

Tourism Potentials of Jimeta-Yola Amusement Park, Adamawa State, Nigeria

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SUMMARY

The study assessed the tourism potential of the Jimeta-Yola Amusement Park in Adamawa State, Nigeria. The tourism potential of the Jimeta Amusement Park had not fully gained public interest. Structured questionnaires were administered to the respondents to obtain information on socio-economic traits, existing fauna and flora, facilities available, and challenges faced in the management of the park. Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of the data obtained. The results showed that the majority of the respondents (68%) were female, above 30 years of age (43%), with tertiary education (43%), and single (45%). Major structures included animal cages (29%). While tortoises dominated the animal population (50%), *Tamarindus indica* dominated the floral species (45%). Poor accommodation (25%), inadequate tourist facilities (25%), and poor feeding (28%) were identified as the major challenges of the park. Proper feeding and the addition of animal structures are recommended.

Keywords: Tourism, Fauna, Flora, Challenges

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy, comprising various subcategories such as nature tourism, agro-tourism, anthro-tourism, safari tourism, academic tourism, and wilderness tourism (Leung et al., 2015). The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and enhances the well-being of local communities (Fletcher, 2015). Ecotourism has been particularly significant in Africa due to the continent's rich wildlife diversity and the abundance of charismatic species (UNWTO, 2015). Over the past 30 years, Africa has seen notable success in ecotourism, reflected in substantial revenue generation, foreign investment, and various socio-economic benefits, which have contributed to the growing popularity of ecotourism in the region (Backman and Munanura, 2015).

Despite facing challenges such as civil war, poor infrastructure, corruption, and a top-down governance approach to wildlife and protected area management, the

demand for ecotourism continues to rise. Tourists are increasingly interested in promoting and engaging with sustainable practices during their travels (CRT, 2016). Nigeria, as Africa's most populous and diverse nation, boasts over 250 cultures and ethnic groups and a population of approximately 200 million people. Much of Nigeria's wealth stems from its strategic geographical location in the heart of Africa. Its rich tapestry of cultures and traditions, diverse flora and fauna, and abundant sunshine in a tropical climate offer tourists an unforgettable holiday experience (Aremu, 2008).

Ecotourism plays a vital role in conserving biological diversity and protecting the welfare of local communities. It raises awareness of local needs and promotes responsible tourism practices. This form of tourism supports small-scale enterprises by encouraging groups of tourists to engage with local services while minimizing the consumption of non-recyclable resources. Additionally, tourism management businesses create development opportunities for local residents (Kaypak, 2020). Ecotourism, through its features, stimulates economic growth at various levels and brings about rural development. Tourism is an invisible trade. It is the only social avenue or market that is large enough for the efficient and effective marketing of global resources, irrespective of where these virtues are located (Ijeomah and Herbert, 2012). Eco-tourists travel to remote destinations in search of unique naturalism (that is, "the naturality of nature" and "the rurality of the rural"), experiences that hardly exist in cities due to a lack of rural communities and standard wildlife parks or unaltered natural environments. Through tourist visitations, protected areas at a global level generate approximately US\$600 billion annually. Economically, this amount is far higher than the US\$10 billion spent globally on park management and protection. In Rwanda's Parc des Volcans, tourists pay US\$170 to spend one hour with lowland gorillas, generating US\$1 million annually for the Rwandan government. However, parks do not exist primarily for economic profits but for conservation, which can be achieved through ecotourism (Langoya and Long, 2016).

Despite numerous scientific studies on the benefits of ecotourism in Adamawa State, little or no information exists regarding Jimeta Amusement Park. There is a lack of data on the number and quality of functional structures that could support the local flora and fauna. Furthermore, whether in its current or past state, there seems to be insufficient documented information on the existing flora and fauna that might attract tourists to the park. Additionally, challenges faced by tourism in the area have not been adequately recorded. This highlights the necessity of this study to assess the tourism potential of Jimeta-Yola Amusement Park.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

LOCATION OF STUDY AREA

Adamawa is within the Sudan and the Guinea Savannah belt, and the presence of the Cameroon/ Mandara and other mountain ranges has been an important resource for tourist activities. Jimeta Amusement Park is located within the Yola North Local Government Area of Adamawa State. It lies at latitudes 9°16' 46.16''N and longitudes 12°10' 12.48''E (Figure 1). The varied climatic conditions, numerous river valleys, and diverse cultural landscapes also hold significant potential for

tourism in the area. Thus, the tourist resources of the state can be categorized into natural and cultural attractions.

The people of Adamawa are noted for their rich cultural heritage, which is reflected in its history, including dances, dress patterns, craftsmanship, music, and cordial relationships. The study area has a tropical wet and dry or seasonal climate. Jimeta typically receives about 122.5 millimeters (4.82 inches) of precipitation and has 146.52 rainy days annually. The yearly temperature is 32.71°C (90.88°F), slightly higher than Nigeria's averages. The state experiences extreme seasonal variation in monthly rainfall. Jimeta comprises many land uses types, ranging from institutional, commercial, residential, to agricultural. In recent times, Jimeta has emerged as the premier commercial, industrial, and transportation urban area of northeast Nigeria.

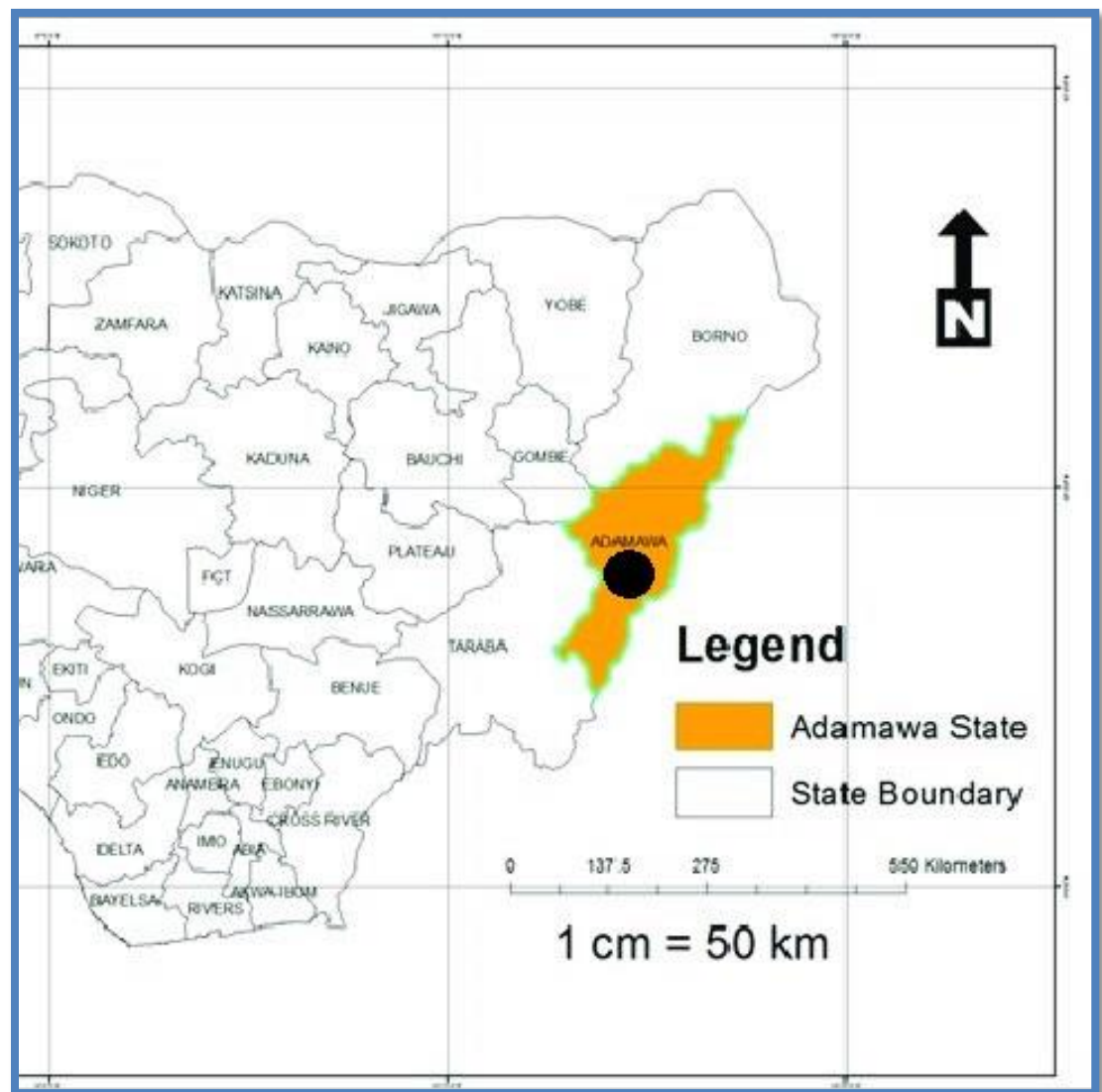


Figure 1: Map of Adamawa State showing the study area (Usman et al., 2018).

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND DATA COLLECTIONS

A preliminary survey was conducted with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, as well as the park, prior to the detailed study in order to assess the structures and flora and fauna species in the park. Data on the existing structures, flora and fauna, and challenges faced in the study area were obtained through the administration of structured questionnaires to the respondents (park staff and those patronizing the park during festive periods) twice per day that is, morning 9:00am to 12:00pm and evening 4:30pm to 6:30pm in the evening. A total of 100 questionnaires were administered to the respondents (40 for Ministry of Culture and Tourism staff and 60 for other respondents (visitors), following Inah et al. (2017) and Ochala et al. (2017). In addition, an on-the-spot assessment of the park's existing and dilapidated structures was conducted following Nouri et al. (2018).

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data obtained were subjected to SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for descriptive statistics (frequency tables, means, and percentages).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS IN THE STUDY AREA

Table 1 shows the results of the demographic characteristics of the respondents in the study area. The results indicate that 42% and 68% of the respondents were males and females, respectively. The results also show that the majority of the respondents were within the ages of 20-30 years. 43% and 38% of the respondents' population are secondary and tertiary holders. The findings on the demographic characteristics of the respondents in the study area show that the majority of the visitors to the park are female. They fall within the age categories of the youth stage. This also implies that the secondary leavers are at crucial stage of patronizing the park. The findings also signify that the majority of the respondents are not married and spend most of their valuable time visiting the park. This finding is in agreement with that of Ochala et al. (2017), who reported that young adults and visitors expect a green environment to entertain themselves.

EXISTING ANIMAL AND PLANT STRUCTURES IN THE STUDY AREA

The results of existing animal and plant structures, as observed by the respondents in the study area, are presented in Tables 2 and 3. The results indicate for Table 3 that there were 29 cages (29%) and 26 children's entertainment facilities that are mostly used (26%). The findings of this study on the existing animal and plant structures confirm that animal cages formed the majority of the structures, followed by the children's entertainment facilities, with few ponds, animal ditches, pens, and animal houses and stalls. Most of the existing structures are not in good condition. This is in agreement with the findings of Ijeoma and Aiyeloja (2010), who report that the center of tourist attractions in any area is through the provision of infrastructural facilities. However, this finding is in contrast to that of Ijeoma and Herbert (2012). The implication is that most tourists will hardly be attracted to the park in its present state.

Table 3 shows the results of existing fauna species in the park as reported by the respondents. The results indicate that tortoises (28%) and monkeys/primates (25%) were the major animals present, while crocodiles (14%), pythons (18%), birds (12%), and others (3%) were also found in the park. The findings of this study imply that the majority of the animals are tortoises and monkeys/primates. This implies that there are not many animals that can attract visitors and tourists to the park. This finding contrasts with Yusuf et al. (2018), who reported three basic tourism ingredients: economic, environmental, and socio-cultural.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents in the study area.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	42	42.00
Female	68	68.00
Total	100	100
Age categories		
21_0 years	43	43.00
31_40 years	19	19.00
41_50 years	12	12.00
51_60 years	23	23.00
Above 60 years	03	3.00
Total	100	100
Educational background		
Primary	04	4.00
Secondary	38	38.00
Tertiary	43	43.00
Others	15	15.00
Total	100	100
Marital status		
Single	45	45.00
Married	36	36.00
Divorced	07	7.00
Widowed	12	12.00
Total	100	100
Staff categories		
Senior staff	20	20.00
Intermediate staff	42	42.00
Junior staff	38	38.00
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

EXISTING FLORA SPECIES IN THE PARK

The result of the existing flora species in the park, as indicated by the respondents, is presented in Table 4. The results show that *Azadirachta indica* (30%), *Tamarindus*

indica (20%), *Khaya senegalensis* (19%), *Parkia biglobosa* (15%), *Eucalyptus spp.* (13%), and others (3%) were the major species, while *Tridax procumbence* (25%), *Croton lobatus* (15%), *Aspilia Africana* (15%), and *Pennisetum purpureum* (45%) were the herbaceous plants available in the park.

Table 2: Existing Animals and Plants structures in the study area.

Structure (s)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Animal cages	29	29.00
children entertainment facilities	26	26.00
Pond	08	8.00
Animal ditch	10	10.00
Animal pen	05	5.00
House/stall	16	16.00
Others	06	6.00
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 3: Existing Fauna Species in the study area.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Tortoise	28	28.00
Crocodile	14	14.00
Python	18	18.00
Monkey/Primates	25	25.00
Birds	12	12.00
Others	03	3.00
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 4: Existing Flora Species in the study area.

Species Woody Plants	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	30	30.00
<i>Tamaridus indica</i>	20	50.00
<i>Khaya senegalensis</i>	19	19.00
<i>Parkia biglobosa</i>	15	15.00
<i>Eucalyptus spp.</i>	13	13.00
Others	3	3.00
Total	100	100
Herbaceous plants		
<i>Pennisetum purpureum</i>	45	45.00
<i>Tridax procumbiens</i>	25	25.00
<i>Croton lobota</i>	15	15.00
<i>Aspelia africana</i>	15	15.00
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The findings of this study implied that there were 5 major woody plant species and 4 herbaceous plants in the area. The implication of this is that there seems to be little forage species for the existing animals in the park. This finding is in contrast with the report of Dickman and Hazzah (2016), who stressed that patronage by tourists to any organization depends on how its natural resources (in the form of wildlife) can contribute to and be compatible with the conserving species being viewed. Olakunle (2018) made a similar observation that periodic stock-taking of information on productivity, abundance, and distribution of species is necessary for proper management. Gamba (2019), equally reported that an industry could only be protected if a reasonable number of the community's population is gainfully employed and/or part of its management.

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE TOURISTS/VISITORS IN THE STUDY AREA

The results of challenges faced by tourists, as observed, are presented in Table 5. The results show that poor accommodation and inadequate tourist facilities are the major challenge (25%); other challenges include insecurity (15%), unskilled staff (18%), and inadequate animal species (17%). The findings of this study highlight the various challenges faced by tourists in the study area. Informed by these challenges, tourists could hardly develop an interest in visiting the park. Folade (2000) made a similar observation in his study of nature parks and forest reserves, noting that such challenges could lead to low patronage by tourists. The implication is that little or no revenue will be generated given the existence of the above challenges.

Table 5: Challenges faced by the tourists/visitors in the study area.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Poor Accommodation	25	25.00
Insecurity	15	15.00
Unskilled Personnel	18	18.00
Inadequate tourists' facilities	25	25.00
Inadequate fauna species of interest	17	17.00
Total.	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE PARK MANAGEMENT IN THE STUDY AREA

Table 6 presents the challenges faced by park management, revealing that poor feeding/nutrition (28%) and inadequate medical care (20%) are the primary issues. Other challenges include poor housing/environment (19%), harsh climate (14%), diseases/pests (16%), and miscellaneous factors (3%). These findings highlight the various obstacles confronting park management. The implications are significant; under-nutrition and malnutrition can lead to early mortality, rendering the area less appealing for tourism and visitors. Uche et al. (2017) noted that low productivity in the tourism industry adversely affects economic growth and has inevitable consequence

CONCLUSION

The assessment of the ecotourism potentials of Jimeta Amusement Park in Jimeta, Adamawa State, Nigeria, was conducted. Existing plant and animal species, their challenges, and those faced by both visitors and park management staff were highlighted. It is pertinent to consider ecotourism as a tool for integrating leisure, conservation, and the socio-cultural wellbeing of host communities towards sustainable development on local, national, regional, and international scales. However, poor planning, implementation, maintenance, and monitoring processes of ecotourism development have been relevant issues in tapping into its benefits at Jimeta Amusement Park. Therefore, there is a need for park management and government authorities to draft an ecotourism management plan for the sustainable development of the ecotourism destination in the state by involving major stakeholders such as the National Park Service, host communities, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, researchers, and private tour operators in the planning process.

Table 6: Challenges faced by the park management in the study area.

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Poor feeding/nutrition	28	28.00
Poor medical care	20	20.00
Poor housing/environment	19	19.00
Harsh climatic weather	14	14.00
Disease and pest	16	16.00
Others	03	3.00
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

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