



Benchmarking organizational culture in hospitality, tourism and leisure management enterprises: bridling the unattractiveness of the Inner-city Core of Akure

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Abstract

The weather of the high concentration of improvement in the inner hemisphere of cities in the developing world is increasingly becoming evident. In Nigeria, and the uncontrolled intensification of homeland use in the inner-city expenses is now an number of serious planning and authority concerns. Governments at various levels are currently struggling with the daunting summons of repressing these urban physical and social problems of almost defied clarification which planners are presently striving to spout with planning-driven strategies. The investment in Akure for this study is because it is an old city and the administrative capital of Ondo State, Nigeria, that has testified immense development and spatial growth, acute traffic volume, industrial and profitable activities with a growing incidence of a dysfunctional city core. This paper examines the inner-city core of Akure using remotely sensed data division of the area. This will assist in generating a compelling and captivating marketing core while representing efficient spatial management toolkits for urban planners, environmental supervisors, learners, and researchers as well as administration and non-governmental regulations

Keywords: Akure, commercial activities, core, inner-city, land use, management, planning, spatial growth.

Introduction

The protraction of city environments remains a common experience all over the world. In most parts of Asia and Africa countries, these cities represent the heart of a fast changing global economy and world economic growth with increasing urbanization growth and activities (UN World Urbanization Prospects report, 2005). Urbanization processes multiplied steadily throughout the 20th century and have remained so because of the large pool of potential migrants to the city from the country-side.

The city is at a spectacular level of development on the continuum of human communities. It is perceptually a geographical entity of extended scope and complexity which allows further development of complicated patterns of physical, social and economic attributes (Basorun, 2015). Generally, cities are locations of high level of accumulation of economic activities and complex spatial structure that are supported by transport systems (Protihba, 2010). The network of transport usually connects the city sub-centers (neighbourhood / business cores) to maximize the efficiency of urban and extra-urban space; allowing clients to visit businesses and customers to patronise retail establishments. It also provides channels of communication and promotes activity/land use patterns that generate spatial interaction.



In Nigeria, the rapid rate of urbanization has engendered several challenges and problems similar to situations in other parts of the world. First, the spatial interactions in terms of movements generated within and between the land-uses produce conflicts along major traffic corridors and activity centres (Akhuewu, 2010). Second, the limited amount of land “space” within most commercial / business cores of the city are highly competitive as there are severed and varied demands for them. Third, the bulk of the housing units around the city cores are overcrowded with acute quality deficiencies which now make them unattractive and unsuitable for habitation. This situation is worse in the inner-city region where existing physical, social and economic conditions have failed to meet the contemporary needs of the urban dwellers as many inner-city inhabitants now relocate closer to the facilities of sub-urban settlements (Pojani, 2008), (Vehbi and Hoskara, 2009).

Urbanization is an unavoidable process; yet, efforts can be made through proper urban land use planning to protect the natural resources and the needs and rights of the people (Soffianian., Nadoushan, Yaghmael, and Falahatkar, 2010). Recently, there have been many debates in worldwide literature on how the vitality and livability in historic commercial districts in city centres (cores) can be improved in a sustainable manner (Balsas, 2000; Ribeiro, 2008). This study aims at improving the unattractiveness of the inner-city core of Akure, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to: (i) examine the inner-city pattern of development; (ii) identify the unattractiveness associated with the area, and (iii) regulate the use of land at the core to achieve optimal coordination of various human activities for the improvement of environmental quality.

Literature Review

The inner zone of the city is customarily the origin of growth; the centre of commercial, social and civil life. This area accommodates the main market, departmental stores, office complexes, banks, theatre / town hall, the palace, museums, and other elements of historic importance (Basorun, 2015). Many of these inner-city historic commercial districts in the world are being threatened, physically degraded or even destroyed by the impact of rapid urbanization owing to the forces of globalization and industrialization (Kidokoro, Harate, Subanu, Jessern, Motte and Selteer, 2008). Investigation into the growth stages and formal development of the inner-city cores also reveals that recent technological changes, especially those in transportation contribute to their rapid physical growth as earlier explained.

Population pressure on the city core in particular, has been so chaotic and the consequence is its loss of value and attraction. Vidinha and Faria (2007) identify the problems causing the loss of attraction to historic commercial districts in city centres as including: the rise of new attraction centres in the suburbs; increased insecurity; the high costs and difficulties of accessibility and parking; the lack of leisure or entertainment facilities in the city cores; changes of consumption and buying habits; and growing competition among the different forms of commerce. Bridling the unattractiveness of the inner-city core, therefore, entails revitalising it through the removal of the physical fabric and the active economic use or utilization and spaces with the adoption of three fundamental options: demolition and redevelopment, refurbishment and conversion for a new use (Tiesdel, Oc, and Heath, 1998).

Literature records that a sustainable revitalization approach remains a toolkit for regenerating the attractiveness of inner-city historic commercial districts. This was demonstrated in the Han District of Bursa – a large city in Turkey located in north western Anatolia of the Marmara region (Turlin, Neslihan, Ozlem, and Nilufer, 2011). It was also applied in the United States’ Main Street Programme and the United Kingdom Town Centre Management scheme as an economic restructuring aimed at strengthening the economic base of downtown areas (Listokin, Listokin, and



Lahr, 1998). Theoretically, this is often accompanied by economic revitalisation with three basic principles which (Vehbi and Hoskara, 2009) describe as : “encouraging, mixed land uses, tourism and high-income people with opportunities, fulfilment of human needs and improvement in living condition.”

To achieve the above principles, Tiesdel, Oc, and Heath (1998) suggest three distinct strategic approaches so that the economic viability of the commercial districts can be restored in the long term (Turlin, Neslihan, Ozlem, and Nilufer, 2011). These include functional restructuring (new uses of activities replacing the former ones), functional regeneration (maintain and improving the competitiveness of the area’s existing retail concentrations) and functional diversification (new uses that synchronise and support the area’s economic base). In practical term, these approaches must be holistic by not only providing short-term physical improvements, but also by causing the social and economic lives in the area to appreciate in the long term under a partnership programme with the government educational institutions and the private sector.

Study Location

The study area is Akure, the Ondo state capital in South Western Nigeria. It is also the headquarters of Akure South Local Government Area (LGA) of the state. The dual political roles aided constant immigration into the city, thus, changing its economic, social and physical structures. Akure is located at approximately, 700 kilometers South West of Abuja, the Federal Capital of Nigeria and is about 350 kilometers from Lagos (the former capital of Nigeria). It lies on a latitude 5° 15’ North of the Equator and a longitude 5° 15’ East of the Greenwich meridian. It was established at the altitude of about 370 meters above sea level (Ondo State Government Agro-climatological and Ecological Monitoring Unit, 2007). It shares a geographical boundary with each of Akure North and Ifedore LGAs in the North, and Idanre LGA in the South.

Methodology

Google Earth (www.googleearth.com) was used to obtain the satellite imagery of Akure. After a reconnaissance survey, the catchment of the city’s main core was later determined to represent the research spot (inner-city). The google earth imagery and the Global Positioning system (GPS) were later employed to validate the co-ordinates of the inner-city and the core. The street guide map of the city was saved in an image-exchange format and plotted out in ARCGIS 10 software. Subsequently, a buffer was carved out as the inner-city service or catchment area. Due to the fact that the research is planned to be explorative, other required data on the unattractive posture of the study area were collected through literature search, master plans, field observation, and discussion with Heads of Urban Development Unit, Ondo State Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Waste Management Board and Akure South Local Government Council.

The City and Growth

Akure has served as centre of trade for centuries as a result of its rapid urban growth. The growth is in the form of a dual process of external expansion and physical/internal growth and reorganisation. The city accommodates quite a number of Federal, State and Local Government establishments (ministries, industries, administrative, educational/research etc.), trade centres, statutory co-operations and quasi-governmental institutions, thus, attracting large spectrum of immigrants. It has witnessed remarkable growth in its organisation in recent years and its population in the past few decades has more than tripled. In 1952, Akure had a population of 38,852 which increased to 71,106 in 1963 at a growth rate of 5.5% per annum. The city population has been growing sporadically since the creation of Ondo State in 1976. It was estimated as

164,000 in 1984 and 239,124 in 1991 (Turlin, Neslihan, Ozlem, and Nilufer, 2011). This figure was projected to be 269,207 by the National Census Board in 1996 and put at about 353,211 by the Federal Bureau of Statistics in 2006.

The presence of the seat of government in Akure, industries, provision of community facilities (Road, water etc.) and social facilities (hospitals, schools, markets etc.) precipitated the migration of people from the surrounding towns/settlements for job opportunities and housing development. Geographically, Akure is compact and at about 8-kilometer radius from the city centre and contains roughly 730 residential family and public layouts as well as administrative quarters served with about six notable nodes along the existing six major routes. The Oba Adesida route runs through the inner city which contains the central (king's) market, the palace, theatres/town hall, museum, central mosque, departmental store/shopping complexes and the general post office. Other buildings include: the Sacred-Heart Cathedral, Democracy park, banks, petrol station and a host of old traditional residential buildings.

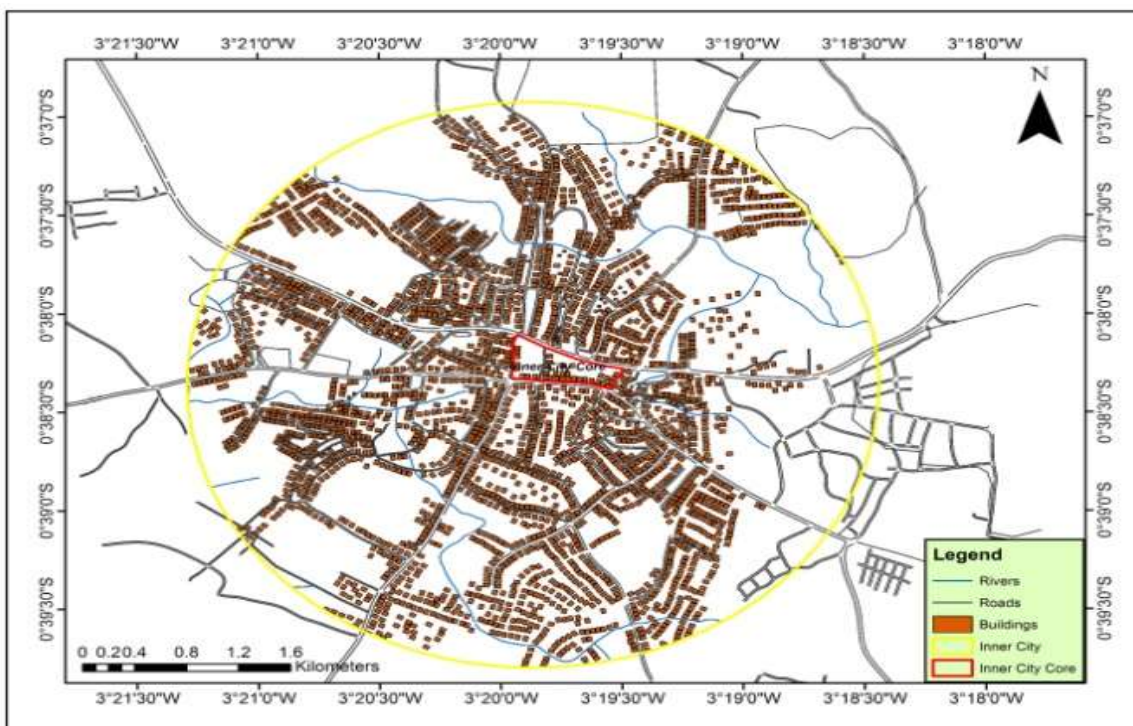


Figure.1: The Inner City Core of Akure, Nigeria.

Dimensions of the Inner-City Core Unattractiveness

Slum and Sprawl

The impression has been created of Akure inner city core as a center of intense social and economic activities. As the commercial core expands in terms of activities and space it is accompanied by over-crowding of the old central housing by poor unemployed peasants. In this area are unplanned and substandard private housing districts, being the origin of growth. It is characterised by shanty dwellings and squatter homes which are too small for a decent family life. The tragedy of the situation is that the majority suffer inadequate water and power supply, waste disposal and toilet facilities spreading over a relatively large area in an often 'untidy' manner (Basorun, 2015).



Physical Layout

The inner city core of Akure was not initially planned as a district centre. In the recent state government urban renewal approach, this area was planned and redesigned; comprising open and lock-up stalls with a large parking space jointly used as “democracy park” (without recreational facilities) to improve the architectural outlook. However, the existing physical condition of the core cannot satisfy the contemporary needs of the urban dwellers. That is, there is arbitrary demarcation of family lands in the area as houses and compounds are developed without reference to any specific system of layout, thus, distorting the physical landscape. The traffic problems have also been aggravated by newly constructed shopping malls and transport infrastructure meant to improve accessibility. The effects of these are: the difficulty of adequate parking and lack of diversity of uses such as leisure activities to attract different age groups and new expectations for the core. The environment lacks a needed pleasant atmosphere that can encourage shoppers to relax, socialize and enjoy the shopping experience. Most local and foreign tourists and shoppers now desire unique shopping places that reflect the characteristics of the locality and prefer more natural environments where there is a feeling of contact with the outside world (Turlin, Neslihan, Ozlem, and Nilufer, 2011).

Environmental Hygiene

A central issue of concern at the core is environmental hygiene with respect to the manner in which the environmental quality is degraded. Predominantly, the solid waste generated by the inhabitants of the inner-city are disposed indiscriminately to constitute heaps of garbage/refuse overflowing into major roads, thereby blocking drainages and result in flooding. The extant refuse collection bins cannot optimally cater for the volume of solid waste generated in the area. Other hygiene related issues include: high occupancy ratios of 4 to 5 persons per room, traditional means of heating (such as the use of saw dust and firewood) and poor toilet and bathroom facilities. The efficiency of the Ondo State Waste Management Board (OSWMB) is hindered by high urban agglomeration. Resultantly, the quality assurance of the core could not be guaranteed with profound risk on the environment and human health. The participation of the private sector is highly desirable if we must realise effective waste management and healthy environment for a productive living.

Safety and Consumers’ Convenience

The inner-city core covers the major commercial corridor, incorporating the main markets, wholesales, private and government institutions. It is a designated business core of high intensity where pressure from interest groups creates more development projects. The phenomena of illegal re-building, partitioning, attachments or building extensions, illegal conversion and new constructions are pervasive throughout the area. Some other structures like kiosks, temporary sheds, etc are jam-packed along the inner routes to constitute constraints to accessibility. Security or safety at the core, therefore, becomes threatened with incessant night theft/burglary and fire outbreak arising from unwieldy development and high density growth. From literature, security is an important factor of node-visit frequency and a determinant of consumers’ convenience. Reference (Turlin, Neslihan, Ozlem, and Nilufer, 2011) maintains that, adequate security makes a node or core more active and flourishing economically and commercially as jobs and services are protected.

Patronage Behaviour



Field observation shows that the city core offers temporary convenience to consumers such as tourists through one-stop shopping. This is a patronage behaviour (often interpreted as a spatial factor) where “all but the most esoteric of shopping needs can be satisfied in a single or one centre, all at a time” (Turlin, Neslihan, Ozlem, and Nilufer, 2011). As expected, the nature of the core reflects concentration of retail businesses, offices and lower-order service outlets. Turlin, Neslihan, Ozlem, and Nilufer (2011) argue that multi-purpose trips are increasingly undertaken by consumers. Research has also revealed that multi-purpose shopping is becoming highly popular, accounting for up to half of all shopping trips. It occurs when consumers are able to purchase both higher and lower-order goods in a single trip.

Value Deprivation

The experience over the years is that urban crowding and high density have remained the grave consequences of urbanization. Another notable, negative implication of this process is the deprivation of value of the inner-city core which is something that drives tourists away. As old trade centers, they accommodate huge commercial buildings and features of historical and cultural values that are constantly neglected on account of rapid urbanization. With more government attention on the construction of inter-regional and intra-city roads and channels of communication, an effective interaction is established as well as rising attractiveness of suburbs settlements resulting in the collapse of the inner-city core. However, Vehbi and Hoskara, (2009) are of the opinion that “preserving and conserving the historic urban quarters in terms of their social, economic and physical context is necessary to achieve vitality and sustainability in these areas”.

Policy Issues and Conclusion

Evidently, the Akure inner-city core has almost lost its value because of the unregulated use of its buildings and space. This calls for its proper management to attain sustainability and systemic urban growth pattern. The challenges of the core have earlier been enumerated to include poor spatial and housing development, unhygienic environment, inadequate security, weak patronage behaviour and value deprivation. Transforming this core to a smart node, therefore, is imperative. This requires a joint effort by the State Government and its Development and Property Corporation (OSDPC) in creating a range of housing opportunities and choices for prospective builders, fostering distinctive and attractive communities at the suburbs and preserving open spaces, physical aesthetics and critical environmental areas for recreation at the core.

The OSWMB in collaboration with private organisations should make provision for adequate waste containers at the inner core for regular disposal of garbage and refuse. Further efforts of the state government should concentrate on centralising public facilities such as markets, police post, health care centres, fire station, multi-purpose shopping malls etc in local communities or neighbourhoods to enhance city cohesion. It should also encourage citizens (stakeholders and communities) to participate in spatial development decisions particularly in the renewal of the physical fabric and investment in recreational activities for different classes of people under a public-private partnership (PPP) approach. It is equally necessary for the State Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to improve the quality of the core by educating the public on modern maintenance, collect information on inner-city activities and advice government regularly on efficient management of the core. All these will permit behavioural and structural changes that will guarantee revitalisation and regeneration of Akure inner city core.

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