

## VISITORS' PLACE ATTACHMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN IN A WATER-BASED RECREATION DESTINATION: CASE STUDY OF LA CAMPAGNE TROPICANA, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Place attachment refers to the emotional relationships between people and place. Environmental concern on the other hand is people's favourable disposition towards the environment. Environmental concern has been linked to place attachment by some researchers, but scarcely in tourism and specifically water-based recreation contexts globally. This study therefore assessed the interrelationship between place attachment of visitors to a water based recreational destination in Lagos State Nigeria and their environmental concern. The study was carried out in La Campagne Tropicana. A total of 205 copies of structured questionnaire were administered to visitors randomly for a period of eight weeks. Data was analysed using Descriptive analysis and PPMC at  $\alpha=0.05$ . A higher percentage of respondents (52.5%) have a strong place attachment. Also, most respondents (52%) displayed a high level of environmental concern. A strong positive correlation ( $r=0.67$ ,  $P=0.00$ ) was found to exist between place attachment and environmental concern. It was concluded that the visitors to the resort are attached and exhibit greater concern about her ecological well-being.

**Keywords:** Environmental Concern, Place attachment, Visitors, Water-based Recreation

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## Introduction

The idea of a place appears to be an uncommon one, which is difficult to explain but immediately understood (Measham, 2003). When defining place, researchers have differently interpreted it with different terms, such as space, environment and location (Kaltenborn and Williams, 2002). It refers to the meanings and values that people associate with a geographical space through personal, group or cultural processes (Li, 2013). Human interaction has played a very active and important role in transforming a space to a place, telling that the relationship between people and places is a significant topic in place-related research (Li, 2013). Place attachment also referred to as 'sense of place' originated from environmental psychology, and it refers to the relationships between people and place (Hwang *et al.*, 2005; Kyle *et al.*, 2004; Williams and Vaske, 2003). It is also defined as emotional links that people develop towards places (Li, 2013). Most times, they are not aware of the emotional bonds until the place is threatened (Giuliani 2003) which are found to be linked to a variety of people's behaviours and perceptions associated with places.

In recreation and tourism contexts, place attachment was first introduced in 1981 (Wickham and Kerstetter, 2000) and represents a person's valuing of a recreation setting and the valuation consists of functional meanings and emotional-symbolic meanings (Li, 2013). The author also established that two types of people-place relationships can occur in a tourism or recreational destination: local peoples' attachment to their residential places, and tourists' attachment towards the destination (Li, 2013). Local people are the owners of a destination and so see the place as their home, while tourists come to the destination as external visitors. The distinctiveness of people-place interactions in tourism in relation to visitors is partially reflected in the definition of tourism itself: as it is a temporary movement where tourists spend only certain duration of time interacting with a place.

Place attachment incorporates several aspects of the people-place bonding of affect, emotions, knowledge, beliefs, and behaviour in connection with a place (Chow and Healy, 2008) and arises from psychological, social, and cultural processes. Because it captures personal values and perceptions, place attachment is an important non-economic measurement of the value of natural places (Warzecha and Lime, 2001). Kyle *et al.* (2003) noted that it is the degree to which an

individual values or identifies with a particular environmental setting. In the context of this study, it was explored under the sub-constructs of place identity, place social bonding and place dependence.

### 1. Place Identity

Place identity describes a profound connection between a place and one's personal identity (Prokansky, 1978). It captures humans' use of places in constructing and maintaining self-identity (Manzo 2003; Smaldone, 2002) hence offering an individual the opportunity to both express and affirm his/her identity (Bunduk *et al.*, 2009). When people visit natural attractions, the physical and social attributes of the place may give rise to a strong sense of place identity (Gu and Ryan, 2008) involving not only the specific, localised experiences but also more specific memories about the place (Devine-Wright and Clayton, 2010). This can aid place protective and conservation behaviours (Walker and Ryan, 2008; Walker and Chapman, 2003; Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000)

### 2. Place Social Bonding

Place social bonding refers to interpersonal relationship which occurs in a place (Ramkissoon *et al.*, 2012; Scannell and Gifford, 2010a; Kyle *et al.* (2004) and fosters "group belonging" (Hammitt *et al.*, 2009). Raymond *et al.* (2010) found that natural settings set the context for social experiences and the bonds which are consequently formed. These communal relationships hold important meanings in outdoor recreation settings (Hammitt, 2000). Also, place attachment is often assumed to develop specifically as a function of social relationships that occur in places (Jones *et al.*, 2000).

### 3. Place Dependence

Place dependence is described as visitors' functional attachment to a specific place and their awareness of the uniqueness of a setting which contributes to meeting their visitation goals (Williams *et al.*, 1992). It refers to connections based specifically on activities that take place in an outdoor, recreational setting, based on the evaluation of the places original intended use and its ability to deliver such use, especially relative to alternative sites (Yuksel *et al.*, 2010; Clark

and Stein, 2003). The greater an individual's level of dependence on the place, the lesser he/she is willing to change the place for another (Scannell and Gifford, 2010a).

Environmental concern on the other hand refers to people's favourable disposition towards the environment. Environmental concern has been treated as an evaluation of, or an attitude towards facts, one's own behaviour, or others' behaviour with consequences for the environment (Takala, 1991). Environmental concern may then refer to both a specific attitude directly determining intentions, or more broadly to a general attitude or value orientation. Stern (1992) identified four different such value orientations;

- Environmental concern as a new way of thinking called the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) (Dunlap and Van Liere, 1978)
- Environmental concern as anthropocentric altruism where people care about environmental quality mainly because they believe that a degraded environment poses a threat to people's health. Thus, it is not the threat to the environment, but the threat to the well-being of people that is of central concern (Hopper and Nielsen, 1991).
- Environmental concern as self-interest, where environmentally responsible behaviour is instigated by perceived personal threats caused by environmental deterioration (Baldassare and Katz, 1992).
- Environmental concern as a function of some deeper cause, such as underlying religious beliefs or post-materialistic values.

Environmental concern has been linked to place attachment by some researchers. For example, a study by Stedman (2002) measured environmental concern by willingness to be involved in actions to protect a lake in Wisconsin; participants were primarily residents of the lake region. The author found that it was the combination of high place attachment and low satisfaction with current conditions of the area that best predicted willingness to participate in a hypothetical environmental action plan. Also, Vaske and Kobrin (2001) conducted a survey on the relationship between place attachment and environmentally responsible behaviour and found a positive association. A study in Norway found that locals who reported high levels of attachment

to the natural area surrounding their community were more likely to oppose the construction of a hydropower plant in the area even in the face of potential substantial economic gain (Vorkinn and Riese, 2001). Another compelling piece of evidence that place attachment may be related to environmental concern comes from Mitchell *et al.* (1993) noted that visitors who had an attachment orientation were consistently more likely to report feelings of personal stewardship such as engaging in maintenance-type activities, cleaning up campsites or performing small repairs in the site

Moreso, in another study in Norway, researchers found that residents' place attachment was positively related to attitudes toward managing and protecting a natural area near their community (Kaltenborn and Williams, 2002). Williams *et al.* (1992) found that, across four sites in the United States, people who scored higher on place attachment also expressed greater concern for ecological impacts to wilderness areas. Essentially, most place attachment studies assessing environmental concern or stewardship show that people who are more place attached to areas also exhibit greater concern about the ecological well-being of the area. Worthy of note is the fact that most of the aforementioned studies were not in water tourism/ recreational destinations. Li (2013) noted that only limited studies have been undertaken on visitors' place attachment and environmental concern in water-based recreation destinations globally. This study therefore assessed the interrelationship between place attachment of visitors to a water based recreational destination in Lagos State Nigeria and their environmental concern.

## Methodology

### Study Area

La Campagne Tropicana is a beach resort in Ikegun, Ibeju-lekki LGA, Epe Expressway, Lagos State, Nigeria, situated at the coast of the Atlantic Ocean bordered by the freshwaters of the Ikegun Lake. Its located at 6.3926<sup>0</sup>N and 4.1865<sup>0</sup>E. The resort boasts itself as a true reflection of African beauty and elegance. It is far away from the noise of the metropolis. It is said to be the most visited beach resort in Africa, offering recreational games/activities both on land and in/on water, which include: an African shaped swimming pool, kayaking, etc. The resort has a total of

24 fully furnished chalets to suits the tourist's taste and style, which are named: Kodi/Laba, Executive Kodi, Oso, Ilegiri (single room with or without spa), Obieze/Anago and Ilerimi. To gain access into the resort, an entrance fee of #5000-#6000 for adults, #2500-#3000 for teenagers and #1500 for children has to be paid (Lacampagne Beach Resorts, 2019).

The resort just like it is obtained in the state as a whole has a tropical wet and dry climate with two distinct rainy seasons; the more intense season occurs between April and July, with a milder one from October to November. Dry season is experienced between August and September, as well as between December and February, accompanied by Harmattan winds from the Sahara Desert, which are at their strongest from December to early February. The temperature range in is between a high of 91°F (33°C) and low of 70°F (21°C). The hottest month is March, when average daytime temperatures reach 84°F (29°C), while July is the coldest month with an average temperature of 77°F (25°C).

### **Target Population**

The target population for this study were visitors to the resort.

### **Data Collection**

Primary method of data collection was employed using structured questionnaire. This was administered to obtain data from the visitors at the resort for 8 weeks (October- December, 2018) through the help of the members of staff of the resort. An estimate of 450 tourists visited the resort during this period. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample size determination, a sample size of 205 visitors' was drawn.

### **Measurement of Variables**

Demographic characteristic variables were measured with close and open-ended questions. The open ended questions allow the respondent to give responses without being limited to any answer. Close ended questions give a list of appropriate answers from respondents. Other variables for objectives were measured using Dichotomy (Yes/ No) and open and close ended questions. Place attachment and environmental concern was measured on a five-point Likert type scale of Strongly Agree = 1, Agree = 2, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 4 and Strongly Disagree = 5

represent negative statements and Strongly Agree = 5, Agree=4, Undecided= 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree=1 represent positive statements.

### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained were first sorted, and 177 of 205 copies of the administered questionnaire were valid. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 14. Both descriptive and inferential statistics was used in this study. Descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used. T-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation techniques were used to draw relationship between variables. Results were presented using tables, qualitative statements and description.

### **Results**

#### **Place attachment**

##### **a. Place identity**

Approximately 40% of the respondents agreed that the resort meant a lot to them, 33.3% strongly agreed, 21.5% were undecided. A larger percentage of respondents (49%) agreed that they felt strongly attached to the resort, 25.4% strongly agreed, 22.6% were undecided. About 40% of the respondents agreed that the resort was part of them, 31.6% were undecided, 22.6% strongly agreed. About 45% of respondents agreed that they felt pleased when they participated in water based recreational activities at the resort, followed by 35.0% respondents who strongly agreed, 16.9% were undecided. Approximately 35% of the respondents agreed that visiting the resort said a lot about who they are, 30.5% were undecided, 24.3% strongly agreed.

##### **b. Place social bonding**

About 32% of the respondents agreed to have a special connection to the people who visited the resort, 31.6% of the respondents also were undecided, 27.1% strongly agreed. Majority (52.0%) of the respondents agreed that it was enjoyable to have talked to other visitors at the resort, followed by 26.6% respondents who strongly agreed, 15.3% were undecided. Approximately

45% of respondents agreed that it was enjoyable to have talked to staff working at the resort, 36.2% strongly agreed, 15.3% were undecided. About 40% of respondents agreed that they visited the resort to spend time with people they love, 38.4% strongly agreed, 16.4% were undecided.

### c. Place dependence

Approximately 38% of respondents agreed that they got more satisfaction out of visiting the resort than from visiting any other attraction, 35.0% respondents strongly agreed, 23.2% were undecided. About 45% respondents agreed that they wouldn't substitute any other attraction for the type of experience, 27.7% were undecided, 19.8% strongly agreed. A larger percentage (46.3%) of respondents agreed that the resort was the best place for what I liked to do, 26.0% strongly agreed, 23.2% were undecided. About 44% of the respondents agreed that they were willing to pay more for attractions and activities at the resort, 28.2% were undecided, 24.3% strongly agree

**Table 1: Place Attachment of visitors to La Campagne Tropicana**

STATEMENT	SA		A		U		D		SD		Mean±SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
<b>Place identity</b>											
This resort means a lot to me.	59	33.3	70	39.5	38	21.5	7	4.0	3	1.7	2.01 ± 0.93
I feel very strongly attached to the resort.	45	25.4	81	48.8	40	22.6	7	4.0	4	2.3	2.12 ± 0.91
I feel the resort is part of me	40	22.6	71	40.1	56	31.6	8	4.5	2	1.1	2.21 ± 0.88
I feel pleased when I participate in water based recreational activities at this resort	62	35.0	79	44.6	30	16.9	5	2.8	1	0.6	1.89 ± 0.82
Visiting this resort says a lot about who I am	43	24.3	61	34.5	54	30.5	13	7.3	6	3.4	2.31 ± 1.03
<b>Place social bonding</b>											
I have a special connection to the people who visit here	48	27.1	56	31.6	56	31.6	14	7.9	3	1.7	2.25 ± 0.10
It was enjoyable to talk to other visitors	47	26.6	92	52.0	27	15.3	10	5.6	1	0.6	2.02 ± 0.84
It was enjoyable to talk to staff working at this resort	64	36.2	80	45.2	27	15.3	4	2.3	2	1.1	1.87 ± 0.83
I visit this resort to spend time with people I love	68	38.4	71	40.1	29	16.4	7	4.0	2	1.1	1.89 ± 0.89



**Place dependence**

I get more satisfaction out of visiting this resort than from visiting any other attraction.	62	35.0	68	38.4	41	23.2	4	2.3	2	1.1	1.96 ± 0.88
I wouldn't substitute any other attraction for the type of experience	35	19.8	80	45.2	49	27.7	10	5.6	3	1.7	2.24 ± 0.89
This resort is the best place for what I like to do	46	26.0	82	46.3	41	23.2	7	4.0	1	0.6	2.07 ± 0.84
I'm willing to pay more for attractions and activities at the resort	43	24.3	77	43.5	50	28.2	3	1.7	4	2.3	2.14 ± 0.88

**Categorization of Respondents Level of Place Attachment**

Results in table 2 showed the respondents level of place attachment to water-based recreation at La Campagne Tropicana. A higher percentage of respondents (52.5%) that have a strong place attachment in comparison to the remaining respondents.

**Table 2: Level of Place Attachment**

Level	F	%	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Weak	84	47.5	13.00	45.00	26.99	7.483
Strong	93	52.5				

**Environmental concern for ecological well-being of the resort**

Results shown in table 3 revealed the respondents environmental concern for the ecological wellbeing of the resort.

A high percentage of respondents (40.7%) agreed to have talked to others about environmental issues at the resort, followed by 25.4% respondents who strongly agreed, 21.5% were undecided. Majority (52.6%) of the respondents agreed to have convinced friends/relatives/other visitors to act responsibly at the resort, 21.5% strongly agreed and 16.4% undecided. About 37% strongly agreed to have disposed waste responsibly during their stay at the resort, 32.2% agreed and

18.1% were undecided. Approximately 48% of the respondents agreed to have learnt what can help solve environmental issues at the resort, 25.0% were indecisive and 16.4% strongly agreed. About 41% of respondents agreed to have conserved water as much as possible during their stay at the resort, 35.0% strongly agreed, 15.3% were undecided. Approximately 44% of the respondents agreed to have preserved green areas during their stay at the resort, 31.6% strongly agreed and 20.3% were undecided. The statement 'I learn what can help solve environmental issues at the resort' ranked first while 'I have preserved green areas' ranked least.

**Table 3: Environmental Concern of Respondents**

STATEMENT	SA		A		U		D		SD		Mean	Rank
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Talk with others about environmental issues at the resort	45	25.4	72	40.7	38	21.5	16	9.0	6	3.4	2.24	2
Convince friends/relatives/other visitors to act responsibly at the resort	38	21.5	102	52.6	29	16.4	7	4.0	1	0.6	2.05	4
Dispose waste responsibly during stay	66	37.3	57	32.2	32	18.1	19	10.7	3	1.7	2.07	3
Learn what can help solve environmental issues at the resort	29	16.4	84	47.5	46	25.0	9	5.1	9	5.1	2.35	1
Conserved water as much as possible	62	35.0	73	41.2	27	15.3	10	5.6	5	2.8	2.00	5
Preserve green areas	56	31.6	78	44.1	36	20.3	4	2.3	3	1.7	1.98	6

### **Categorization of respondents by level of environmental concern**

Results in table 4 showed the respondents level of environmental concern. Majority (52%) had high level of environmental concern in comparison to the rest of the respondents.

**Table 4: Level of Environmental Concern**

Level	F	%	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D
Low	92	52.0	6.00	27.00	12.6949	3.76099
High	85	48.0				

**Test of Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>01</sub>)**

There is no significant relationship between the environmental concern of the tourists and place attachment to water-based recreation at La Campagne Tropicana.

PPMC was used to test the relationship between the environmental concern of the tourists and place attachment to water-based recreation at La Campagne Tropicana and it was revealed that there is a strong positive correlation thus a significant relationship exists ( $r=0.672$ ,  $P= 0.000$ ). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

**Table 5: Correlation Analysis between Environmental Concern and Place Attachment**

Variable	R	P	Decision
environmental concern VS place attachment	0.672**	0.000	Significant

**Test of Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>02</sub>)**

There is no significant difference in place attachment between male and female tourists to water based recreation at La Campagne Tropicana

T-test was used to test the difference in place attachment between male and female tourists at La Campagne Tropicana and it was revealed that no significant difference exists ( $t= 1.076$ ,  $P= 0.284$ ). The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

### Test of Hypothesis 3 (H<sub>03</sub>)

There is no significant difference in the level of environmental concern between the male and female tourists at La Campagne Tropicana

T-test was used to test the difference in the level of environmental concern between male and female tourists at La Campagne Tropicana and it was revealed that no significant difference exists ( $t= 1.199$ ,  $P= 0.232$ ). The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

**Table 6: Test for H<sub>02</sub> and H<sub>03</sub>**

Variables	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	t	df	P	Decision
Place attachment	Male	85	27.62	6.76	1.076	175	0.284	Not Significant
	Female	92	26.41	8.09				
Environmental concern	Male	85	13.05	3.75	1.199	175	0.232	Not Significant
	Female	92	12.37	3.76				

### Discussion

Place attachment is an important non-economic measurement of the value of natural places because it captures personal values and perceptions, (Warzecha and Lime, 2001). Kyle *et al.* (2003) noted that it is the degree to which an individual values or identifies with a particular environmental setting. On place identity, La Campagne Tropicana attracts a large percentage of tourists who feel strongly about the resort. This is in line with Gu and Ryan (2008) who noted that when people visit natural attractions, the physical and social attributes of the place may give rise to a strong sense of place identity. With respect to place social bonding, about 79% of water-based recreationists at La Campagne Tropicana, at least agreed that it was enjoyable talking to

other visitors at the resort, backing up the argument that people become attached to places which facilitate interpersonal relationships (Scannell & Gifford, 2010a) and that natural settings set the context for social experiences and the bonds which are consequently formed (Raymond *et al.*, 2010).

Moreso, a large percentage (72.3%) of tourists agreed that the resort was the best place for what they liked to do. This thus agrees with the definition of Place dependence as visitors' functional attachment to a specific place (Stokols and Shumacker, 1981) and their awareness of the uniqueness of a setting which contributes to meeting their visitation goals (Williams *et al.*, 1992). It has been however stated that most individuals often develop a strong dependence with a particular place when the place provides a sense of exceptionality or is distinctive from other places. The overall place attachment of majority of visitors to the resort was found to be strong. This indicates a deep emotional connection the visitors have for the resort. This is in line with Li (2013), and Chow and Healy (2008).

On environmental concern, most visitors in the resort largely agreed to have talked to others about environmental issues at the resort, convinced friends/relatives/other visitors to act responsibly at the resort, disposed waste responsibly during their stay at the resort, learnt what can help solve environmental issues at the resort, conserved water as much as possible during their stay, and preserved green areas. Likewise, the overall environmental concern assessment revealed a relatively high percentage. In other words, issues of the environment are paramount to the visitors as they can be said display environmentally responsible behaviours. This corroborates Stern (1992).

In assessing the relationship between respondents' attachment to the resort and their environmental concern, a strong positive correlation was found to exist. This means than an increase in place attachment translates to an increase in visitors environmental concern and vice versa. This supports a study by Stedman (2002) that solidified the notion that place attachment is related to environmental concern, as measured by willingness to be involved in actions to protect a lake in Wisconsin. Mitchell *et al.* (1993) particularly noted that visitors who had an attachment orientation were consistently more likely to report feelings of personal stewardship such as engaging in maintenance-type activities, cleaning up campsites or performing small repairs in the

site. A notion supported by Li (2013), Kaltenborn and Williams (2002), Vaske and Kobrin (2001), Vorkinn and Riese (2001) and Williams *et al.* (1992).

## Conclusion

Visitors to La Campagne Tropicana largely had a strong sense of place attachment to the resort as well as a high environmental concern. A strong positive correlation existed between place attachment and environmental concern of the visitors.

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