



## Assessment of Guided Tour on Visitors' Behaviour in Lekki Conservation Centre, Lagos State and Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** Impact of tour guides on biodiversity conservation in Lekki Conservation Centre (LCC) and Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove (OOSG) was assessed. 379 questionnaires were administered to visitors and all the tour guides in both sites were interviewed. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential tools. Result showed that the most preferred interpretive service was guided tour with a mean value of (M=2.375) and (M=2.924) for LCC and OOSG respectively. It was also revealed that 88.8% of the visitors in LCC became aware of conservation at the end of their tour and were willing to protect and conserve the natural resources around them while only 18.2% of the visitors in OOSG were aware of conservation after their tour. Results further showed that the visitors to OOSG were not properly enlightened about environmental conservation during their tour. However, they were taught about the culture and traditional values of the grove. The tour guides at LCC displayed a better understanding of interpretation than the tour guides at OOSG. The study concluded that, the tour guides should be properly trained on conservation and they should use the power of tourism audiences to spread conservation messages around the globe.

**Keywords:** Environmental Interpretation, Interpretative services, Tour Guides.

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### INTRODUCTION

Visitors experience, satisfaction and understanding in nature and ecotourism is hinged on tour guide and his ability to stimulate visitors interest in the resources being interpreted. According to Buesgens (2013), apart from tourist, the interpreter or tour guide is without doubt the most important component of ecotourism.

Interpretation aims to stimulate interest, promote learning, guide visitors in appropriate behaviour for sustainable tourism and encourage enjoyment and satisfaction (Moscado, 2001). Most park management agencies reported that the benefits of interpretation and environmental education should be clearly understood throughout their organization (Wearing *et al.*,

2008). Environmental interpretation is considered a vehicle for sustainable tourism as it minimizes the adverse environmental and social impacts of tourism by creating pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours (Surya and Gyan, 2013). Some scholars who investigated concepts regarding tourism and ecotourism agreed that 'guides', in general, hold accountabilities within their tour group and outside the group. The accountabilities include: facilitate learning, client enjoyment, managing interaction between clients, facilitating and mediating interaction between clients and host communities (Weiler and Ham, 2002; Beaumont, 2001; Orams, 1997; Roggenbuck, 1992). Covering this wide array of accountabilities also means being a

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representative of a number of roles. Hence, Tour guides or interpreters represent the tour operator, the host community, the tourism industry, and act on behalf of land managers (Buesgens, 2013). These multi-skilled individuals must also present a meaningful experience to the visitor (Buesgens, 2013).

According to Ham (1992), interpretive forms can be divided into two groups: personalized or guided, and non-personalized or self-guided. The guided form is developed in direct contact between the public and the guide. This includes: talks, excursions, live interpretation and the mass media (educational events, formal and informal community education programs) while the self-guided form, will develop without the intervention of any member of staff, but through different objects and resources. It includes exhibitions which can be outdoors or indoor, excursions on trails where interpretation will be through pamphlets, signs or audio equipment, publications and audiovisual programs (Ham, 1992). The study was conceived with the

objective of determining visitor's preference for interpretive programs and the perception of the tour guides at LCC and OOSG. The benefits of resource interpretation are many: a better informed public and therefore empowered constituency of park supporters, a closer bond between parks and neighbours, and a public vested in the rational application of science in the care of park natural resources. Interpretation has a direct and indirect contribution to sustainable development (Wolfgang, 2002). Some of its contribution includes: promotion of sustainable resource use, resource management and social development in the host region, and contributing to environmental awareness and changes of behaviour in visitors. (Ogunjinmi *et al.*, 2009). There are several management tools available for national parks' managers; however, a dynamic and imaginative public relations effort such as interpretation and environmental education remains tool that must not be neglected (Onadeko and Meduna, 1984).

## METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Lekki Conservation Centre (LCC) and Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove (OOSG). LCC is a non-governmental organization while OOSG is a Government organization. LCC is one of Nigerian Conservation Foundations' (NCF) foremost conservation project and it is Located in Lekki on the Lekki-Epe Expressway in Eti Osa Local Government Area of Lagos. Geographically it falls between 2° 45'E and 4°20'E and between latitude 6°52' to 3°54'. Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove (OOSG) is located along the bank of Osun River in Osogbo Local Government Area of Osun State in South Western Nigeria. Its geographical coordinates are 7°45' 02" N and 4°33' 08" E. It covers an area of 75 hectares and is encircled by a buffer zone of 47 ha (IUCN, 2005).

### Methods for Data Collection

#### *Population and Sampling Techniques*

The statistical population were visitors to Lekki Conservation Centre and Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove, the management and the tour guides of the study sites. The respondents were selected randomly. A sample size of 379 was chosen based on the total number of visitors to Lekki Conservation Center and Osun osogbo sacred Grove. The population of visitors to Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove at the time of this study (2016) was 5,696 visitors. (OOSG Annual Report, 2015) while the influx to Lekki Conservation Center is approximately 28,139 visitors ( NCF Annual Report, 2015). Using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) determination of sample size, the sample size was proportionally distributed between the sites based on their population. Thus, 315 and 64 visitors were sampled in Lekki Conservation

Centre and Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove respectively. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula for sample size determination is stated below:

$$s = \frac{X^2 NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2 P(1-P)}$$

where:

s = required sample size.

$X^2$  = the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841).

N = the population size.

P = the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size).

### Field Observation

Field observation was carried out to investigate visitors' on-site behaviour at LCC and OOSG. Visitors' behaviours on improper dumping of refuse, littering and crossing of lawns were observed and noted. The management objectives of LCC and OOSG were studied for the research. Also, the management of both sites were interviewed to determine if interpretation has helped in realising the management objectives.

All the tour guides at LCC and OOSG were interviewed with the United States National Park Services (2007) competency standard to assess their level of understanding. According to the United States National Park services (2007), tour guides are found competent if they: 1) understand their role to facilitate connections between resource meanings and audience interests; 2) understand, recognize, and create opportunities for audiences to make their own intellectual and emotional connections to resource meanings and 3) understand, recognize, and cohesively develop an idea or ideas in interpretive products and activities.

Thus, the tour guides were interviewed and asked about the foundations of interpretation, knowledge of the resource(s), audience and appropriate techniques.

### Data Collection

Data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire, interview and field observations. The questionnaire was administered to the visitors and was divided into five sections A-E. Section A addressed the demographic variables of the respondents, B measured different visitors' experience of the study areas, C measured visitors' satisfaction, D measured interpretation programs offered to the visitors while Section E measured the visitors' off-site conservation behaviour.

Field observation was carried out on visitors' on-site conservation behaviours. The response of visitors to improper dumping of refuse, littering on the environment and crossing of lawns were observed and noted. The management plan of LCC and OOSG were perused for the research. Interview guide was used to elicit information from the management of both sites to determine if interpretation has helped in realising the management objectives. Questions were asked about the management objective and the role interpretation has played in achieving the stated objectives.

All the tour guides present in both study sites were interviewed. Five (5) tour guides at LCC and eight (8) tour guides at OOSG bringing it to a total of 13 tour guides. The United States National Park Service competency standard was used to assess their level of understanding. The tour guides were asked how well they understand environmental conservation, environmental interpretation, the resource, the audience and appropriate techniques that are used during an interpretation exercise.

### Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, median, mode, and standard deviation. Results obtained was presented in tables and field observation was also documented. Inferential tools used include T-test and Pearson's correlation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics of the study showed that 55.6% (Table 1) of the visitors to LCC were male between 25-50 years, while OOSG had the same number of male and female visitors with 25-50 years (58.1%). Most of the visitors to both sites were single (53.7% for LCC and 56.3% for OOSG) with 53.7% and 51.6% having tertiary educational level for LCC and OOSG (Table 1). This corresponds with the findings of Ryan and Glendon, (1998) who reported that tourist who desires active and interactive experiences in tourist destinations were more likely to be young males.

Results showed that guided tour has the highest mean of 2.375 and 2.924 for LCC and OOSG respectively (Table 2). This indicated that guided tour is the most preferred interpretation strategy at both sites this is in line with Moscardo, (1996) who stated that guides or on-site interpreters are the most effective method for increasing visitor learning. He further stated that using trained interpreters on site will help to attract the attention of visitors, to answer questions, to provide social interaction, and to tailor the information given to visitors to match what the visitors are seeing at the time. It can be therefore be deduced that Visitors preferred guided tour because they are taught how to relate with what is being seen. The inferential test showed that there was significant difference in the visitors preference for interpretive programs in LCC and OOSG ( $t = -10.91, p < 0.01$ ).

Results also revealed that all the tour guides at LCC were specially trained on environmental interpretation when employed so that conservation message can be properly communicated to the audience. This is in tandem with Moscardo, (2001) who stated that tour guides are more effective when trained because they can enforce and demonstrate minimal impact behaviours and can manage interactions between visitors and the wildlife.

In OOSG, all the tour guides (8) were not trained on interpretation neither did they have formal training in conservation/related fields (Table 3). The educational level revealed that two (2) had Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree, (1) was National Diploma (ND) holder, two (2) others had Higher National Diploma (HND) and the remaining three (3) have National Certificate of Education (NCE). However, they encourage visitors in conservation practice by telling them about the traditional values, cultural norms and beliefs of the site. The tour guides also stated that the animal population has been increasing. Hence it can be accepted the indigenous methods are adopted in passing across conservation messages to visitors at OOSG. This corresponds with McArthur and Hall, (1993) who stated that some benefits of having interpreters on site include their ability to attract the attention of visitors, to answer questions, to provide social interaction, and to tailor the information given to visitors to match what they are seeing at the time. Ogunjinmi *et al.*, (2009) further stated that interpretation is considered to be an important tool that helps to increase visitors' enjoyment, awareness and understanding of the environment

In the course of the interview it was discovered that all the tour guides (5 tour guides) at LCC has basic knowledge of the key points of interpretation which includes: communicating information, pleasure, knowledge of the audience and a good knowledge of the resources being interpreted this agrees with Ham, (1992) who stated a good interpreter knows his environment, his audience and what interpretation is all about. The tour guides at LCC had a good perception about interpretation that meets the USA National Park Service's (2007) competency standard while the tour guides at OOSG did not meet the standard of USA National Park Service. However, the tour guides at OOSG affirmed that their long stay in the Grove has afforded them the

**Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of visitors**

Variables	LCC		OOSG	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	175	55.6	32	50.0
Female	140	44.4	32	50.0
Total	315	100.0	64	100.0
<b>Age</b>				
1-14	28	8.9	3	4.7
14-24	79	25.1	23	35.9
25-50	183	58.1	29	45.3
50 above	25	7.9	9	14.1
Total	315	100.0	64	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Single	169	53.7	36	56.3
Married	134	42.5	23	35.9
Widowed	8	2.5	4	6.3
Divorced	4	1.3	1	1.6
Total	315	100.0	64	100.0
<b>Religion</b>				
Christianity	268	85.1	54	84.4
Muslim	32	10.2	7	10.9
Others	15	4.8	3	4.7
Total	315	100.0	64	100.0
<b>Educational level</b>				
Primary	44	14.0	13	20.3
Secondary	93	29.5	14	21.9
Tertiary	169	53.7	33	51.6
No Formal Education	9	2.9	4	6.3
Total	315	100	64	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2017

**Table 2: Interpretation Strategy Preferred by Visitors in LCC and OOSG**

Interpretation strategies	LCC		OOSG	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
guided tour	2.375	.6785	2.924	.2657
Brochure	1.719	.7231	1.600	.8808
Exhibits	1.672	.7139	2.508	.5885
self guided trail	1.203	.5398	1.435	.7726
bill boards and sign post	1.313	.5308	2.102	.8829

Source: Field Survey, 2017

**Table 3: Tour Guides Perception of Interpretation at LCC and OOSG**

Perception statement	LCC	OOSG
Have you heard about environmental conservation?	+	+
Have you heard about environmental interpretation?	+	-
Have you been trained on environmental interpretation?	+	-
Do you know the basic principles of interpretation?	+	-
Do you consider the audience when interpreting?	+	-
Do you understand interpretation strategies?	+	+
How well do you know the resources you are interpreting?	+	+
Have you had any training on conservation?	+	-
Do you have educational background in environment related field	+	-

Source: Field Survey, 2017

opportunity of knowing and being conversant with the resources well enough to know how to communicate them to visitors

**Visitors’ Environmental Behaviour**

Table 4 shows visitors’ off-site environmental behaviour. “I will stop improper dumping” had the highest mean value of 2.48 for LCC while “I will read about conservation” had the least mean (M=1.95). However for OOSG, “I will stop improper dumping” had the highest mean value of 2.40 while “Contribute to environmental cause” had the least mean for OOSG with the value (M=1.34).

**Visitors on Site Behaviour**

In the course of the study, visitors’ on site behaviour was observed. At LCC, the visitors appreciate the tour guides and started practicing what they learned about conservation like avoiding improper dumping of refuse and telling others to be careful about fragile thing in the environment. While at OOSG the visitors admired the souvenirs items on display and they fed the animals present with fruits.

Visitors’ off site behaviour was rated as “I already do this” =3; “I intend to do this” = 2 “and I do not intend to do this” = 1.

From the results, visitors in LCC perceive that conservation is important at the end of the tour and many of them were willing to carry out

conservation related exercise. 66% intend to plant trees, 64% were willing to tell others about conservation and 54% of the visitors affirmed that they were willing to stop actions that pollute the environment. This correspond with Ogunjinmi *et al.*, (2009), who identified interpretation to be of central importance as it helps to increase community support and cause a positive change in visitors’ behaviour.

From the study, it was observed that the visitors at LCC appreciated the tour guides after the tour and they started practicing what they learned about conservation like avoiding improper dumping of refuse and telling others to be careful about fragile thing in the environment. This agrees with Garrod and Wilson, (2003) who noted that interpretation programs in natural areas can be effective in terms of informing visitors about appropriate behaviours and encouraging them to engage in those behaviours and this also corresponds with Surya and Gyan, (2013) who noted that Environmental interpretation is considered a vehicle for sustainable tourism as it minimizes the adverse environmental and social impacts of tourism by creating pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours.

At OOSG, only 53.1% of the visitors intended to plant trees, 3% were willing to tell others about conservation and 1.6% intends to stop actions that pollute the environment which is as a result of the visitors not being properly enlightened

**Table 4: Visitors' off-site Environmental Behaviour**

Environmental statement	LCC		OOSG	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
plant trees	1.859	.7097	2.143	.5771
avoid killing animals for personal use	2.109	.8930	2.267	.8772
tell people conservation	1.578	.7518	2.273	.5310
wisely use resources	2.078	.7623	2.270	.4446
care for nature	2.031	.8159	2.381	.4929
learn more about conservation	1.469	.6416	2.273	.4671
stop improper dumping	2.406	.6599	2.476	.8569
stop polluting the environment	2.375	.9344	2.457	.5177
Complain about environmental damage	1.516	.8163	2.121	.7080
contribution to environmental cause	1.344	.6719	2.016	.6555
read about conservation	1.406	.8110	1.949	.6706
watch environmental messages	1.516	.7345	2.124	.7823
pay attention to environmental issues	1.922	.5991	1.968	.2969

Source: Field Survey, 2017

about conservation, this could also be due to the fact that the tour guides interpreted the traditional values and cultural heritage of the site. Improper dumping of refuse was noticed at OOSG and a visitor was seen crossing the lawn and she was not corrected. This contradicts the findings of Rajack and Warren, (1996) who reported that majority of visitors learn about environmental issues at protected areas and zoos.

It could therefore be deduced that interpretive programs have a positive influence on visitors' behaviour if the message is properly communicated this is supported by Wolfgang, (2002) who stated behavioural changes as one of the objectives of interpretation. This also correspond with Manfredo and Driver, (2002) who also noted that changes in conservation

attitudes were associated with structured, quality, interpretation programs and not simply exposure to the wildlife. Thus an important role for interpretation in sustainable wildlife tourism is to inform visitors of the consequences of certain behaviours and to provide education to encourage minimal impacts.

The inferential tests indicated a significant difference in the visitor's conservation behaviour at LCC and OOSG. Visitors in LCC were willing to conserve the environment because they were enlightened through interpretation while visitors to OOSG were not willing to conserve. Thus, a positive change in visitors' attitude and behaviour indicates that interpretation can be an effective and desirable tool in sustainable tourism.

### CONCLUSION

The study showed that guided tour is the most preferred interpretation strategy at Lekki Conservation Centre and Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove thus it can be accepted that guided tour is the most effective method for increasing visitor learning. Furthermore, using trained tour guides will help to attract the attention of

visitors, answer visitors questions, and to tailor the information given to visitors to match what the visitors are seeing at the time. It can be stated that Visitors preferred guided tour because they are taught how to relate with what is been seen to their personal experience.

Although, most of the visitors to Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove were not properly enlightened about environmental conservation during their tour, they were taught about the culture and traditional values of the grove hence only a few who already had knowledge of conservation before visiting the site were willing to conserve the environment. This study shows Interpretation is an important tool that influences visitors' satisfaction and experience. From this study, majority of the visitors in LCC became aware of conservation at the end of their tour and were willing to protect and conserve the natural resources around them. Visitors, willingness to visit again showed they were satisfied with the tour and learnt new things. The level of understanding of the tour guides about interpretation goes a long way in influencing the results that will be achieved from the interpretation exercise. Thus, a tour guide

with a good understanding of interpretation, the audience he is addressing and the resources to be interpreted will not only increase the satisfaction and experience of visitors but he/she will also make them aware of some of the values of the environment and provoke a change in their attitude towards the environment. Results further showed that the effectiveness of interpretation varies in relation to the attitudes and behaviours of visitors to both site. positive change in attitude and behaviour of the visitors and their willingness to visit again indicated that interpretation is an effective and desirable tool in biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism. It is therefore recommended that the tour guides should be properly trained on conservation and environmental interpretation. Tour guides should also recognise the power of interpretation and learn how to effectively use it to spread conservation message around the globe.

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