

Assessment of the Availability and Utilization of Recreational Facilities in Selected Hotels at Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The provision of recreational facilities and the level of satisfaction derived by visitors are veritable tools in exploring the economic and social impacts of the hotels in which these are available. Private and public sector operators of hotels and policy makers in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry require this information in the quest to meeting the social and health needs of visitors. This study was carried out to assess the recreational facilities available in eight randomly-selected hotels within Akure Metropolis through site observation, personal interviews and questionnaire. The respondents were 10 randomly selected visitors in each hotel. The responses were analyzed through descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages and presented in graphs, bar and pie charts and tables. The recreational facilities in the hotels varied and include swimming pool, gymnasium, tennis court and games room with bar. The swimming pool and gymnasium were the most utilized facilities by 46.0 and 21.3% of respondents respectively. The facilities were used for relaxation (36.2%), exercise (18.8%) and fun (16%). Many of the respondents (42%) would be willing to re-visit and 28.6% expressed the desire to inform friends about the available recreational facilities. Thus, satisfaction and the purposes of using the recreational facilities were met. The quality of services provided for recreation was high (48.8% of interviewees) but site observation revealed the need for proper maintenance of the most enjoyed recreational facilities and acquiring additional ones to boost patronage and enhance general positive attitude towards recreation.

Keywords: Hotel, recreational facilities, availability, satisfaction, impact

Introduction

Leisure and recreation were recognized as causes for concern during the Great Depression of the 1930s and have become important concerns in the modern-day societies (Pigram and Jenkins, 2006). Anxiety and extensive stress, as a result of overwork, are indications of depression. It has the capacity to disrupt relationships and interfere with meaningful work and daily activities and so must be avoided. Coleman et al, (2001) observed that depression is one of the societal problems that manifest from increased leisure time that is not properly utilized, the others being idleness, violence, alcoholism, drug

abuse and sundry social vices. The activities and programmes of the Tourism and Hospitality Industry, in space and time, have the potentials to ensure the proper utilization of leisure and minimize the negative vices in the society.

Nigeria is a rich tourist and recreational destination. There are seven established National Parks, games reserves and three UNESCO World Heritage sites while opportunities exist to visit and participate in traditional and cultural festivals, moonlight stories, fishing and playing various games (Smith, 2015). Despite the huge potentials,

there seems to be an attitudinal indifference to recreation and leisure. Igbojekwe (2009) reported that 70% of the people interviewed indicated little or no interest in recreation and also expressed apathy towards tourist activities, tourism products and services and government programmes in tourism. The consequences of this lack of tourism habit or culture are poor investment and private sector participation in tourism and hospitality industry and under-utilization of the available recreational facilities in Nigeria. The overall effect is low patronage and returns on investment despite the efforts of tour operators to boost tourism (The Vanguard, 1999). Therefore, efforts at identifying the causes and providing solutions needed to improve the situation must determine, in figures, the level of provision and utilization of recreational facilities, particularly, in hotels.

The success of the tourism industry in any state of Nigeria will depend on the ability to develop, manage and market tourism products and activities. Ondo State is endowed with natural resources (favourable tropical climate, flora and fauna in uncultivated forests, oil and gas deposits, bitumen and extensive coastline) cultural and infrastructural resources of tourism proportions. Akure, the capital, is the largest commercial nerve-centre and most frequently visited city in the state such that it

has acquired the status of business tourist capital. These potentials and the proximity to the proposed UNESCO World Heritage site at Idanre culminated in the selection of Akure as one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) cities (Aribigbola, 2009). The outcome is a thriving and fast-growing hotel industry with revenues and customer loyalty determined by location and the standards of the recreational facilities provided.

The hotel business combines the services of providing accommodation and catering spatially and functionally. The practice of contemporary hotel business has exceeded these basic functions to offering services that will extend guests' stay and realize economic profit through satisfying their specific needs for which the roles of recreational facilities in hotels have become more important. Thus, in the light of the rapid growth of the hotel industry in Akure Metropolis, this research undertook an exploration of the recreational facilities and services in the hotels and assessed visitors' preferences and perception of the availability and relevance as measured by the rate of their utilization. The information on the state of available recreational facilities and social amenities will be of benefit to public and private sector operators and prospective investors in entertainment and recreation, and tourism and hospitality.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

The study was carried out in Akure (lat. 7°15' N, long. 5°15' E; 370 m altitude), the capital of Ondo State, Nigeria with a population of 500,000 in 2006 (Ondo State Information Bulletin, 2006) and projected to reach 1.8 million in 2015. The climate is influenced by rain-bearing southwest monsoon winds from the Atlantic Ocean and dry northeast winds from the Sahara desert which result in distinct wet and dry seasons in March-November and November-March respectively. The features

are annual rainfall of 1,524 mm, daytime atmospheric temperature at 28°-31°C and 80% mean annual relative humidity.

The geomorphology has been defined by the River Ala and the crystalline acid granitic formations of the pre-Cambrian basement complex such that the topography is generally undulating with plains and remnants of hills and inselbergs. The soils are characterized by sandy surface layers underlain by weakly-developed clayey, mottled and occasionally concretionary subsoil, erodible and variable

chemical composition. The vegetation is typically upland rainforest most of which has been degraded by agriculture (arable and tree crop farming), urban growth and infrastructure needed for social, economic and political development.

The research is exploratory such that multi-method techniques involving site observation, personal interviews and questionnaire administration were used. The sample frame is the total number of visitors and random sampling was used to select 8 hotels. The names of hotels in Akure metropolis which had recreational facilities were written on cards and shuffled continuously taking the top card at each shuffling until the required

sample size was met (Asika, 2005). Letters were sent to the hotels to seek audience with the management and for permission to conduct the study. Personal interviews were conducted with the hotel managers or their representatives while visitors to the hotels were respondents to questionnaire schedule. The study was conducted between February and August 2014.

The various responses from the questionnaire were coded and analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS version 17) and Microsoft Excel Spread Sheet Analysis to obtain frequency counts and percentages. The results were presented in tables, graphs, pie and bar charts

Results and Discussion

The demographic information of the respondents is presented in Table 1. A greater proportion of visitors who used the recreational facilities provided in the hotels aged between 31 and 50 years (76.3%). This

agrees with QORF (2008) who identified the predominant age groups with active participation in recreational activities as 25-54 years.

Table 1: Demographic Table on Information of respondents

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	50	62.5
	Female	30	37.5
Age	21-30	13	16.3
	31-40	34	42.5
	41-50	27	33.8
	above 51	6	7.4
Marital status	Single	23	28.8
	Married	42	52.5
	Divorced	12	15.0
	Widowed	3	3.7
Education	Primary	3	3.8
	Secondary	6	7.5
	Tertiary	56	69.9
	Others	15	18.8
Occupation	Civil Servant	40	49.9
	Self Employed	31	38.8
	Student	8	10.0
	Others	1	1.3
Income	Below ₦ 50, 000	20	25.0
	₦ 50-80, 000	20	25.0
	₦ 80-120, 000	28	35.0
	above ₦ 120, 000	12	15.0

Most of the respondents had been married (71.2%) which appears to be linked with the age structure. All the visitors attended educational institutions and so were literate which conforms to the occupation mainly as students, self-employed and civil servants. Males used the recreational facilities (62.5%) more than the females. This is similar to the observation of Cohen *et al.* (2007) that more males were seen in parks and recreation facilities and outnumbered the females in all recreation areas but equal in the playgrounds and tracks. Most of the respondents had monthly income of ₦80,000-120,000 (35%) which suggests that they can afford membership registration and be more willing to spend time needed for using the recreational facilities.

The recreational facilities available in the hotels and used by the visitors are shown in Fig. 1. The facilities are swimming pool (46%), restaurant and bar (25%), gymnasium (21.3%) while only 1.3% each had shopping mart and salon. The other facilities which include internet and children playground are available in 3.8% of the hotels while 1.3% contained all the facilities. The level of utilization of the recreational facilities shows that visitors' preferences differ and were individualistic. This is because recreation brings joy and satisfaction to people and the provision of appropriate recreational opportunities are critical to the satisfaction of an individual's need for cognitive and aesthetic stimulation (Cooper *et al.*, 2008).

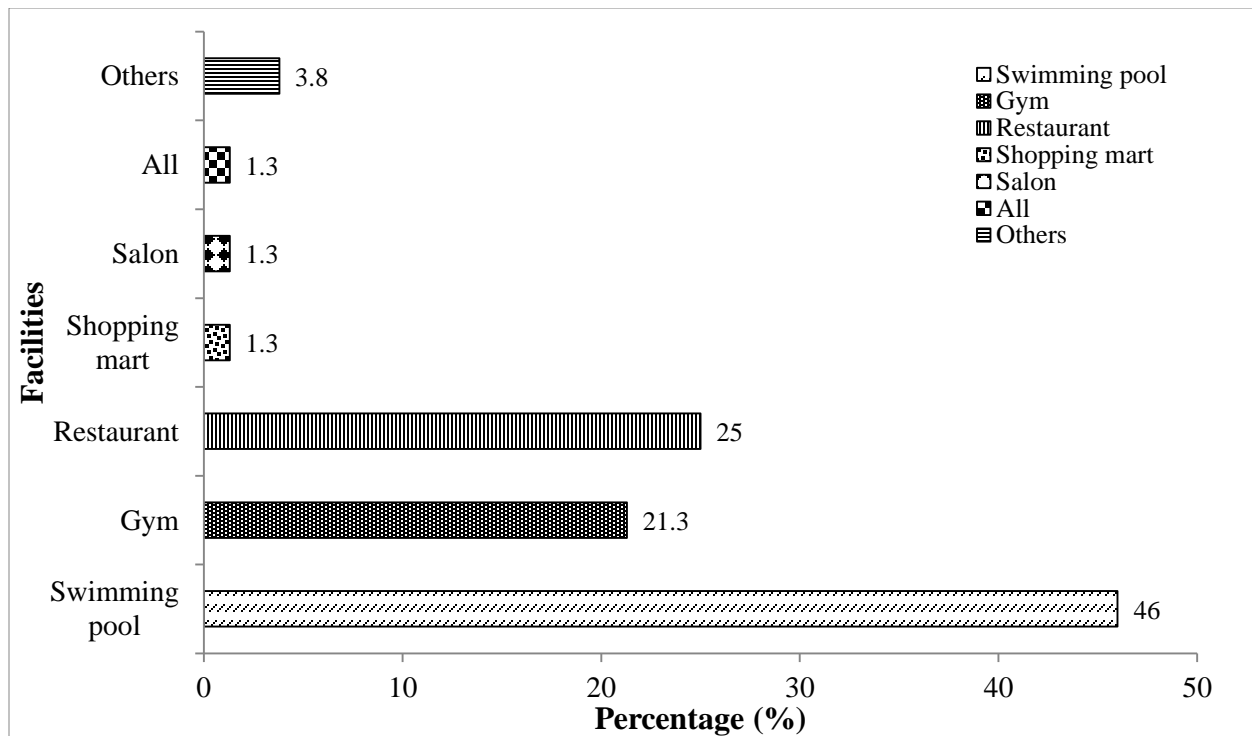


Figure 1: Facilities used most by visitors in the selected hotels

The purposes for using the recreational facilities by respondents are shown in Fig. 2. Most respondents use the facilities for relaxation (36.2%) more so as they expressed

the desire to relax after the long day at work. The facilities were also used for exercise (18.8%) and fun (16%) but less for entertainment and socializing. All the

purposes were achieved by 16% of the respondents. This is line with findings of Manning et al., (2005) that recreation involves a character engaging in a preferred activity in a particular ordinary environment that provides the required setting for the desired experience.

Fig. 3 shows the frequency of use of the facilities by the respondents. The highest level

of patronage was occasionally (28.8%) followed by weekly (23.8%) daily (13.8%) and monthly (11.3%) while 20% rarely used the facilities. This result however is not in agreement with findings of Javed *et al*, (2015) who recorded a higher percentage of monthly users of recreational facilities.

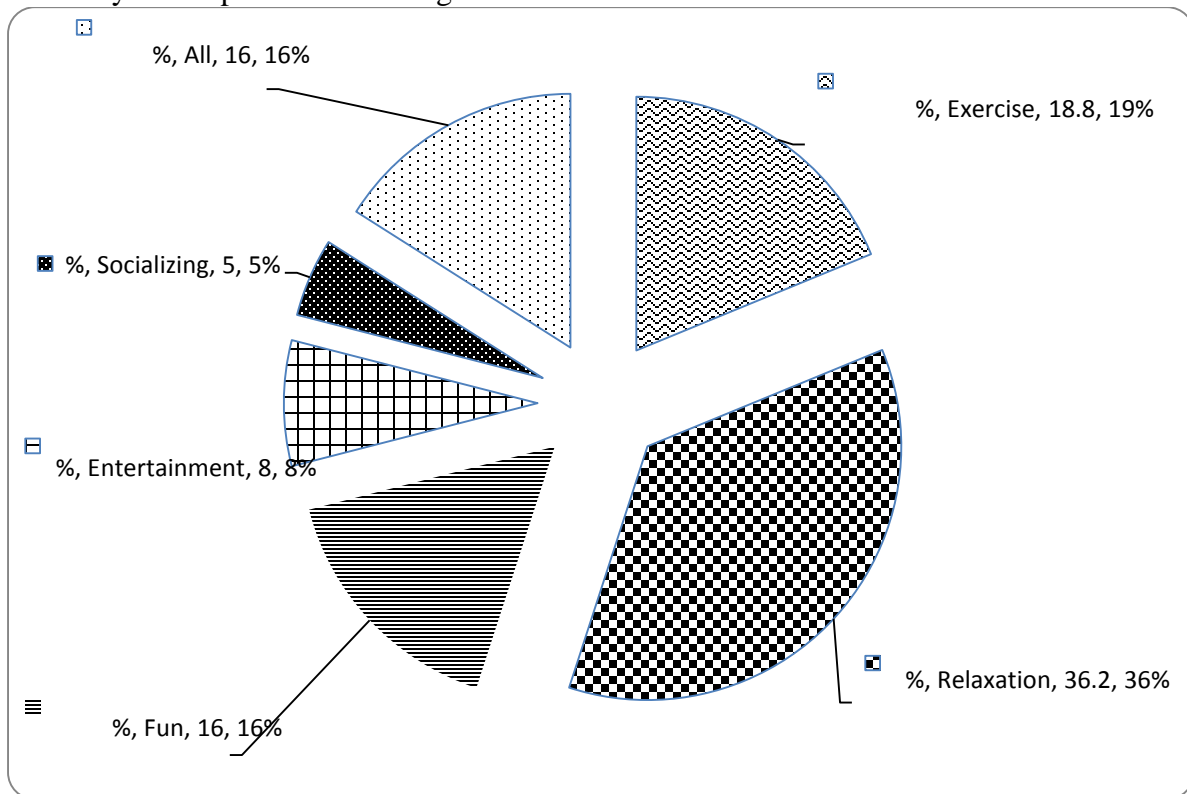


Figure 2: Purpose of using recreation facilities

The respondents' perception of the availability of the recreational facilities is shown in Fig. 4. Majority rated the level of availability as high to very high (66.3%) while

some agreed the level was average (28.8%) and only 1.3% rated the level as low probably because expectations were rarely met.

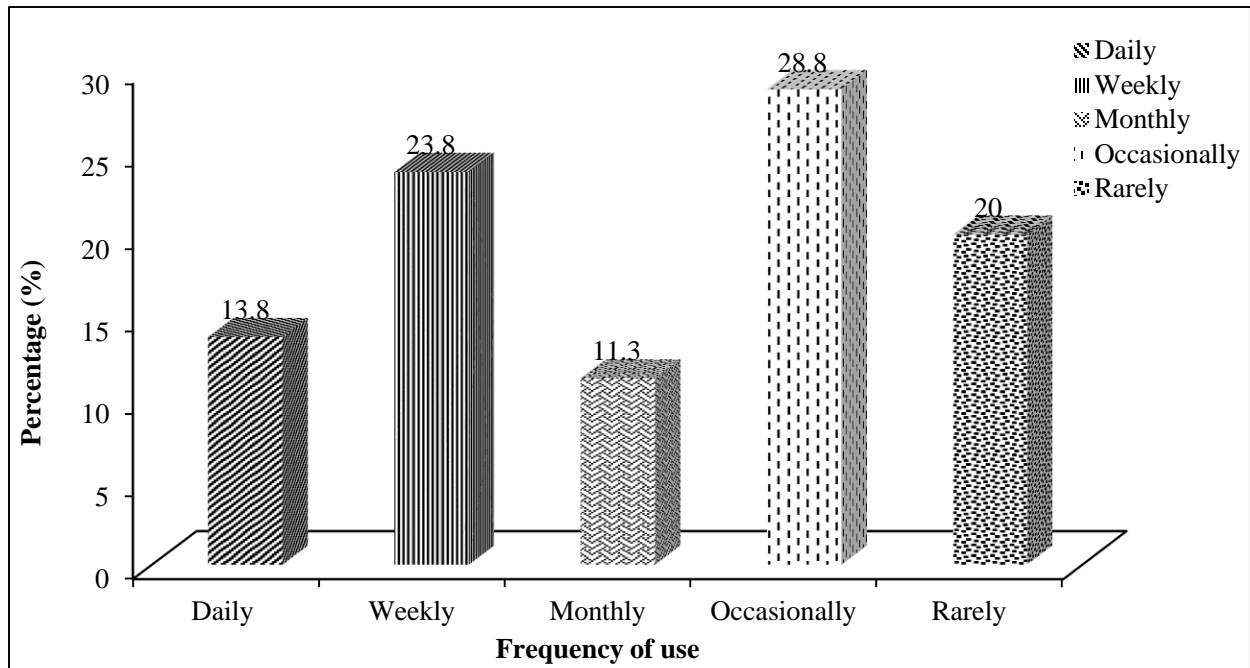


Figure 3: Frequency of use of recreation facilities by the respondents

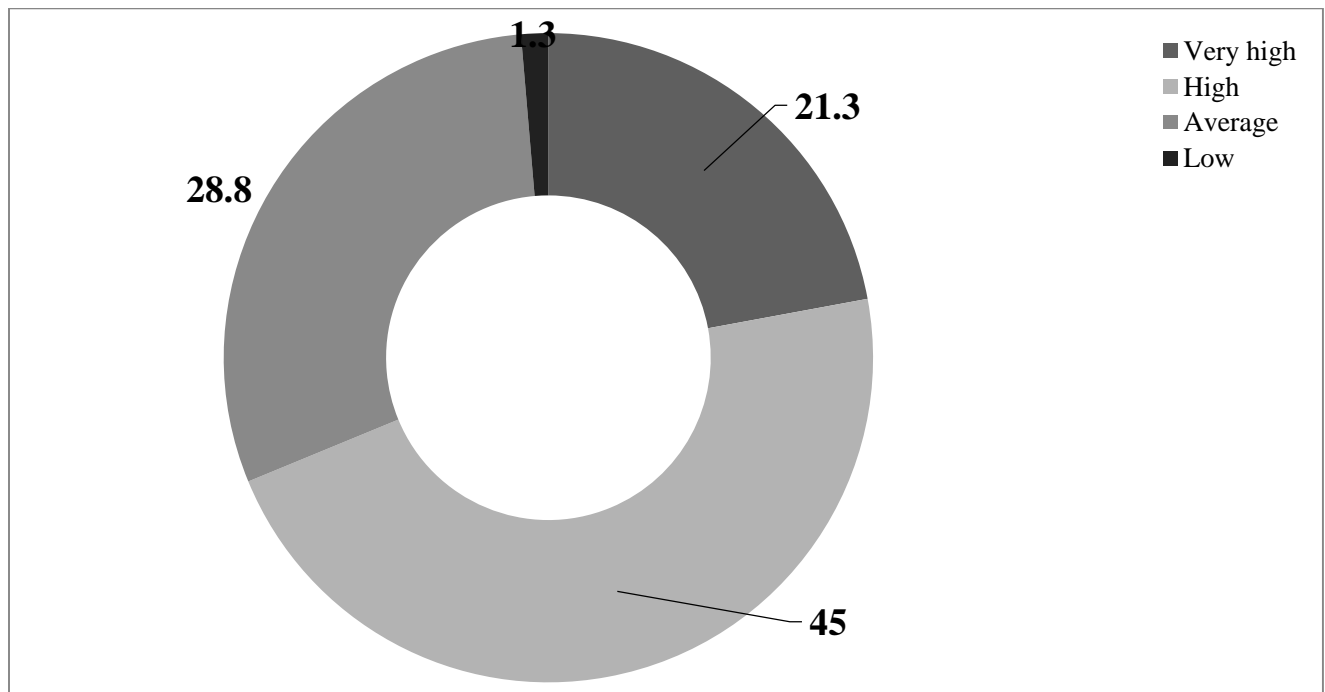


Figure 4: Availability of recreation facilities in the selected hotels

The impacts of the recreational facilities on meeting the visitors' expectation and satisfaction are shown in Table 2. A greater proportion of the respondents indicated the

willingness to come back (42.5%) while 28.8 and 22.5% indicated willingness to tell friends and noted improvement in the health status respectively.

Table 2: Impact of recreation facilities on visitors' satisfaction

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Willing to revisit	34	42.5
Willing to tell a friend	23	28.8
Improvement in health status	18	22.5
Others	5	6.2
Total	80	100.0

Since recreation is discretionary, an individual can choose to avoid the experience of a destination or to participate somewhere or somehow else. Hui *et al.*, (2007) opined that understanding the reason why tourists return to a destination were fundamental issues for destination managers since revisits would mean more sales revenue and less costs. The results of this study are indicators of satisfaction and that the purposes for the visits to the recreational facilities have been achieved. Since the visits to hotels for recreation are regarded as an essential part of tourism, the strategy for success and to improve patronage relates to providing the desired experience in order for people to come back for the purpose of recreation and tourism.

The interviews with hotel management and visitors and personal observation show that

maintenance of the recreational facilities is giving priority to ensure the availability for use at any point in time. This agrees with Fletcher and Fletcher (2003) who emphasized that visitor satisfaction is strongly related to the maintenance of available facilities and the behaviour of personnel. The hotels in Akure Metropolis are mindful of the fact that for customers to re-visit the facilities, they must be satisfied with the level of recreational facilities provided. Ibimilua (2009) had recommended that hotels and restaurants should maintain high standards and qualitative environmental conditions that conform to international standards in order to increased patronage. This greater patronage is hinged on customers' satisfaction and meeting their high levels of expectation.

Conclusion

Akure is the commercial nerve-centre and most frequently-visited city and business tourist capital of Ondo State, Nigeria. The economic prosperity of the city has engendered a thriving and fast-growing hotel and hospitality industry whose success and customer loyalty depend on location and the standards of the recreational facilities provided. The types of facilities and their level of utilization by visitors were studied. The hotels provided recreational facilities such as swimming pools, gymnasium, tennis

court and games room with bar while the most utilized were swimming pool and gymnasium for the main purpose of relaxation, exercise and fun. The willingness to re-visit and the desire to inform friends about the high quality of the facilities indicate the high level of customers' satisfaction. The proper maintenance of available facilities and acquisition of additional ones would boost customers' patronage and enhance positive attitude to recreation and tourism.

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