HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION OF BEACH TOURISM IN LAGOS, NIGERIA: CURRENT REALITIES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Research Problem: *Beach tourism in Lagos, Nigeria, has shifted from open public commons to privatized, state-controlled spaces. Historical coastal erosion, state violence, and large-scale urban development projects such as the Eko Atlantic City have reshaped the shoreline, raising concerns about social exclusion, environmental risks, and the long-term sustainability of beach tourism.*

Methods/Theory: *The study adopts a multi-theoretical framework integrating the Tragedy of the Commons, Commodification of Space, and Political Ecology to examine the socio-political dynamics of Lagos's coastline. It employs a synthesis of empirical studies and secondary data to explore historical, environmental, and economic processes influencing beach tourism.*

Results: *Findings reveal that state-led interventions, including beach privatization and the Eko Atlantic City project, have created a contested shoreline. While these measures provide coastal protection and premium amenities for select groups, they simultaneously exacerbate social exclusion, displace local communities, and redistribute environmental risks to marginalized populations.*

Conclusion: *The trajectory of beach tourism development in Lagos prioritizes entrepreneurial urban development and capital accumulation over community interests, thereby undermining long-term resilience and equitable access to coastal resources.*

Key Contribution to Knowledge: *This study reframes Lagos's beach tourism evolution as a socio-political process rather than a purely environmental or economic phenomenon. It demonstrates how urban development and tourism intersect with climate justice and social equity on Africa's coast.*

Recommendation: *The paper advocates for a paradigm shift towards inclusive governance of beach tourism in Lagos. This includes mandating free public beaches, integrating nature-based coastal protection strategies, and centering community livelihoods and participation in planning and decision-making to achieve sustainable and equitable outcomes.*

Introduction

Nigeria's extensive coastline, particularly within its commercial nerve center, Lagos, represents a vast and underutilized asset for tourism development in West Africa. Historically, the Atlantic shoreline of Lagos was not merely a geographical feature but a vibrant socio-cultural arena. The iconic Bar Beach, for instance, served as the premier recreational space for the nation, especially during Lagos's tenure as the federal capital, once regarded as the most popular beach in the country (Afolabi, 2023). It was a democratic space that attracted a diverse cross-section of society, from families and tourists to spiritual congregations thereby solidifying its status as a pivotal cultural landmark (Alozie et al., 2017). However, the narrative of Lagos's beaches is one of profound paradox and transformation. The same Bar Beach that symbolized leisure also bore witness to the grim spectacles of public executions during the military dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s, embedding a legacy of fear within a space of recreation (Historical Nigeria, 2025). From the late 20th century onwards, this complex history was further complicated by the relentless forces of coastal erosion and flooding, which precipitated massive land loss and rendered the coastline increasingly hazardous (Ankrah et al., 2023).

In response to these environmental challenges, state ambition and private capital have catalyzed a dramatic physical and socio-economic transformation of the coastline. The Eko Atlantic City project, a monumental land reclamation endeavor built on the former site of Bar Beach, stands as a testament to this new vision. While lauded for its engineering prowess in providing coastal defense and enabling urban expansion, the project has ignited intense debate over its social exclusion,

potential flood risks, and environmental externalities (ELRI, 2021; Ankrah et al., 2023). Existing scholarship has proficiently documented the geophysical processes of coastal erosion (Alozie et al., 2017; Ankrah et al., 2023) and the technocratic aspects of projects like Eko Atlantic (ELRI, 2021). However, a significant gap remains in understanding how these historical, environmental, and urban-development trajectories converge to reshape the very nature of beach tourism, particularly concerning issues of public access, social equity, and community displacement. This study seeks to fill that void by providing a holistic historical analysis and prospective examination of Lagos's beach tourism landscape, arguing that its future sustainability is inextricably linked to addressing these critical socio-environmental tensions.

Research Problem

Beach tourism in Lagos has shifted from being a public common to a privatized and exclusionary space due to coastal erosion, state interventions, and large-scale urban development projects. This transformation prioritizes capital accumulation and elite access, while displacing local communities, increasing social inequality, and redistributing environmental risks, thereby undermining the prospects for equitable and sustainable tourism development.

i. To analyze the historical evolution of Lagos beaches from public commons to privatized spaces.

ii. To examine the impacts of state-led interventions such as the Eko Atlantic City project and beach privatization on community access, livelihoods, and environmental risks.

iii. To apply multi-theoretical perspectives (Tragedy of the Commons, Commodification of Space, and Political Ecology) to understand the socio-political processes shaping beach tourism in Lagos.

Methodology

This study employs a comprehensive desk-based research methodology, synthesizing a wide array of secondary data to construct a holistic narrative. The analysis draws upon multiple sources to ensure triangulation and depth: (1) Academic literature (e.g., Alozie et al., 2017; Ankrah et al., 2023), provides the scientific and theoretical foundation; (2) Policy and technical reports (e.g., ELRI, 2021; Eko Atlantic EIA, 2012), offer insights into the planning and official discourse; (3) Media reports (e.g., Vanguard, 2012; Financial Times, 2025; ThisDay, 2024) document contemporary events and public reactions; and (4) Historical and encyclopedic sources (Historical Nigeria, 2025) help establish the historical context; and a review of government policy on tourism development in Nigeria (Odetoye & Folorunso, 2024), offers insight into how government policies affect tourism. A thematic analytical approach is adopted to organize this diverse data into coherent streams exploring historical development, environmental drivers, socio-economic transformation, and future-oriented policy implications for beach tourism in Lagos.

Theoretical Framework

To comprehensively analyze the historical development, current realities, and future prospects of beach tourism in Lagos, this study is underpinned by a multi-theoretical framework. This integrated approach allows for a nuanced examination of the interplay between political economy, socio-spatial justice, and

human-environment interactions that define the Lagos coastline. The core theories applied are the Tragedy of the Commons, the Commodification of Space, and Political Ecology.

The Tragedy of the Commons and Its Critiques

Originally proposed by Garrett Hardin (1968), the "Tragedy of the Commons" posits that individuals, acting independently and rationally according to their self-interest, will ultimately deplete a shared limited resource (the "commons"), even when it is clear that it is not in anyone's long-term interest for this to happen. Hardin used the analogy of herders sharing a common parcel of land, each wanting to maximize their gain by adding more sheep, leading to overgrazing and the destruction of the commons for all.

This theory provides a initial lens to understand the historical degradation of Lagos's beaches, particularly Bar Beach. The shoreline can be viewed as a common-pool resource, open to all for recreation, fishing, and sand mining. The literature indicates that uncontrolled sand mining and unregulated use contributed significantly to coastal erosion (Alozie et al., 2017; Ankrah et al., 2023), seemingly aligning with Hardin's prediction of resource depletion through unmanaged collective action.

The provisions of this theory underpins the tenets of this study, however, this study moves beyond Hardin's simplistic and pessimistic formulation by incorporating the work of Elinor Ostrom (1990). Ostrom demonstrated that communities are capable of creating sophisticated self-governing institutions to manage common-pool resources sustainably without privatization or state control, thus avoiding the "tragedy." The historical use of Lagos beaches for community commerce and spirituality (Wikipedia, 2024) suggests the potential for such communal management. The study therefore uses the "Tragedy" as a starting point to ask a more critical question: *Was the erosion of Lagos's beaches a true "tragedy of the commons," or was it a failure to establish or support robust communal or state-led governance institutions? This reframing allows the analysis to critique the state's response, which was not to strengthen communal governance but to enact a radical solution: privatization and enclosure.

Commodification of Space and the Production of Space

This study draws on critical urban theory, particularly Henri Lefebvre's (1991) concept of the "production of space" and David Harvey's (1989) work on urban entrepreneurialism. Lefebvre argued that space is not a neutral container but a social product, shaped by power relations, capital, and ideology. He distinguished between representations of space (space as conceived by planners, developers, and authorities) and representational space (space as directly lived by its inhabitants). Harvey critiqued the shift from urban governance as "managerialism" (providing services) to "entrepreneurialism" (competing for capital investment), which often leads to the commodification of public assets for private gain.

This theoretical lens is central to analyzing the current realities of beach tourism in Lagos.

The Production of Eko Atlantic: The project is a quintessential example of a conceived space. It is a vision imposed by state and capital to produce a new, hyper-capitalistic space of luxury and exclusion, directly on the erased site of the former public commons (Bar Beach). This transformation is driven by an entrepreneurial urban governance model seeking to position Lagos as a global city.

Commodification of the Shoreline: The shift from public beaches to privatized, fee-paying clubs (Financial Times, 2025) is a clear process of commodification. Public space is transformed into a commodity from which capital can be extracted, directly excluding those unable to pay. This creates a conflict between the lived space of local communities (for whom the beach is a cultural right) and the conceived space of investors and authorities (for whom it is a revenue-generating asset).

Justification for Displacement: The evictions in Tarkwa Bay and the demolition of Landmark Beach (OHCHR, 2025; This Day, 2024) can be understood as the state using its power to clear existing lived spaces to make way for new conceived spaces (like the coastal highway) that align with its entrepreneurial and developmentalist ideology.

Political Ecology

Political Ecology provides a framework for understanding the intricate connections between political, economic, and social factors and environmental issues and changes (Amaeze, & Otabor, 2024). It rejects apolitical explanations of environmental problems (e.g., blaming "natural causes" or "overpopulation") and instead asks: Who benefits from, and who bears the costs of, environmental change and resource management? It emphasizes themes of marginalization, environmental justice, and the unequal distribution of costs and benefits.

Political Ecology is the unifying theory that binds the analysis together, offering a critical lens for the discussion and conclusion.

Analyzing Environmental Risk Distribution: The study uses this lens to critically examine the Eko Atlantic project. While it is marketed as a solution to erosion (protecting valuable real estate in Victoria Island), a political ecology approach prompts the investigation into its "environmental externalities" (ELRI, 2021; Ankrah et al., 2023). The key question becomes: If the "Great Wall of Lagos" redistributes erosion and flood risks, which communities downstream will bear the brunt of this displaced environmental cost? This frames the project not just as an engineering feat but as an act that potentially redistributes environmental risk from the wealthy to the marginalized.

Climate Vulnerability and Social Equity: The theory directly links climate vulnerability to social equity. The study argues that vulnerability to flooding is not just a biophysical fact but a social condition. Low-income communities in informal settlements along the coast (like former Kuramo Beach residents) are more vulnerable due to their political marginalization and lack of protective infrastructure, not merely their geographic location.

Evaluating Future Prospects: The recommendations for "nature-based solutions" and "community-centered development" are rooted in a political ecology perspective. They propose an alternative model of environmental management that seeks to enhance resilience without creating social losers, advocating for inclusive and just forms of climate adaptation and tourism development.

Synthesis of the Theoretical Framework

These three theories are not used in isolation but are integrated to provide a powerful explanatory framework:

The Tragedy of the Commons sets up the historical problem of resource management. The Commodification of Space other other hand explains the dominant neoliberal response: the enclosure and privatization of the commons for capital accumulation; while Political Ecology provides the critical tools to evaluate the social and environmental justice outcomes of this response, revealing the

winners and losers and framing the search for more equitable and sustainable alternatives.

Together, this theoretical foundation allows the study to argue that the transformation of beach tourism in Lagos is not a neutral or inevitable process but a deeply political one, shaped by power, capital, and competing visions of urban development, with profound implications for equity, access, and resilience.

Literature Review

The existing body of literature provides a multifaceted, though fragmented, foundation for understanding the evolution of Lagos's coastline.

Historical Development and Transformation of Beach Tourism in Lagos

The historical development and transformation of beach tourism in Lagos is closely tied to the broader processes of coastal engineering that have reshaped its shoreline. From the colonial era to the present, beaches such as Bar Beach, Tarkwa Bay, and Elegushi have evolved from natural recreational spaces into contested urban frontiers, increasingly threatened by erosion, flooding, and rapid urbanization. Early interventions along the Lagos coastline, particularly the construction of groynes at Bar Beach, were primarily aimed at protecting critical infrastructure but often disrupted sediment dynamics, creating unintended consequences for beach stability and tourism. This reflects the wider global trajectory of coastal engineering, which has shifted from rigid defenses to more sustainable approaches that integrate ecological and socio-economic considerations (Esteban et al., 2023). In Lagos, however, reliance on short term and fragmented engineering solutions has produced uneven outcomes, underscoring the need for an integrated strategy that secures both shoreline protection and the long term sustainability of beach tourism.

The creation of Eko Atlantic City represents one of the most ambitious coastal engineering projects in Africa and is central to contemporary debates on shoreline transformation in Lagos. Designed as a response to the chronic erosion and flooding that devastated Bar Beach, the project is envisioned as a self-sustaining modern city built on reclaimed land from the Atlantic Ocean. While its massive sea wall and land reclamation works embody cutting-edge engineering, critics argue that it reflects enclave urbanism, privileging elite interests while raising questions about inclusivity and long term environmental impacts (Titilayo, 2023). Studies evaluating its architectural and infrastructural innovations, such as climate responsive facades in high-rise developments, highlight its role in advancing sustainable urban design (Ajibola et al., 2024). However, these assessments often overlook the wider implications for beach tourism, community access, and the cultural identity of Lagos's shoreline, which has historically functioned as a space of public recreation and socio-economic activity.

Recent advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning provide new tools for addressing Lagos's coastal challenges. Globally, these technologies are increasingly applied to predict shoreline change, assess flood risks, and optimize coastal defense systems (Abouhalima et al., 2024; Masria & Abouelsaad, 2025). In Nigeria, however, their integration into coastal management remains limited and rarely extends to tourism planning. Research by Adagbasa et al. (2024) and Dada (2024) has generated insights into shoreline change and extreme coastal water levels, yet their emphasis remains technical and environmental, offering little engagement with tourism, cultural heritage, or recreation. This

gap has meant that while Lagos possesses high-profile projects such as Eko Atlantic City, there is still limited understanding of how engineering interventions, urban expansion, and environmental risks converge to reshape the future of beach tourism. By situating these debates within both global coastal engineering discourse and local socio-economic realities, the present study seeks to highlight the overlooked connections between engineering sustainability and the viability of beach tourism in Lagos.

Beaches as Cultural and Tourism Assets in Nigeria

Scholarly and historical sources affirm that Lagos's beaches have long functioned as multifunctional commons for leisure, spirituality, and commerce (Afolabi, 2023). Bar Beach epitomized this model of open access and multi-use public space, serving as a social equalizer where all citizens could engage with the natural waterfront until coastal degradation eroded both its physical space and its symbolic role (Alozie et al., 2017).

Apparently, a substantial segment of research is dedicated to the existential threat of coastal erosion. Studies consistently document an alarming annual shoreline retreat of 8–14 meters, a process accelerated by both natural oceanic forces and anthropogenic activities such as unsustainable sand mining and the disruption of littoral sediment flow by upstream infrastructure (Alozie et al., 2017; Ankrah et al., 2023). The 2012 Kuramo Beach tragedy, where a storm surge claimed numerous lives, is frequently cited as a catastrophic example of the hazards of unplanned coastal settlements and the urgent need for integrated coastal zone management (Vanguard, 2012; Channels TV, 2012).

Eko Atlantic and Coastal Engineering

The Eko Atlantic project is a major focus of contemporary research. Technical reports highlight its scale, reclaiming over 10 million square meters of land and protected by the 8.5 km “Great Wall of Lagos” (ELRI, 2021). While its proponents champion its role in protecting Victoria Island from erosion, critical academic analyses argue that such hard engineering can redistribute erosion risks to adjoining coasts and deepen socio-spatial inequalities (Ankrah et al., 2023). However, emerging journalistic analyses identify a clear trend: the rapid transition from free, public beaches to privatized, commercialized leisure clubs (Financial Times, 2025). Venues like Elegushi and the former Landmark Beach Resort operate on a pay-to-enter model. While this development offers enhanced security and amenities, it systematically marginalizes low-income residents, limiting inclusivity and raising critical questions about the right to the city.

Tourism, Community, and Human Rights Dimensions

Recent reports from human rights organizations and media outlets bring to the fore the contentious issues of displacement and eviction. The forced removal of communities in Tarkwa Bay and the demolitions at Landmark Beach underscore tensions between urban expansion, security enforcement, and community rights (OHCHR, 2025). These actions are shown to dismantle informal economies and erode tourism authenticity, threatening the livelihoods that thrive around beachfronts.

The existing literature offers robust insights into the individual components of this complex issues; erosion, engineering, and economics. However, it lacks a synthesized framework that explicitly connects these elements to the overarching development of the tourism sector.

There is a paucity of systematic work that traces the historical lineage of beach use, analyzes the current tourism landscape through a lens of equity and resilience, and proposes integrated future pathways that balance economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Empirical Reviews

Firstly, Alozie et al. (2017) conducted a foundational empirical study on the geophysical degradation of Lagos's coastline. Through satellite imagery analysis and field surveys, they quantified severe erosion rates, particularly at Bar Beach, and explicitly linked this environmental change to the loss of tourism infrastructure. Their work provides the critical empirical evidence that physical erosion was a primary catalyst for the transformation of the beach tourism landscape, moving beyond anecdotal accounts to data-driven analysis of the historical degradation that prompted state intervention.

Secondly, Ankrah et al. (2023) provided a systematic, regional-scale review of shoreline change in West Africa, placing Lagos's crisis in a broader context. Their meta-analysis confirmed that the erosion rates in Lagos are among the most severe on the continent and critically reviewed the efficacy of hard engineering solutions like sea walls. This study empirically supports the discussion on the limitations of projects like Eko Atlantic, highlighting the potential for transferred risk and negative downstream impacts on adjacent communities, a core concern of this paper's political ecology lens.

Thirdly, Adelekan (2016) empirically investigated the vulnerability of coastal communities in Lagos to climate hazards. Through household surveys and vulnerability indexing in areas like Kuramo Bay, the study quantified the socio-economic factors that exacerbate environmental risk. This work provides a crucial evidence base for arguing that climate vulnerability is a function of social marginalization and poverty, not just geographic location, directly supporting this study's analysis of the unequal distribution of climate risk.

Fourthly, Ajibade (2017) offered an empirical examination of the social implications of coastal protection projects in Lagos. Through qualitative interviews and focus groups with displaced and at-risk communities, the research documented perceptions of exclusion and the social costs of "climate-proofing" the city for elite enclaves. This study's findings on community displacement and the prioritization of capital over people provide direct empirical support for the themes of social equity and justice central to this paper's discussion.

Furthermore, Oloruntoba & Eweje (2022) conducted an empirical policy analysis of urban governance and sustainability in Lagos. Their research traced how neoliberal policies and entrepreneurial urban strategies favor large-scale, capital-intensive megaprojects over pro-poor, community-inclusive development. This review provides the empirical link between macro-level governance models and the micro-level outcomes of beach privatization and exclusion, framing the commodification of Lagos's coastline as a deliberate political-economic strategy.

Similarly, Nwosu et al. (2021) empirically reviewed the state of tourism entrepreneurship in Nigeria's coastal areas. Their study documented the proliferation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) around beach fronts and analyzed the threats they face from regulatory uncertainty and land disputes. This work offers empirical grounding for discussing the economic impact of demolitions, such as at Landmark Beach, on the local tourism economy and livelihoods, moving the discussion beyond physical displacement to economic disruption.

In the same vein, Ibeun et al. (2020) focused specifically on the empirical assessment of sediment dynamics along the Lekki Peninsula. Their geological research provides scientific evidence that upstream activities (e.g., dam construction on the Ogun River) are a significant, often overlooked, driver of coastal erosion in Lagos by reducing sediment supply. This review widens the scope of analysis beyond local factors, introducing the critical dimension of regional environmental management that must be considered for any sustainable solution.

Moreover, Elenwo & Young (2021) conducted an empirical evaluation of public perceptions of beach quality and accessibility in the Niger Delta, with findings highly applicable to Lagos. Their survey-based research found a strong public preference for and value placed on free, public-access beaches, and a perception that privatization limits recreational opportunities for the majority. This study provides empirical support from a similar context for the argument that the loss of public beaches represents a significant reduction in social welfare and quality of life.

In addition, Adewumi & Olojede (2019) empirically reviewed the role of cultural and heritage tourism in Nigeria's development. They documented how informal cultural practices and communal gatherings at beaches form an intangible cultural heritage. This work provides an evidence-based argument for the cultural, not just recreational, value of beaches, supporting this study's contention that their privatization and transformation result in a loss of cultural space and authenticity.

Finally, Udechukwu et al. (2022) conducted an empirical review of nature-based solutions (NbS) for coastal management in Nigeria. They catalogued successful applications of mangrove restoration, dune stabilization, and other soft engineering techniques in the Niger Delta, assessing their cost-effectiveness and community co-benefits compared to hard infrastructure. This review provides a critical empirical foundation for the future prospects section of this study, offering viable, evidence-based alternatives to the current heavy reliance on hard engineering for coastal defense.

Discussion

The transformation of Lagos's beachfront is not a simple linear narrative of environmental degradation and technological solution. Rather, it is a complex socio-ecological drama driven by power, capital, and competing visions of development. Through the application of the theoretical lenses of the Tragedy of the Commons, Commodification of Space, and Political Ecology, and grounding the analysis in empirical evidence, the current realities and future prospects of beach tourism in Lagos can be understood as a struggle over who controls, benefits from, and bears the cost of the city's most valuable natural asset.

Current Realities: The Enclosure and Re-engineering of the Commons

The present-day landscape of Lagos's beach tourism is a physical manifestation of neoliberal urban policy and the state's prioritization of capital security over communal access. The empirical studies by Alozie et al. (2017) and Ankrah et al. (2023) provide the scientific basis for the initial "crisis": severe coastal erosion threatened not only community land but also high-value capital investments in Victoria Island. From a Tragedy of the Commons perspective, this provided the justification for radical state intervention to prevent the total degradation of the common-pool resource.

However, the state's response was not to empower communities or create new, inclusive governance institutions as envisioned by Ostrom. Instead, it facilitated what David Harvey terms "accumulation by dispossession."

The solution, the Eko Atlantic city project, represents the ultimate commodification of space. It involved the literal enclosure and re-engineering of the former commons (Bar Beach) into a hyper-privatized, fortified enclave designed for global capital and a local elite (ELRI, 2021). This new conceived space (Lefebvre), produced by and for capital, stands in stark opposition to the lived space of the original users. The project functions as a "spatial fix" for capital's crisis—creating new, highly secured real estate from the sea—but in doing so, it actively produces new socio-ecological problems.

A political Ecology analysis, supported by Ankrah et al. (2023) and Ajibade (2017) reveals the externalities of this fix. The "Great Wall of Lagos" is not a neutral shield; it is an agent that redistributes hydraulic energy. Empirical models suggest that while it protects Eko Atlantic, it likely exacerbates erosion and flood risk for downstream, unprotected coasts where low-income and informal settlements are located. This creates a stark environmental injustice: the very communities least responsible for causing erosion and least able to adapt are made to bear the brunt of a "solution" designed to protect the assets of the wealthy. This validates the core political ecology question: the benefits of coastal protection are accrued privately, while the risks are socialized onto the marginalized.

This process of exclusion is replicated along the entire coastline. The shift to privatized, pay-to-enter beach clubs (Financial Times, 2025) is the commercial manifestation of this enclosure. As Elenwo & Young's (2021) research in a similar context confirms, this transition from public good to private commodity significantly diminishes social welfare and recreational access for the majority of citizens. Furthermore, the demolitions at Landmark Beach and evictions in Tarkwa Bay (OHCHR, 2025; ThisDay, 2024) are not isolated events but logical extensions of this model. They represent the state using its power to clear existing lived spaces, which host vibrant, albeit informal, tourism economies as documented by Nwosu et al. (2021) and possess intangible cultural heritage (Adewumi & Olojede, 2019), to make way for new conceived spaces of infrastructural development (the coastal highway) and securitized leisure that align with its entrepreneurial city brand (Oloruntoba & Eweje, 2022).

Future Prospects: Pathways Towards a Just and Resilient Shoreline

The future of beach tourism in Lagos hinges on its ability to break from the current unsustainable and inequitable paradigm. The alternatives must be rooted in a different set of principles: inclusivity, ecological integrity, and distributive justice.

First, the call for at least one free, well-managed public beach is not merely a suggestion but a imperative for social equity. It is a direct challenge to the complete commodification of the coastline and an acknowledgment that the right to the city includes the right to recreational space. This requires a conscious policy reversal from entrepreneurial governance back towards a managerial function that serves all citizens.

Second, the overwhelming reliance on hard engineering must be reconsidered. The empirical work of Udechukwu et al. (2022) on Nature-based Solutions (NbS) provides a viable pathway. Complementing grey infrastructure with mangrove restoration, dune rehabilitation, and beach nourishment offers a more resilient and adaptable approach to coastal defense. Critically, as a Political Ecology perspective would emphasize, these solutions often provide co-benefits for local communities (e.g., fisheries enhancement from mangroves) rather than subjecting them to externalities. This approach also aligns with addressing the

regional sediment dynamics highlighted by Ibeun et al. (2020), moving towards a holistic sediment-cell management plan rather than a piecemeal, site-specific defense that displaces problems.

Third, future development must be community-centered. This means not just avoiding forced evictions but actively incorporating the existing micro-enterprises documented by Nwosu et al. (2021) into the formal tourism economy. Recognizing the cultural value of these spaces (Adewumi & Olojede, 2019) and designing tourism that benefits rather than displaces local communities is essential for sustainability and authenticity. This approach aligns with Elinor Ostrom's principles of polycentric and community-involved governance of common-pool resources.

Finally, destination branding must be reimagined. Lagos has the potential to market itself not as a cheap imitation of other global destinations, but as "Africa's Urban Beach Capital", a unique fusion of vibrant city life, rich cultural heritage, and dynamic coastal resilience. This brand must be built on a genuine commitment to sustainability and equity, transforming its current vulnerabilities into a story of innovation and justice. This requires learning from the vulnerability assessments of Adelekan (2016) to ensure that resilience building protects the most vulnerable first.

Seemingly, the current trajectory of beach tourism in Lagos, characterized by privatization, exclusion, and hard engineering, is a choice, not an inevitability. It is a choice driven by a particular political-economic model. The empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks presented reveal the high social and environmental costs of this model. The future prospect lies in making a different choice: one that values the commons, invests in nature, empowers communities, and builds a truly inclusive and resilient coastline for all of Lagos's citizens.

Conclusion

The evolution of beach tourism in Lagos is a microcosm of the city's broader transformation, from a history of public, albeit sometimes fraught, commons to a contemporary landscape marked by commercial ambition, environmental intervention, and social contestation. This study has demonstrated that the trajectory from the open sands of Bar Beach to the privatized clubs and reclaimed land of today has generated economic activity and physical protection for some, but at a significant cost. The current path risks entrenching social exclusion, undermining long-term climate resilience for all, and eroding the authentic cultural textures that form the foundation of a thriving tourism sector. The future of Lagos's coastline as a tourism asset therefore hinges on its ability to reconcile economic development with unwavering commitments to equity, sustainability, and community participation.

Recommendations

Based on the reviewed studies and current realities that surround beach tourism in Lagos, this study has the following recommendations:

i. Establish Public Beaches: The Lagos State Government should establish at least one free public-access beach with government/private partnership management to ensure social equity and inclusivity.

ii. Implement Integrated Planning: Develop a sediment-cell shoreline plan for the entire Lagos–Lekki coast to manage erosion holistically and prevent the displacement of risk.

iii. Invest in Hybrid Defenses: Invest in nature-based coastal defences

alongside engineering works to create a more sustainable and resilient coastline.

iv. Ensure Community Participation: Ensure community participation and human rights safeguards in all tourism and urban redevelopment projects to protect livelihoods and foster social license.

v. Market a Sustainable Brand: Market Lagos as a climate-resilient beach destination that integrates inclusivity, culture, and sustainability under a cohesive brand identity.

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