

Enhancing the Nigerian Tourist Attractions through Landscaping for Sustainable Tourism Development

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This paper asserts the case for developing Nigeria's tourism industry, with particular emphasis on the physical aspects, especially landscaping. Thus, the main objective of the study is to investigate the need for landscaping elements in the Nigerian tourist attractions. This was carried out through a critical review of literature on landscaping; as well as examining its importance to tourism development. Furthermore, the investigation was underpinned by an empirical investigation using the quantitative method of data collection through questionnaire survey on all stakeholders in the tourism industry in Nigeria. The data generated from the survey were analysed and results expressed in percentages and standard deviation. The findings revealed that landscaping has the potential to enhance tourism experience and contribute to human wellbeing. And brings to limelight the important role landscaping plays with the implication that if landscaping is not made to be at the centre of tourism policy, tourism is likely to fall short of expectation. The paper therefore strongly recommends that landscaping should be made a permanent feature of Nigerian tourism development.

Keywords: landscaping, Nigeria, quality of life, sustainable tourism

Introduction

Tourism is becoming one of the main focus for economic revitalization globally and especially in developing countries where attention is being directed, to serve as avenue for economic diversification (Awodele & Ayeni, 2011). It benefits the country as a whole, as well as the local economy (Bankole & Odularu, 2006). In view of this, it is vitally important that tourism is sustainably developed in Nigeria by providing all supporting and essential infrastructure that are lacking, which will collectively enhance tourism experience of potential tourists.

As noted by Ayeni, Ebohon, and Taki (2009), the 'Nigeria tourism industry is beset with numerous problems', and prominent amongst these are the dearth and absence of tourism infrastructures and supporting institutions. Thus, there is the need to focus on improving on the physical look of many of the Nigeria's tourist attractions through adequate provision of landscape elements, Nigeria is highly blessed with natural resources (Jiboku & Jiboku, 2010), which it has not been able to capitalise on for effective and sustainable development. The lopsided development of the oil sector for export on the one hand, and on the other, the huge revenue from oil exports have consigned other equally vital sectors of the economy to the periphery of economic activities. One of such sector, despite the huge potentials, is the tourism sector.

One of the main attributes of the tourism sector is the labour intensiveness, which affords tremendous opportunities for employment, income generation, and foreign exchange earnings (Adora, 2010). For a labour surplus economy like Nigeria, it is clear that sectors such as tourism can contribute significantly to economic growth and development. This is why the World Tourism Organisation statistics shows Nigeria lagging seriously behind other countries with regards to earnings, tourism arrival, and departure (WTO, 2008), and this represents a missed opportunity for Nigeria to effect a sustainable and diversified economy. Thus, the need for Nigeria to develop its tourism sector is overwhelming, given its needs to diversify its economy from crude oil exploration and exports, and above all seize on the labour intensive advantages offered by the tourism sector for employment and income generation. However, and in the experiences of other countries, the tourism sector has to be planned and developed for the full benefits to manifest in sustainable development (Figueira, 2001).

While tourism supporting infrastructure is underdeveloped and grossly inadequate, this is compounded by the total disregard for landscaping in little efforts made towards tourism development. Landscape is significant to tourism development in many respects; as argued by Abraham, Sommerhalder and Abel (2010), landscapes have the potential to enhance mental, physical and social wellbeing, and these attributes are overwhelmingly important to tourism given the beneficial impact on

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the quality of life and tourism experience. This paper therefore advanced the argument that, introducing landscape elements is the most effective ways to sustainable tourism development, and this will enhance and transform tourism in Nigeria.

Sustainable Tourism and Landscape

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WECD) defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs” (WECD, 1987). This definition follows the report in response to global concerns about the state of the global environment, which was noticeably degrading and degenerating rapidly (Fashola, 2012; Naik, 2010). The significant aspect of this definition is that it places mankind at the heart of the global environmental deterioration given its view that the current rate of global natural resource consumption is at variance with the ‘carrying-capacity’ of the natural environment to regenerate itself (Ebohon & Rwelamila, 2001)

The particular concerns are that, at this rate of consumption, the ability of future generation to satisfy their own need is compromised (WECD, 1987). As noted by VanDerZanden and Cook (2010), the over consumption or misuse of natural resources by current generation leaves fewer and degraded resources for future generation hence the call for sustainable development, which is a concept that advocates a balance to be struck between human needs and the regenerative capacity of the natural environment (Ercan, 2011). Thus, sustainable development is about meeting human needs without having to compromise the ability and integrity of the natural environment.

The field of tourism is not immune to the concept of sustainable development given the close relationship between the natural environment and tourism (Inskeep, 1987). This relationship can be found in the definition of tourism by the World Tourism Organisation as the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetics needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological process, biological diversity and life support systems. In the same vein as WECD definition of sustainable development, Swarbrooke (1999) perceives sustainable tourism as tourism that meets the current needs of tourists, the tourism industry, and host communities without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own tourism needs. Thus, sustainable tourism is tourism development that avoids damage to the natural environment, as well as the local socio-economy and cultures (Nohl, 2009, Tzanopoulos et al, 2011). As a result requires that sustainable tourism development to be carefully

planned for the full benefits to accrue to the local economy (AMSET, 2007).

What constitutes a developed tourism sector hinges on several attributes that include the quality of the landscape, the diversity of wildlife, including flora and fauna; the historic and cultural features, and availability of tourism supporting infrastructure and services (Supplementary Planning Guidance, 2004). These attributes define landscape and hence tourist attraction, which Liu, Ko and Ko (2011) define as “things to see, activities to do and experiences to be remembered”. In this regard, tourism can enhance quality of life of tourists directly, and also indirectly impact other stakeholders in the tourism industry through employment and income generation, as well as the opportunity it creates for knowledge exchange between tourists and the local residents.

Landscape plays the role of the enhancement of tourism development; the reason for this assertion is that landscape refers to the combination of natural and cultural, physical and symbolic elements, and features on land that are the products of human and natural environment interactions (Supplementary Planning Guidance, 2004). It is through this relationship that the impact of tourism and the attendant quality of life accrues to the tourists through their experiences (Supplementary Planning Guidance, 2004). Given this intricate relationship that exists between landscapes, tourism, and the natural environment, it is crucially important to adopt a more sustainable approach to tourism development, particularly the planning and management of landscapes (Leitao & Ahern, 2002). This ensures a landscape that supports the ecological processes and guarantee biodiversity (Opdam, Steingrover & Rooij, 2006). Indeed, the Scottish Natural Heritage (2003), considers the quality of the environment important for functional, aesthetics, scientific and economic reasons; ensuring that the environment remain useful; that is, offering safety, tranquillity, and recreational opportunities for tourists.

Dejean-pons and Chaboisseau (2000) argued that landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere and a key element of individual and social wellbeing. Emphasizing on the meaning of quality of life, Pacione (2003) argued that it is not necessarily a simple function of material wealth but refers either to the conditions of the environment that people live or the attribute of the people themselves. This is why landscape is rightly perceived to be more than just a view, and in addition, it contributes to the characteristics that make an area unique, and this is important to tourism experience (CPRE, 2010; White, 2006). Given the relevance of landscape to tourism, there is an overwhelming need to approach the development and management of landscape sustainably. Creating and managing sustainable landscapes as highlighted

by Dodson (2010) encourages people to engage and indulge in outdoor leisure activities.

Nohl (2011) asserts that an improvement of landscape aesthetics will have much to do with sustainable development of landscapes, thus, sustainability is an all embracing principle for developing and managing nature and resources. Ling and Dale (2011) argued that, interaction with nature is as vital for community as is social intercourse; without landscape and cultural diversity, both ecological and human systems will stagnate and eventually collapse or fail.

In the works of Selman (2008); Backhaus (2008), and Gailing (2005), five dimensions to sustainable landscape are discussed. Firstly, environmentally sustainable landscape requires landscapes to be of sufficient size and quantity and must maintain a healthy and viable flora and fauna population. Secondly, an economically sustainable landscape must also embrace attractiveness to support tourism and recreation activities. Thirdly, a socially sustainable landscape must emphasis grass root participation and inclusively n decision making, and accessibility. Fourthly, politically, sustainable landscape should reflect effective governance structure for both private and public domain. And finally, aesthetically sustainable landscape must address visual perception and amenity, as well as adopt a healthy and functioning system. Thus, landscape not only plays an important role enhancing visual appeal of tourist destinations but also crucial to sustainable tourism development. Accordingly, sustainable landscape is landscape which contributes to human wellbeing, protects and enhances the ecosystem (flora and fauna) by constantly regenerating while affording future generations the opportunity to fulfil their tourism needs.

Wellbeing and Sustainable Landscape

Quality of life refers to the degree of well-being felt by an individual or group of people, and this relates to both physical (health, diet, pain and diseases) and psychological (worry, stress and pleasure) aspects of life. In a similar vein, Felce and Perry (1999) define quality of life as the satisfaction of an individual's values, goals and needs through the actualisation of their abilities or life style. In the words of Benson and Roe (2007), quality of life is defined by broad indicators, including the natural environment, opportunities, and services available to people living in a given area

A direct contact with nature, particularly a well-designed landscape can facilitate relaxation and contribute to quality of life (Thompson, et al, 2007, Klett 2004). Other forms of benefits include

psychological-stress reduction, and improvement to physiological-physical health. Indeed, SEEDA (2005) has shown that being exposed to nature can yield immense health benefits such as reductions in blood pressure. Similarly, Morris (2003) also found that visual contact with nature has huge emotional and psychological benefits as well as restorative effects.

Morris (2003) has identified five key benefits of exposure to the environment, these includes, facilitating social interaction and fosters a more socially beneficial society; improving people's physical health and mental well-being; improves psychological and spiritual health, leading to increased life-span, greater well-being and increased ability to function better at work and home. Also, it helps to free the mind by enhancing spiritual, sensory and aesthetics awareness; and lastly, participating in regular outdoor physical activities can contribute significantly to quality of life. As such there is the need to enhance the environment for man's benefit.

Similarly, Ulrich (1979) stressed that individuals feel significantly better after exposure to nature scenes. Furthermore, landscaping that includes trees, shrubs, lawns, gardens and flowers improve our quality of life. It enhances and helps the environment by cleaning the air, controlling erosion and providing shelter to wildlife. In addition to nature is the man made elements which also contribute to the quality of life through visually pleasing environment. Thus, Skarback (2007) believes that, a substantial recreational and landscape development has become a decisive factor in people's choice of where to live and work. Summarily, it is evident that the benefits and well-being associated with landscaping are innumerable, creating an overwhelming impact on the quality of life. It is therefore important, given the discussion above, the need to ascertain the views of tourism stakeholders in Nigeria on the role and significance of landscaping to tourism development in the country.

The Study Area

Nigeria is located in West Africa, on Latitude 9^o 4' North of the equator and Longitude 7^o 29' East of the Greenwich Meridian. With Abuja as its capital, comprises thirty-six states and Federal Capital Territory (Wikipedia, 2012) and has a population of about 167 million (National Population Commission, 2012).

The study was carried out within two geopolitical zones in Nigeria; the North Central and the South West, which were randomly selected from the six geopolitical zones which make up Nigeria (Ikein et al, 2008) and these two zones

selected, made up the study population. The six zones include the North-west, North-east, North-central, South-west, South-east and South-south as shown in Figure 1 below. These zones cut across

different climates, including equatorial climate in the south, tropical in the central and arid in the north to provide unique landscape and ecological features, hence the different tourist attractions.

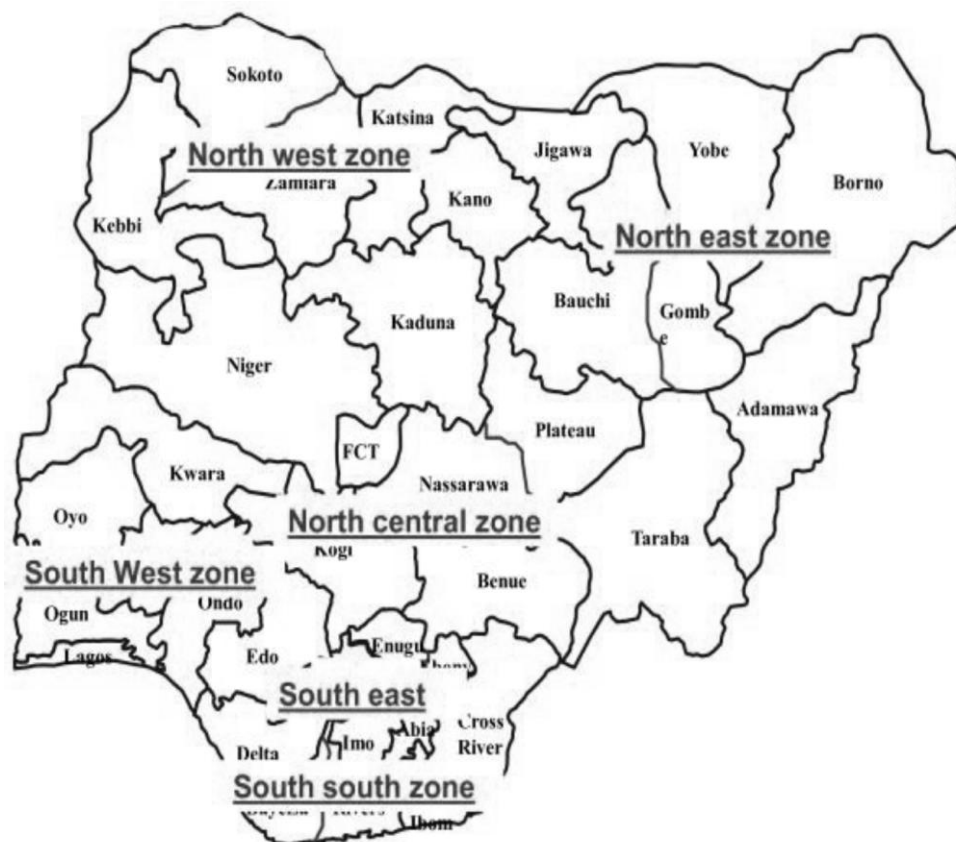


Figure 1. Showing map the six geo political zones in Nigeria. Source: Dineen et al. (2008).

Methodology

The quantitative method of data collection was adopted in this study, combined with the review of literature in order to gauge the views of tourism stakeholders in Nigeria on the significance of landscaping to tourism development. While the quantitative method allow the gauge of data in numerical terms, using closed ended questionnaires, the literature review allows an in-depth knowledge of factors underpinning their views to give a credible and valid results (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) using various publications. In this study, respondent opinions were measured on a Likert scale of 4 points, where 4 denotes strongly agree and 1 denotes strongly disagree.

From the study population, four states namely, Kogi, Ekiti, Ondo, the Federal Capital Territory-Abuja and an academic institution were selected using the simple random and convenience sampling methods to represent the sample frame from where samples were drawn. A stratified random sampling was then used in the selection of respondents from

all stakeholders in the tourism industry, including staff of the Nigerian Tourism Board, hotels and travel agents, government employees, non-government employees and tourists. On whom eight hundred and fifty closed ended questionnaires were randomly administered by closely supervised trained research assistants between the months of March and June, 2010. The assistants were trained and initially used for pretesting of the questionnaire to check for possible problems. This helped to ascertain reliability, overall structure and verified that the questionnaire meets the expectation for usefulness.

A sample size of two hundred was estimated for each of the states selected and fifty academics, this was neither too small nor too large in order to achieve the objective. At the end of the survey, a total of seven hundred and forty-five questionnaires were returned completed, thus a response rate of eighty-seven percent were recorded and data analysed using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) and results expressed in simple percentages and standard deviation.

Results and Discussion

Results from the analysis of the characteristics of the respondents using the SPSS_X showed that males predominate in the sample, representing 63.4 percent while female respondents were 36.6 per cent, which comes as no surprise given the overpowering influence in the Nigerian culture, men tend to take important decisions concerning the households. It is not an overstatement to say that housewives would usually keep questionnaires of this nature for their husbands or ask the researcher to come back when their husbands are available. The predominance of men in the sample is reflected in the mode average, which is 1.

Most of the participants were within the age bracket of 20-50 years, accounting for 83.7 percent of the total sample size while those above the age of 50 years accounted for 10.7 percent with 5.6percentrefusing to participate. Furthermore, majority of respondents which accounted for 49.3 percent were government employees, 28.4 percent are self-employed, 22.1 percent are unemployed, while 0.1 of the total sample did not respond. The educational background of respondents was also surveyed, revealing that respondents are well educated with 65.8 percent having had a tertiary education. Similarly, 12.6 are educated to secondary school level, and 12.2 percent are educated to primary school level, while only8.9 percent had no formal education and needed assistance with the questionnaire.

Also, a total of 58.9 percent are married while 39.1 percent are single. About 1.6 percent are widows while 0.4 did not respond. The range of income level was also ascertained with 48.1 earning between N7,500 and N100,000 per month, which is the equivalent of between US\$30 and US\$770 per month; 41.1 percent earn above N100,000 per month, which is the equivalent of US\$770 Dollars; 25.1 percent earn between N100,001 – N500,000 monthly, which is the equivalent of between US\$770 and US\$3,846 per month; 16.0 percent earn above N500,000 monthly, the equivalent of US\$3.846 per month, while 10.2 percent did not respond to this question.

The characteristics of respondents showed that all stakeholders are represented in the sample, these range from low income earners to high income earners, different age groups, and sufficiently educated to understand the questionnaire survey. The uneducated segment of respondents' population is assisted by trained field assistants. This degree of representation can only enhance the validity and credibility of results.

Further questions were posed to respondents and includes; whether landscaping can change their attitudes towards holidaying; if landscape contributed to the negative attitude of Nigerians towards tourism. Also, is landscape a key element to

sustainable tourism development and finally, if landscaping will present various investment opportunities. The questions asked and responses are further discussed as a below.

As established from the literature, providing supporting infrastructure will help enhance the tourist attractions as well as tourism experience and the need or push to visit. Inadequate infrastructure for development and lack of consideration for landscaping, given the enormous tourism resources, amounts to waste and lack of visit by tourists. It was also revealed in the literature that landscaping has the potential to improve well being and has several other benefits. There is the need to improve many of the attractions in order to change people's attitude towards holidaying, have quality landscape to encourage tourists visit.

Attitude towards holidaying

In view of the above and to ascertain if landscaping will change respondents attitude towards holidaying, respondents were asked to rate their responses from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Table 1 and Figure 2 revealed that 46.6 percent (347) agree that people's attitude towards tourism will change if landscaping elements are used in the Nigerian tourists' attractions and 38.8 percent (289) strongly agree. Also, 7.9 percent (59) disagree while 1.1 percent strongly disagrees and 5.6 percent (42) did not respond. It therefore implies that a total of 85.4 percent of respondents agree that people's attitude to tourism will change towards holidaying if landscaping is used. The mean which shows the location of data is 3.12 and the standard deviation which shows the spread is 1.002.

Table 1. Attitude towards holidaying.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
No response	42	5.6	5.6	5.6
Strongly disagree	8	1.1	1.1	6.7
Disagree	59	7.9	7.9	14.6
agree	347	46.6	46.6	61.2
Strongly agree	289	38.8	38.8	100.0
Total	745	100.0	100.0	

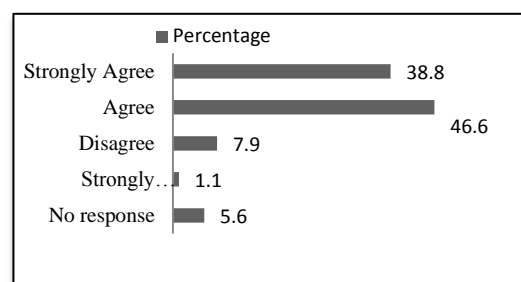


Figure 2. Percentage of distribution.

The findings revealed that enhancing the Nigerian tourist attractions will improve the attitude people have on holidaying. This corroborates the literature that improving the attractions improves tourist visit and well being.

Contribution of attractive landscapes

Also asked through the questionnaire was the need to know whether the lack of attractive landscapes contributes to the negative attitude of Nigerians towards tourism. From the literature, aesthetic appearance was found to be an important appeal. As revealed in Table 2 and Figure 3 that 44.6 percent (332) of respondents agree that lack of good landscaping explains the negative attitude to tourism in Nigeria and 32.1 percent (239) strongly agree. Also, 16.5 percent (123) disagree while 1.1percent (8) strongly disagrees and 5.8 percent (43) did not respond, giving a total of 76.7 percent that agree. The mean is revealed to be 2.96 and the standard deviation shows the spread of 1.024.

Table 2. Negative attitude to tourism.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
No response	43	5.8	5.8	5.8
Strongly disagree	8	1.1	1.1	6.8
Disagree	123	16.5	16.5	23.4
Agree	332	44.6	44.6	67.9
Strongly agree	239	32.1	32.1	100.0
Total	745	100.0	100.0	

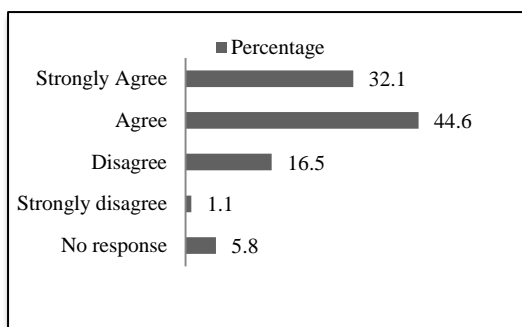


Figure 3. Percentage of distribution.

Corroborating this findings with the literature, revealed that landscape help in the enhancement of tourist attractions as well as serve as important elements for a functional, aesthetics and useful environment. This creates positive interaction and recreational opportunities for tourists. As such, people are willing to pay for good looking attractions as revealed from the analysis; the absence of landscaping in the Nigerian tourist attractions explains their negative attitudes towards tourism. Furthermore, without quality landscape, both ecological and human systems will gradually fail.

Key elements for sustainable tourism development

Thirdly, respondents were asked if landscaping would be a key element for sustainable tourism development. This was revealed in literature that the landscape of an attraction creates an overwhelming impact on human well being, choice of where to go for tourism activities, as well as on the economy. Also, a beautiful attraction is likely to attract tourist visit; and the same time improve on the economy. From the analysis, 56.9 percent (424) agree that landscaping is a key element towards the emerging tourism market, in addition, 30.3 percent (226) strongly agree. Also, 6.2 percent (46) disagree while .9 percent (7) strongly disagrees and 5.6 percent (42) did not respond. The total respondents that agree to this notion therefore are 87.2 percent as can be seen in Table 3 and Figure 4. The mean, that is, the average data value is 3.05 and the standard deviation, that is, the spread is .953.

Table 3. Key element towards tourism market.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
No response	42	5.6	5.6	5.6
Strongly disagree	7	.9	.9	6.6
Disagree	46	6.2	6.2	12.8
Agree	424	56.9	56.9	69.7
Strongly agree	226	30.3	30.3	100.0
Total	745	100.0	100.0	

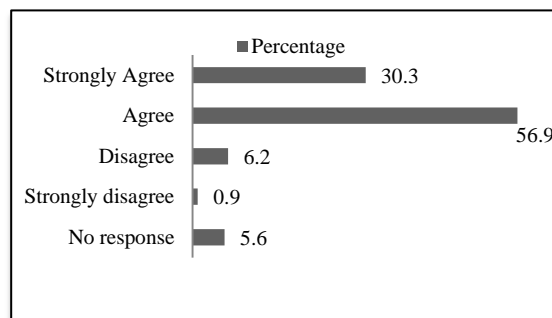


Figure 4. Percentage of distributions.

Investments opportunities in landscaping

Again, the analysis on whether landscaping will present various investment opportunities revealed in Table 4and Figure 5that 48.3 percent (360) agree that landscaping can present various investment opportunities in the tourism industry and 39.9 percent (297) strongly agree. Also, 5.2 percent (39) disagree and 1.1 percent (8) strongly disagrees while 5.5 percent (41) did not respond. The total respondents therefore that agree that landscaping can be an investment opportunity for tourism

industry is 88.2 percent. The mean is 3.16 and the standard deviation is .982, Showing the data location and data spread respectively.

Table 4. Investments opportunities in landscaping

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
No response	41	5.5	5.5	5.5
Strongly disagree	8	1.1	1.1	6.6
Disagree	39	5.2	5.2	11.8
Agree	360	48.3	48.3	60.1
Strongly agree	297	39.9	39.9	100.0
Total	745	100.0	100.0	

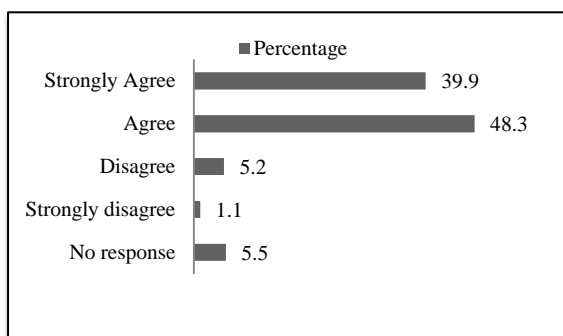


Figure 5: Percentage of distributions.

What the analysis indicates is that the tourism industry can be transformed to provide economic opportunities to all the stakeholders in the tourism industry, which is the kind of economic diversification that monoculture economies like Nigeria needs at this stage of its economic development. The indirect effects on the quality of life for a country such as Nigeria where poverty predominate is huge, especially as tourism can facilitate the replication of infrastructures and services to areas of less amenities, particularly rural areas where most of the tourist attractions are located. As already noted in the literature, the physical environment either encourages or discourages a tourist from tourist attractions, and a landscaped environment is likely to encourage internal tourism. Thus, sustainable landscape allows the general aesthetics of the tourist environment to be improved to attract and encourage local tourism which can be used to promote tourists' attraction and also facilitate fast development of the Nigerian tourism industry.

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the need for the enhancement of the Nigerian tourist attractions for sustainable tourism development and has been empirically validated. Planning and Managing

landscape in tourist attractions in Nigerian will enhance landscape aesthetics and encourage local tourism. The huge benefits to all tourism stakeholders from increased tourism have also been discussed, particularly in the area of employment, income generation, and above all, because of the beneficial impact on the quality of life for both tourists and the local population.

The implication of the study is that the physical environment has a major role to play in tourism development; it determines the level of tourism activity in a tourist destination and unless these are transformed effectively through landscaping, tourism may not be of great benefit to Nigeria's economic development. As such, the findings bring to the limelight the important role landscaping plays in tourism development.

Nigeria has the opportunity to sustainably develop its tourism industry through effective landscaping in order to fully exploit the benefits tourism confers on other sectors of the economy. Finally, the results clearly show that improving tourists' environment through landscaping will greatly alter their attitude positively towards local tourism.

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