

PREVAILING ISSUES AND RATE OF TOURISTS PATRONAGE OF HISTORICAL MONUMENT: A STUDY OF BADAGRY SLAVE ROUTE AND RELICS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on Badagry Slave route and relics with emphasis on rate of tourist patronage and other related issues bothering on tourism. Qualitative and secondary data were employed in this study. A total number of 10 respondents were involved in the study. Findings showed that Excursion, diplomatic visit, festivities and hosting of meeting always determine the rate of patronage of this attraction. It is always at its peak in the month of November to March and less in April to October as a result of heavy down pour. The attraction recorded its highest number of domestic tourist patronage in the year 2000 (13,500 arrivals), while 2,003 international arrivals was recorded in the year 2007. Factors accounting for poor patronage to this attraction include poor funding, poor management of the place, and inadequate manpower. Therefore there should be regular training and retraining of staff so that they can easily meet up with unfolding challenges in the society.

Keywords: Slave route and relics, baracoon, historical monument, international and domestic tourists, arrivals

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is positioned as the world largest industry has led to the widespread acknowledgement of the decisive role it plays in shaping the global economy and creating employment for millions of people. Tourism is often identified as a promising growth sector that offers one of the few opportunities for economic diversification. It has many linkages with other economic sectors, and if integrated into national development plans with adequate provisions for intersectoral linkages can contribute to the growth of all tourism-related activities in all of the major economic sectors - agriculture, including fishing, industry and services, including transportation (CSD 1996). Several empirical studies have also documented that tourism has direct, indirect and induced impacts on economic development (Slee et al., 1997). The industry is one of the most crucial tradable sectors in the world. Tourism is an effective weapon which can assist underdeveloped countries to achieve the 2015 anti-poverty Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Globally the tourism industry has created

100,000 new jobs a year thus accounting for 11 percent of global employment (WTO, 2004 cited by Bankole and Odularu 2006). Its unique features as the only service industry where there is a positive balance of trade flows from first world to the third world countries, makes it a viable sector in which most African cities where half of young people account for about 50 percent of the population could reap enormous rewards from its growth. It was revealed that 50 percent of the world's poorest nations ranked tourism in their top three income sources, attracting vital foreign exchange.

In Nigeria, tourism is relatively a budding enterprise but owing to the country's potentials, it has undergone a gradual but progressive evolution in the past three decades (Nigeriabusinessinfo 2005). The tourism sector in this West Africa's leading nation encompasses tropical beaches, rain forest, savannahs, lively cities and rich cultures. It has so far been in the shadow of the oil sector. New investment initiatives and efforts to increase security are now to change this (afrolNews, 2008). However, it has been stressed by NTDC (2007) that the realization of the potential role of the tourism sector as a major instrument for socio-economic development and sustainable living may not be possible unless our numerous tourist attractions are well developed, packaged and promoted, with diligent attention to security and welfare of visitors. While appreciating the necessity for this, very little is known about the level of patronage of most of our tourist attractions both at domestic and international fronts, hence the focus of this study which is on Badagry Slave Route and Relics in Lagos State.

The particular concern of this work include the rate of patronage of this attraction by domestic and international tourists; the factors that influence the rate of patronage by domestic and international tourists; the factors militating against improved patronage of Badagry Slave Routes and Relics and how the identified problems could be solved for better results and general improvement of tourism sector in the state. The popularity of this Slave Route and Relics as a historical monument with relatively developed infrastructure and its proximity to the researchers informed its choice as the focus of this study. The position of this work is that a comparative study of local and International tourists' patronage to this attraction will showcase its significance to tourism consumption and development and other issues surrounding it. This is limited to the rate of tourist patronage between 1995 and 2007.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SLAVE ROUTE AND RELICS IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian slave routes identify the main chartered routes used for the shipment of slaves from West Africa to the new worlds between the 16th and 18th century. This trans-Atlantic slave trade is perhaps the most significant element of Nigerian and African history. Europeans discovered the southern areas of Nigeria along its coast in the 15th Century. Portuguese explorers settled in southern Nigeria and started the slave trade. The Dutch, British and other European traders later joined them in the slave business. The Slave trade flourished for about 300 years in Nigeria. Authentic proofs have been established that Nigerian slaves were crucial and dominant in the development of the Americas as the blacks of this route dominate the black

population from North America to Cuba and other Caribbean Countries down to Brazil. The Bights of Benin and Biafra were the main locations of departure in Nigeria from where the Yorubas, Igbos, Moko, Bibi tribes who are now identified in many parts of Americas particularly Jamaica, the tidewater areas of Maryland, Virginia and other Anglophone colonies.

Badagry (Lagos State), Calabar, Ikot Abasi (Akwa Ibom State) Opobo and Arochukwu are three locations of strategic importance. Badagry was the first slave port because of its location close to the ocean which facilitated slaves to be taken via the coastal regions, including Opobo and Arochukwu (Nigerian towns), Gold Coast in Ghana, Quidah in the Republic of Benin, and Goree Island Senegal, via the Atlantic ocean to the Caribbean and the new world of the Americans. Badagry as a historic location has many outstanding relics capturing the full story of the slave trade covering the hunting and capture of slaves, the imprisonment of slaves prior to being sold, the selling of slaves at a slave market and the route taken by the slaves to the slave ships. It has a museum which consists of high quality authentic materials related to all slave trade process, while such museum could be aided further through UNESCO funding as a home of pathetic history of the blacks. The compound of Chief William Abass Seriki the Slave Chief and his baracoon (slaves prison) remain intact and important historical monument.

The Slave Market is a walled area in the center of Badagry, which provides a Slave Market exhibit and depict the brutal and sub-human conditions under which the slaves were held and later transported. Another dramatic area is the "Point of No Return" consisting of a park and jetty area from where slaves were taken by boat across the lagoon to the Atlantic Ocean side where they are finally shipped. Badagry historic sites and relics have a real and historically significant story to tell. The standard of the building particularly the slave market and the slave master yard are in need of repair and restoration. This historic site should be the subject of conservation in order to prevent further decay. Besides, the town consists of the first storey building in Nigeria, and in it, the English bible was first translated into Yoruba by Bishop Ajayi Crowther, a freed slave who later turned a missionary; a point where Christianity was first preached in Nigeria under an Agia tree is also significant in Badagry. Physical improvements and conservation coupled with extended interpretation, recreations and re-enactments will be required to optimize the authentic experience for tourists and position these locations as primary slave route attractions (NTDC 2006).

BADAGRY SLAVE ROUTES

There are five slave routes in this ancient town; each is named after the country which dominated the routes. There is Dutch Route which runs from the slave market, Posukoh, to the port. Also in existence is Portuguese Route that runs from Jegba Quarters (present day Agbalata market) to the port. Others include English Route - from Ahovikoh Quarters to the port; French Route that is connected by Awhajigor and Brazillian Route, which runs from Boekoh to the port (Black Heritage Festival nd).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted qualitative method in its approach towards achieving the objectives raised herein. The qualitative method involves the in-depth interview of one official of Badagry Slave route and relics; three packaged tour Manager, one resource persons from Tourism Departments in Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State and two from Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu, Lagos State. Secondary source of data collection (existing literatures); relevant publications that are available on the research subject; as well as contextual analysis of recorded data on Badagry Slave Route and Relics also form part of qualitative method adopted in this study. These are very essential in order to achieve the set objectives. The data collected were transcribed. The transcribed information was fed into the Open code computer software for analysis. The analyzed data were interpreted with quotations where necessary for clarification of issues.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic characteristics of the respondents in this study show that three (3) of them were males, while the remaining two (2) were females. Apart from the staff of the Slave relics that have been working with the department for the past seven years, the remaining respondents have between 4 to 5 years experience in terms of patronage of this Relics particularly during the regular Students Educational Tour of this Relics. The official data collected from Badagry Slave route and relics which showed the numerical figure of both the domestic and International tourists' patronage to the place were expressed in percentage. The data cover the period between year 1995 and 2007. The Rate of Tourists Patronage of Badagry Slave Route and Relics: According to the data which span between 1995 and 2007, this tourist attraction recorded the highest tourists inflow in year 2000 with tourists inflow estimated at 13,500 while the lowest inflow was in 1995 with total patronage of 4,800 tourists.

According to the above figure, the number of domestic tourists that patronized Badagry Slave route and relics between 1995 and 2007 amounted to 92,569, while international or foreign tourists recorded 7,206 for the same period of time (1995 - 2007). In all, the total population of tourists (both domestic and international) that patronized the attraction is 99,775. In the year 2007 the highest international tourist patronage recorded was 2,003 while the lowest inflow was in the year 2005 with only 42 international tourists. It was noted that there was no record kept in 1999 and the year 2001 for both domestic and international tourists. The reason given for this was that of political uncertainties. According to an officer in this establishment:

"In view of previous political logjams in the country, people were not sure of what the outcome of another democratic experiment of 1999 in Nigeria will be. As a result of this, many tourists (both domestic and international) stayed away from this attraction. This accounts for the reason why patronage was not recorded for that year".

Factors that influence the rate of patronage by domestic and international

tourists: As it was revealed in the administrative office of the Slave route that what usually brought high tourists patronage was as a result of excursion, diplomatic visit, festivities and hosting of meeting in the peak period usually from the month of November to March and less in April to October as a result of heavy down pour of rain fall. The respondents in the in-depth interviews equally corroborated this, while some other factors were listed. The respondents list the following as the factors influencing the rate of tourist patronage of Badagry Slave Route and Relics: availability of business cum leisure activities; occasional festivities like Eyo, etc, Students educational activities, influx of guests into the state as a result of traditional activities like burial of important chiefs or dignitaries. In the words of a Package-tour Manager:

"Apart from Educational tour by the Students from primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions to the place, the usual practice is that people usually take the visitation to this place as a secondary matter. It is either they are in Lagos State for conferences; meetings, workshops, or other social activities that are taking place within the State".

To another respondent who is an academic:

Eyo festival has for long being a regular channel through which Badagry Slave Route and Relics gets its visitors. Whenever tourists come for Eyo festival they usually use the occasion to pay a visit to this attraction and this has been going on for years.

Another respondent (a Packaged tour Manager) said:

"Unlike any other festival that could either be annual biannual etc, Eyo festival is held to mark important events in the state. The implication of this is that the festival can take place whenever occasion and tradition demand especially at the final burial rites for a highly regarded chief. The more we have such occasions the more the patronage of the Slave Route and relics at Badagry".

In view of the fact that the domestic patronage to this heritage is on the higher side compared to that of the foreign tourists, inquiry was made from the respondents on the rationale behind higher domestic patronage to this attraction. A Lecturer from one of the Polytechnics whose students are regular visitors to the place said:

"It is one of the prominent heritage on ground in the state hence the inevitability of the need to patronize it".

In the words of another Lecturer:

"The curiosity about the place based on what many have read in the history book and heard from people who had knowledge about the place have been motivating the patronage".

Another respondent who is a staff of this heritage said:

"Many schools are incorporating educational tour in their curriculum; availability of such schools that cut across the state; and the neighbouring states have been providing avenue for regular patronage of this place".

In the words of another Packaged tour Manager who is a respondent here:

"The unique geographical location of Badagry town particularly its bracing beaches made it a sought-after entity for the tourists. These along with the historical heritage influence the tourists' inflow into the community on regular basis".

Though the data provided on the rate of patronage of tourists to this attraction look impressive, however the expectation is that this rate of patronage should have been more than what it is (as at the time of this study) in view of the popularity of this attraction and prominent position it held during the era of slave trade. On the basis of this, the rate of patronage is adjudged inadequate and poor in nature hence the inquiry on what account for such poor patronage. The position of the respondents that took part in the in-depth interview based on their experiences of the place on the factors that account for poor patronage of the Slave route and relics include poor funding, poor management of the place, and inadequate manpower. According to a respondent who is a staff of this tourist attraction:

"We have problem of inadequate funding by the government. This is a common phenomenon; it is everywhere. Also there is need for extra hands on the job. We need to give kudos to the Lagos State government in terms of giving consideration to some of the tourist attractions in the State and in terms of tourism development; however much still needed to be done for better results".

But the perspective differs on the part of other respondents who were frank in relating what they felt accounted for poor patronage of this attraction. Majority of them went for poor management of the place. According to one of them:

"The major cause of low patronage of this attraction is poor management and lack of courtesy on the part of some staff of the place, particularly among those that attend to tourists when they are on visit. I've heard a tourist complaining bitterly of unruly manner of a particular guide within this attraction once. When you look at this critically such issue is very terrible because you cannot tell the number of people such experience had been intimated with. Where staff of a historic place like this are deficient in manner of approach it can have damaging effects on the fortune of such place in terms of patronage and development, you know first impression last longer. Domestic tourists may be able to stomach such manner because we are used to it, but it may not be the same with foreign tourists".

The reason for lack of data on patronage of this attraction was as a result of internal wrangling that occur within the staff over the issue of leadership of another attraction within the community, that is, the first storey building in Nigeria. The point here is that all attraction centres in the town work hand in hand hence the effect of such wrangling on each of them. Factors militating against general development of Badagry Slave Routes and Relics: Some problems were established as militating against the development of Badagry Slave Route and Relics. The problems identified include:

"Lack of tourism experts in the slave route and relics; poor record keeping of the slave route and relics; lack of courtesy on the part of some staff of the place and occasional harassment of tourists in the slave route and relics, as well as non-availability of cruise boat from slave route and relics to the 'port of no return".

A respondent who is an academic submitted that:

"Most of the staff of this place are regular staff with no basic or related training on how to manage or operate in an organization of the magnitude of Badagry Slave Routes and Relics. This is affecting their performance and services they are rendering".

Speaking on a similar issue, a respondent said:

"It is obvious that most of the staff of the place are regular civil servants seconded to the place with no requisite training on their jobs hence there incompatibility with the assignments being given to them therein".

In the words of another respondent:

"The problem there is that the staff with unruly behaviour may not see their working in this establishment as worthwhile. It is even possible that they are 'modern' religious types who may perceive their commitment to the job as being idolatory. But if they have received formal training in this regard, it would have eradicated such impression or reduce it drastically to the level that will not affect their career, after all the Nigerian constitution affords everybody the right to worship in his or her peculiar way so far it will not affect another person".

A female respondent concern was on the need to be innovative in terms of services being provided for the tourists in Badagry Slave route and relics. According to her, this includes exploring into unexplored frontiers such as provision of cruise boat. In her words:

"Many tourists would have loved to explore the 'Port of no return' in the course of their visit in order to appreciate the havoc the slaves passed through. This would have added glamour to this attraction; it would have been the most sought-after attraction within Badagry Slave Route and relics. However absence of cruise boat makes this unattainable and at the same time deny the place the needed opportunity for greater development".

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

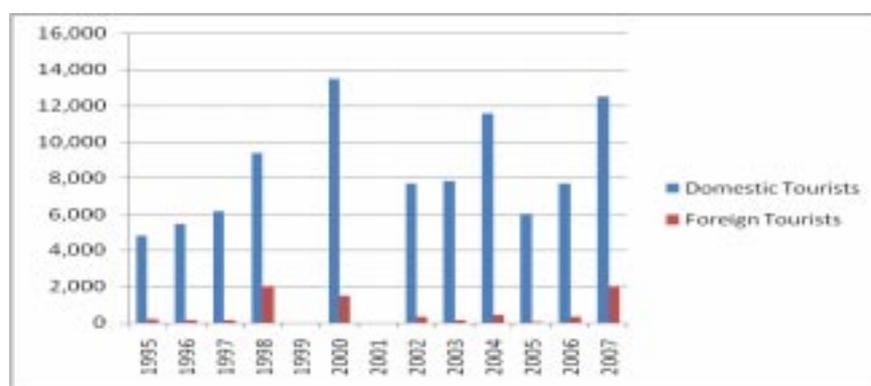
The most pathetic issue noted in the course of this study is that there exist no tangible way of keeping record within this establishment. In view of the central role this attraction is playing as first Slave route in Nigeria, much is expected from them in terms of record keeping to facilitate robust research work and outcome. However, the followings are the issues noted in the course of this study:

- The number of domestic tourists that patronized Badagry Slave route and relics between 1995 and 2007 surpassed that of international tourists.
- Students on excursion are the regular patrons of this Slave route and relics; this therefore affirm the fact that excursion, diplomatic visit, festivities and hosting of meeting always determine the rate of patronage of this attraction. It is always at its peak in the month of November to March and less in April to October as a result of heavy down pour of rainfall..
- In the year 2007 the highest international tourist patronage was recorded in 2007 with 2,003 tourists, while the highest domestic tourist patronage of 13,500 arrivals was recorded in the year 2000.
- The lowest international tourists' patronage recorded was in 2005 with only 42 international tourist arrivals, while the lowest domestic patronage recorded was 4,800 tourists in 1995.
- It was noted that there was no record kept in 1999 and the year 2001 for both domestic and international tourists.

- Data provided portrayed poor patronage while the factors accounting for this include poor funding, poor management of the place, and inadequate manpower.
- The factors militating against the development of this attraction are lack of tourism experts in the slave route and relics; poor record keeping of the slave route and relics; lack of courtesy on the part of some staff of the place and occasional harassment of tourists in the slave route and relics, as well as non-availability of cruise boat from slave route and relics to the 'port of no return'.

Based on the above, the following recommendations were made:

- Employment of trained experts would enhance the development of the slave route and relics, hence the need for a well trained staff with specialization in tourism or related field particularly in tour guiding.
- Record keeping should be made a priority hence the qualified and well trained staff should be put at the helm of affairs of this unit for positive outcome. It should be an autonomous unit within the
- Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) should give financial assistance towards development of this attraction.
- There should be regular training and retraining of staff so that they can easily meet up with unfolding challenges in the society. Attendance of conferences and workshops are other ways by these staff could be assisted to update themselves with the challenges of their tasks.
- Efforts should be made to reach out to the corporate organizations that will be coming to the assistance of Badagry Slave route and relics. The help could be in form of renovation and projection of the image of this attraction both at local and international spheres.
- Lagos State Tourism Corporation and Lagos State Transport Management Authority in partnership with NTDC should make provision for cruise boats which would be used for conveying the tourists round the coastal aspects of this attraction particularly, the 'point of no return'.



Domestic and Foreign Tourists Patronage of Slave Route/relics (1995-2007)

Source: Adeyinka, 2008

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