

Evaluation of Visitors' Satisfaction and their Perception about Animal Welfare in University of Ibadan Zoological Garden

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Abstract

Zoological gardens are perhaps the oldest form of wildlife tourism. From an economic point of view, wildlife tourism can be regarded as a product-market, which is a group of products with similar benefit patterns and satisfaction for a group of customers. However, there are still zoos in the world which have failed to live up to basic practices and standards of animal welfare. This study therefore assessed tourists' satisfaction and their perception about animal welfare in the University of Ibadan. A total of 150 structured questionnaires were randomly administered to the zoo visitors. The results indicated that 40% of the respondents were students. Majority of the visitors (52%) earned between ₦10,000 and ₦30,000 monthly. Visitors' level of satisfaction was high with regards to reception received at the entrance gate, entrance fee, personnel service and animal diversity. Chi square test revealed association between the age of respondents and satisfaction about entrance charges at 0.05 level of significance ($P < 0.05$). Spacing of enclosures in the avian, primate and carnivore sections was limited as recorded by 28%, 21% and 20% of the respondents. Other welfare issues are the lack of mates/companion for animals and the poor hygienic conditions of the enclosures. Visitors overall level of satisfaction was high and their perception of animal welfare indicated that they are good evaluators of animal welfare.

Keywords: Animal welfare, Visitors' perception, Visitors satisfaction, Wildlife tourism, Zoo.

Introduction

Tourism has grown faster than any other trade in the world (Agbu, 2002). In areas with suitable and abundant wildlife, development of tourism based on wildlife watching or hunting can provide economic incentives and revenue for conservation of natural habitats (Higginbottom *et al.*, 2001). Wildlife tourism is based on encounters with non-domesticated (wild) animals, which can either occur in the animals' natural environment (such as national parks and game reserves) or in captivity (zoological gardens and aquaria).

Wildlife tourism contributes positively to biodiversity conservation. There has been a progressive recognition that if biodiversity

conservation is to be sustained, it must be promoted both inside (in-situ) and outside (ex-situ) protected areas and must be incorporated with the realities of modern economies and meeting people's needs. Also, evidences that wildlife tourism can bring benefits to wildlife and habitats that might assist in redressing conservation problems caused by factors other than tourism (Manfredo and Driver, 2002). It has also been argued that tourism in ex-situ sites such as zoological gardens diverts attention from animals occurring in the natural environment thus minimizing the pressure on the natural habitat.

Zoological gardens (popularly known as zoos) are perhaps the oldest form of wildlife

tourism. Efforts to tame and keep wild animals in captivity are almost as old as human society itself. Zoo is an institution committed to the exhibition, preservation and study of animals, especially wild species. Many Zoological gardens give tourists an opportunity to enjoy and appreciate majestic wildlife animals (Kuuder *et al.*, 2013); sensitize tourists to the value and need for wildlife conservation (Uloko, 2004; Borokini, 2013); increase their motivation, interest, experience and appreciation of nature (Corazon, 2008) and; solidify the relationship of co-existence between man and wild animals to satisfy the quest for biodiversity conservation (Ayodele and Alarape, 1998). Although most people visit zoos for the purpose of entertainment, zoos also educate the public about natural habitats, animal behaviour, and the plight of animals in danger of extinction (Stanley, 2005; Hancocks, 2001; Mitchell, 1991).

From an economic point of view, wildlife tourism (*in-situ* and *ex-situ*) can be regarded as a product-market which is a group of products with similar patterns of benefits and satisfaction for a group of customers (Rosa *et al.*, 1999). The customers associated with different product-markets are likely to have different objectives, motives and satisfaction in relation to wildlife tourism. Kuuder, *et al.* (2013) noted that little attention has been given to tourist satisfaction in nature-based tourism in Africa. Accordingly, an attempt at finding out tourist/visitor satisfaction and perception in zoological gardens is worth the while. In a similar approach, Covelli *et al.* (2005) commented that concepts of quality as perceived by tourists including levels of satisfaction and perception have rarely been employed in nature research. The evaluation of the level of satisfaction in wildlife tourism serves two main purposes. Firstly, it provides

information about customer needs and how to meet these needs and secondly (in turn) provide a platform for organizations managing zoos to communicate with their customers (Kuuder *et al.*, 2013).

From a biological conservation point of view, there are still zoos in the world which have failed to live up to basic expectations and practices, and where the standards of animal welfare are still of concern. For example, Knowles (2003) reported that less scrupulous zoological gardens in the west have yet to embrace accepted standards of care. Also in developing countries, many zoos might be said to render inferior standards of living for their animals. According to research results (Falk *et al.*, 2007; Hassan, 2015; Melfia *et al.*, 2015), visitors are good evaluators of animal welfare. Visitors to zoological gardens make judgements about animal welfare on the basis of what they observe during their visit (Melfia *et al.*, 2015). For visitors or tourist with high level of conservation awareness, their level of satisfaction may be directly dependent on the level of animal welfare. More so, there is a lack of information on the motivation, expectation and level of satisfaction of local visitors who visit zoos in developing countries (Puan and Zakaria, 2007). This study therefore assessed visitors' satisfaction in the University of Ibadan Zoo as well as their perception of animal welfare.

Materials and Methods

Study area

This study was carried out in the University of Ibadan Zoological Garden with coordinates 7.43°N and 3.88°E. The zoo was established in 1949 primarily as a menagerie to support teaching and research in the Department of Zoology. With time its animal collection grew

in number and diversity and the menagerie gradually became a full-fledged zoo in 1974. It is mainly for the purpose of conservation, education and entertainment. It welcomes a large number of visitors from far and near every year. The zoo, like most modern zoos, displays wild animals primarily for the conservation of endangered species, as well as for research purposes and education, and so also for entertainment of visitors. The garden is home to a wide array of animals comprising mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

In the last four years, the zoo has undergone tremendous transformation in the drive towards international standards (Morenikeji, 2015). It has been moved from obscurity to visibility and now enjoys greater patronage among others. The garden has now being stocked with more and new species of animals. Sections in the garden include the Avian, herbivore, carnivore, reptile, primate and small animal sections. The zoo is opened 7 days a week, 365 days a year from 8.00 am to 6.30 pm daily. The zoo education department is dedicated to teaching youngsters and adult about wildlife and wild habitats through engaging interactive zoo programs.

Data collection

A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from visitors. A total of 150 copies of the questionnaire were randomly administered inside the zoo for a period of two weeks in September, 2015. The questionnaire contains information like visitors' motivation, major purpose of visit and, possibility of revisit etc. To measure level of tourist's satisfaction, a five point Likert scale of response was constructed as follows; Extremely Satisfied, Very Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied and Very Dissatisfying.

Statistical Package for Social Science version 20.0 (SPSS 20) was used to analyse the quantitative data using frequencies, percentage analysis, and chi-square test.

Results

The results indicated that many of the respondents were students. They accounted for 40% of the total respondents. This was followed by civil servants who accounted for 5.5%. Others were business men/women, civil servants, corps members, engineers, nurses, teachers and self employed (Figure 1). Majority of the respondents (52%) earned between ₦10,000 and ₦30,000 monthly. Only few earn above ₦150,000 (Figure 2).

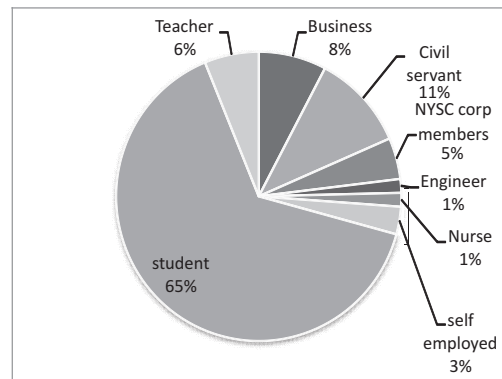


Figure 1: Occupation of respondents in percentage

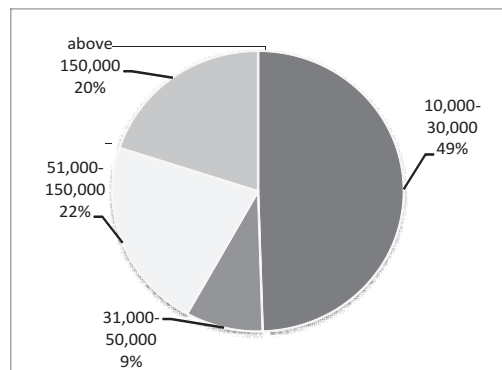


Figure 2: Monthly income of respondents

Figure 3 shows visitors level of satisfaction with regards to reception received at the entrance gate, entrance fee, personnel service and animal diversity. It also indicates overall level of visitors' satisfaction. With regards to visitors' level of satisfaction about animal welfare and safety, 5% of the total respondents indicated poor animals' safety, 18% complained about lack of mates for animals in their enclosures, 20% indicated insufficient space for carnivores, 21% were discontented about the space in primates' enclosure, 10.5% were not satisfied with the spacing in enclosure for reptiles, 28% stated poor enclosure in avian enclosure, 15% indicated inadequate feeding of animals, 19% indicated poor hygiene in enclosures, while 9.5% complained about poor state of health of animals in the zoo (Figure 4).

The Chi square test revealed association between the age of respondents and satisfaction about entrance charges at 0.05 level of significance ($P < 0.05$) as shown on Table 1.

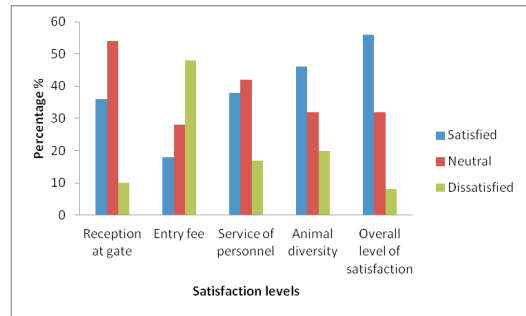


Figure 3: Visitors' level of satisfaction in the zoo

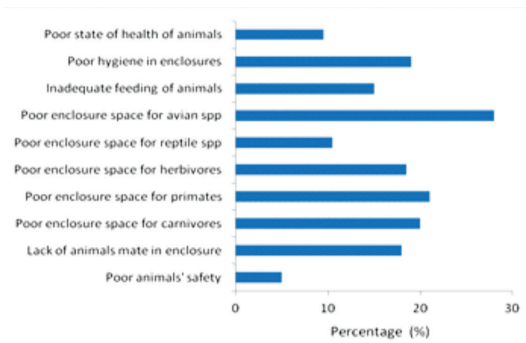


Figure 4: Respondents' assessment of animal welfare and safety in the Zoo

Table 1: Chi Square test of association between age and satisfaction with entrance fee

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi Square	44.688(a)	15	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	29.231	15	0.015
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.691	1	0.101

Discussion

According to the findings of this study, there are indications that University of Ibadan zoological garden is living to actualize basic concepts and objectives of the establishment of zoological gardens: attract and entertain visitors, education, conservation and research. The high proportion of respondents that were students is attributed to the fact that the zoo is located within the University campus. In turn, both could be responsible for the majority

respondents having income level falling between ₦10,000 and ₦30,000.

Reception received at the zoo entrance, services provided by the zoo personnel and animal diversity were the major form of satisfaction for visitors. A total number of 163,204; 159,937; 140,733; 175,187; and 270,845 comprising both children and adults visited the zoo in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively. A decline was noticed between 2011 and 2012 but shot up between 2013 and 2014. Year 2014

recorded the highest number of tourist. This rise in tourists' influx could be ascribed to the development, upgrade and re-stocking of the zoological garden which started in 2014. According to Alarape *et al.*, (2015), different attractions motivate tourists or visitors to zoological gardens. A visitor/tourist attraction is a vital component of any country's tourism industry, as they stimulate travel to destinations. Overall level of visitors' satisfaction (56%) was very high in the zoological garden. However, majority of the respondents' (48%) were dissatisfied with the entry fee. This may be attributed to the fact that a high percentage of the respondents were students with low monthly income of between ₦10000 and ₦30000.

With regards to visitors' perception about the welfare of the animals based on what was observed during visit (Fig 4), the spacing in enclosure for avian spp (bird line) in the zoo recorded high level of dissatisfaction (26%). The inadequate space was also recorded for primates (22%) and carnivores (20%). Others include poor hygiene in animal enclosure (19%); lack of mates or companion for some animals (18%), and

The study revealed that zoo visitors are good evaluator of animal welfare and wellbeing based on what they perceive during visit. This is in line with the reports of Falk *et al.* (2007), Hassan (2015) and Melfia *et al.* (2015). For visitors with high level of conservation awareness, their level of satisfaction may be directly dependent on the level of animal welfare.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The University of Zoological garden is a good wildlife tourism destination that attracts considerable number of visitors' year in year out. It supports numerous wildlife resources

ex-situ. As revealed by the results of this study, the overall level of satisfaction of visitors to the zoo was high. The fact that visitors to zoos make judgements about animal welfare on the basis of perception during their visit was also proven. Worthy of note is the fact that the visitors are concerned about the welfare of these animals as they were quick to point out that some species lack adequate space especially in the avian, primate and carnivore section as well as the lack of mates/companion for some of the animals and poor hygienic condition of some enclosures..

It is therefore recommended that there should be improvement in the spacing and hygienic conditions of enclosures. Moreso, many visitors want to watch animals feed to have experience of what is obtainable in the wild. The zoo management should encourage visitors to pre-arrange feeding. For instance, goat supplies can be provided by the zoo management and visitors (especially school children groups) encouraged to purchase for the purpose of feeding them to the lions. The visitors eventually derive satisfaction in live feed experience, the animals benefit by having more to eat and the zoo management benefit by cutting feeding costs.

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