Demographic Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	52	52.0
	Female	48	48.0
Age	Below 20 years	56	56.0
	21-30 years	38	38.0
	Above 30 years	6	6.0
Marital status	Single	89	89.0
	Married	11	11.0
Highest educational attainment	O level	30	30.0
	OND/HND	10	10.0
	Bsc	43	43.0
	Msc	6	6.0
	Others	11	11.0
Occupation	Trader	11	11.0
	Artisan	6	6.0
	Student	71	71.0
	Others	12	12.0
Income	Below #2000	61	61
	#20000-#30000	10	10
	#30000-#40000	6	6
	Above #40000	23	23

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Visitors Travel Motives and Source of Information about Conservation

Visitors' travel motives are presented in Figure 1. It indicates that 63.0% of the respondents visited for recreational purpose, 17.0% for nature observation, 10.0% for research purpose and 10.0% for other reasons such as business meetings. Visitors' sources of

information about conservation are in Figures 2. The major source of information about conservation according to the visitors is through mass media with 37.0%, followed by books with 20.0% and other means with 17.0%. This is followed by internet with 15.0% and people (family and friends) with 11.0%. 89.0% and 85.0% of the visitors have heard of and also know examples of endangered species (Figure 3).

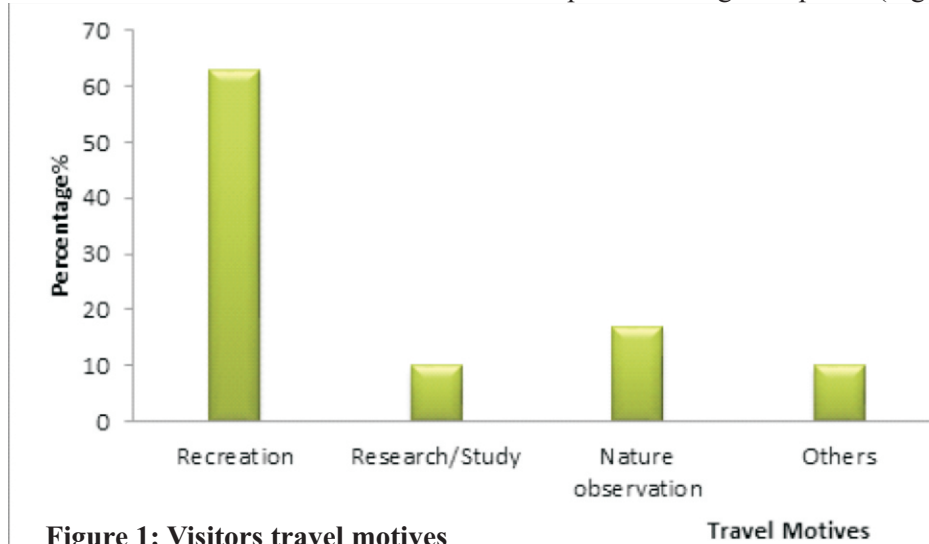


Figure 1: Visitors travel motives
Source: Field Survey, 2016

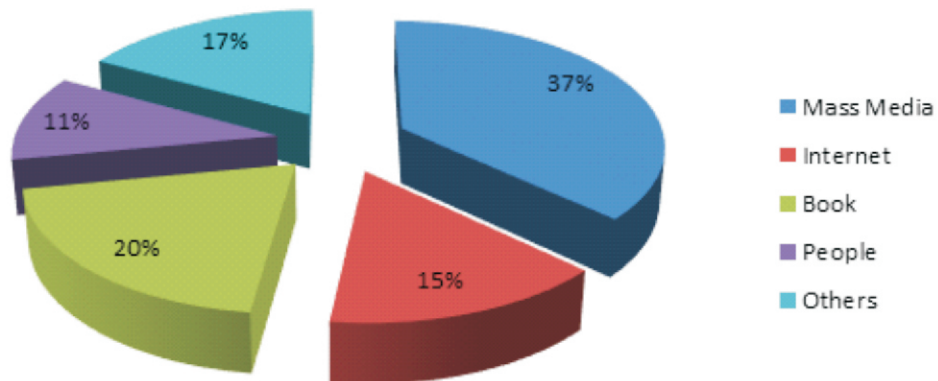


Figure 2: Visitors awareness media about conservation

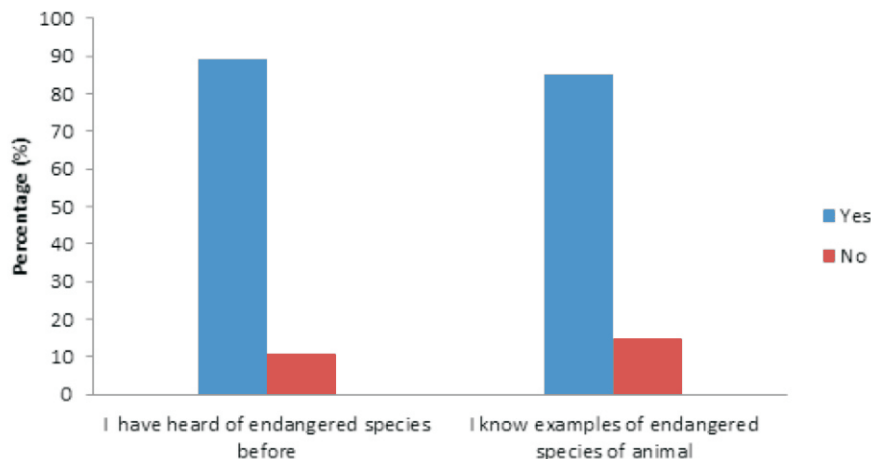


Figure 3: Awareness of Endangered species

Visitors' attitude and behaviour towards conservation

Attitude and behaviour of visitors towards conservation

Table 2 shows the attitude and perception of visitors toward conservation in Agodi Gardens. It shows that 74.0% of the respondents claimed that they were not interested in conservation while 70.0% had not attended any programme about conservation before. In addition, 70.0% did not actively search for information about conservation while 89.0% have heard about endangered species before and 84.0% claimed that conservation helps to prevent endangered species from

going into extinction. Furthermore, and 85.0% knew some endangered species of animals. Findings also show that 83.0% of the respondents perceived that biodiversity should be conserved. Majority (67.0% and 70.0% respectively) however did not advocate for the conservation of biodiversity and did not advise their family and friends to conserve natural resources. A greater percentage (62.0%) on the other hand felt that media campaigns should be done regularly on conservation and that government should declare more conservation areas (58.0%).

Table 2: Attitude and behaviour of tourists toward conservation

STATEMENTS	Percentage (%)		Rating
	Yes	No	
I am interested in conservation	26.0	74.0	-
I have attended programmes about conservation before	30.0	70.0	-
I actively search for information about conservation	30.0	70.0	-
I think conservation helps to prevent endangered species from going into extinction	84.0	16.0	+
Biodiversity should be conserved	83.0	17.0	+
I encourage my family and friends to conserve natural resources	30.0	70.0	-
Advocating for biodiversity conservation is what I can do	33.0	67.0	-
Media campaigns should be done regularly about biodiversity conservation	62.0	38.0	+
Government should declare more conservation areas	58.0	42.0	+

Note: + = positive rating, - = negative rating

Discussion

The study revealed that majority of the visitors were male, single, educated, young, students and earns a monthly income of below ₦20000. The fact that most of the visitors were youth agrees with Jonsson and Devonish (2008) and Ryan and Aglendon (1998) who noted that younger tourists are more active and are more likely to seek whole range of physical activities when visiting a destination, and that tourist who desire active and interactive experiences in tourist destinations are likely to be youths. Furthermore, 63.0% of the visitors travelled for recreational purpose. This shows that conservation and education is not the visitor's primary motive. This was observed by Yolandan and Giselle (2014) in a study carried out in South Africa Zoo that people visit the zoo purposely for altruistic recreational activities.

The major source of information about conservation according to this study is through mass media with 37.0%, followed by book (20.0%) and internet (15.0%). This study gives support to the vital role mass media play in creating people's awareness about the conservation of natural resources. This medium has been identified as one of the most effective ways of getting information across to the largest possible audience in any country (Komali, 2011). On the attitude and perception of visitors toward conservation in Agodi Gardens; visitors' responses were measured under a positive and negative attitudinal rating. Visitors to the zoo negative rating (5) outweighs their positive

(4). With respect to the positive rating, 83% of the respondents perceive that biodiversity should be conserved; 84% claimed that conservation helps to prevent endangered species from going into extinction. A greater percentage (62%) also perceived that media campaigns should be done regularly on this and that government should declare more conservation areas (58%). On the negative rating, 74% of the respondents claimed that they are not interested in conservation; 70% of them have not attended any programme about conservation; 70% also said they do not actively search for information about conservation and majority (67% and 70% respectively) do not advocate for the conservation of biodiversity; and do not advise their family and friends to conserve natural resources. Some of the visitors' positive attitude and behaviour towards conservation as determined by this study was also noted in Szell (2012). A major downfall to these positives is the disinterest of majority of the visitors in conservation. This may be due to the fact that the visitors travel motive is mostly for recreation.

Conclusion

Visitors to Agodi Gardens are mostly male, single, educated, young, students and earn a monthly income of below N20000. They travel mostly for recreational purpose. The major source of information about conservation according to this study is through mass media. This study thus gives support to the unparalleled role mass media play in creating people's awareness

about the conservation of natural resources. Majority of the visitors had negative attitude and behaviour towards conservation as they are mostly not interested and do not participate in any conservation activity. There is urgent need for conservation professionals to embark actively in conservation awareness to the visitors in Agodi Garden to ensure development of positive attitudes towards conservation since it is highly impossible to form a positive attitude and behaviour on a subject matter that is hardly known. It is therefore recommended that various media such as book, social media, communication corporations should be employed in dissipating conservation education to the populace. Promoters of ecotourism or managers of conservation areas can make use of formal classes or advocacy campaigns in schools. The management of Agodi Gardens (and other conservation areas) should employ professional guides to provide interpretation. Such guides can both provide interpretation for visitors, and can also act as the first line of defence for the environment. This will not only educate visitors on the resources of the site and the need for conservation, but also bring about a situation where visitors form a positive attitude and behaviour towards conservation and on the long run can advocate for biodiversity conservation wherever they find themselves.

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