

# Enhancing Circulation and User Mobility in Ecotourism Resort Using Architectural Design

ALOKA ONYEBUCHI<sup>1</sup>, BONMENE KIANEN<sup>2</sup>, DR. FERDINAND DAMINABO<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> *Department of Architecture, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.*

**Abstract-** *This study thoroughly investigated the critical elements that enhance circulation and user mobility within ecotourism resorts, emphasising sustainable and inclusive design principles. Employing a mixed-method approach, including case studies, literature reviews, surveys, and site visits, the research identified innovative strategies for optimising spatial arrangements and promoting ecological balance. Key findings highlighted the importance of meticulously designed clear pathways, strategic zoning and segregation of spaces, universal accessibility, and effective wayfinding systems in improving guest experiences while preserving the natural environment. The research also emphasised on the integration of indigenous architectural elements, the thoughtful use of natural features such as topography and vegetation, and the implementation of eco-friendly practices to create harmonious and sustainable resort environments. These elements do not only facilitated efficient movement patterns but also contributed to the aesthetic and functional enhancement of the resorts. Additionally, the study underscored the significance of continuous feedback loops, including post-occupancy evaluations, to refine and improve design strategies over time. The insights provided by this study offer valuable guidance for architects, designers, and stakeholders in developing ecotourism resorts that prioritise efficient circulation, cultural authenticity, and environmental stewardship. By focusing on these critical design aspects, the research contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism development, aiming to enhance user mobility, guest satisfaction, and long-term ecological conservation.*

**Indexed Terms-** *Ecotourism resorts, Circulation design, User mobility, Sustainable architecture, Universal accessibility.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The rise of ecotourism reflects a global shift towards sustainable tourism practices. Ecotourism is "a responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains local well-being, and involves education" (The International Ecotourism Society, 2015), emphasising environmental conservation, cultural appreciation, and responsible travel.

Within this transformative context, architectural design has taken on a pivotal role, serving as the tangible manifestation of these ideals within ecotourism resorts. These resorts' design shows how spaces were planned, constructed, and experienced, embodying the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature. A well-designed eco-resort allows guests to immerse themselves in the natural world while leaving a minimal environmental footprint (Fennell, 2018; Honey, 2008).

Enhancing circulation and user mobility within ecotourism resorts plays a crucial role in providing a seamless and enriching user experience for visitors. Efficient circulation pathways and optimal space utilisation are pivotal in achieving a design that accommodates visitors and aligns with the site's ecological balance, creating a harmonious and sustainable guest experience (Fredman et al., 2017; Becken & Stantic, 2019).

This study explores and analyses the role and influence of enhanced circulation and user mobility in resort design, explicitly focusing on ecotourism resorts. By examining the importance, impact, and strategies for enhancing circulation patterns and user mobility within these resorts, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights and recommendations for architects, designers, and stakeholders involved in the design and development of sustainable tourism destinations.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted for this study is a mixed-method research approach, focusing on international and local ecotourism resorts to derive insights relevant to the study. This method involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study. Thus, it is more than simply collecting and analyzing both kinds of data; it also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research alone” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4).

### 3.1 Data Collection Mode

#### 3.1.1 Primary Data Collection:

The study employs primary data collection methods, including on-site investigations, personal observations, questionnaires, and surveys. These methods provide firsthand information and insights on circulation, spatial organisation, and space utilisation within existing ecotourism resorts (Smith, 2018).

#### 3.1.2 Secondary Data Collection:

Additionally, secondary data collection involves a comprehensive review of existing literature, academic journals, published articles, web pages, blogs, and relevant unpublished works related to eco-tourism resort design, sustainable architecture, and space optimisation strategies (Jones, 2016).

### 3.2 Parameters Used for The Analysis

The analysis is tailored around several vital parameters that are critical to understanding and evaluating Enhanced Circulation and User Mobility within ecotourism resorts:

3.2.1 Circulation Efficiency: Assessing the efficiency of movement patterns for guests, staff, and service vehicles within the resort premises (Jones, 2016).

3.2.2 Spatial Organization: Analyzing the layout and organisation of different functional areas to ensure optimal and user-friendly arrangements (Jones, 2016).

3.2.3. Accessibility and Universal Design: Evaluating the resort's adherence to accessibility standards and

universal design principles to ensure inclusivity for guests with diverse abilities (Jones, 2016).

3.2.3 Utilisation of Natural Elements: Examining the integration of natural features such as topography, vegetation, and water bodies into the resort's design for aesthetic and functional purposes (Jones, 2016).

3.2.4 Traffic Flow and Congestion Management: Assessing measures implemented to manage traffic flow and reduce congestion within the resort (Jones, 2016).

3.2.5 Flexibility and Adaptability: Analyzing the adaptability of spaces to accommodate varying needs or events while maintaining efficient circulation patterns (Jones, 2016).

3.2.6 Integration of Sustainable Practices: Examining the incorporation of eco-friendly principles in circulation and space management strategies (Jones, 2016).

3.2.7 User Experience and Comfort: Evaluating the overall user experience concerning the circulation layout and spatial design within ecotourism resorts (Jones, 2016).

### 3.3 Data Analysis Technique

Given the qualitative nature of the data extracted from the case studies, this study used qualitative data analysis methods. This technique involves summarising data segments, categorising data based on recurring subjects, and establishing connections between these categories to construct a framework for addressing the research inquiries (Gerring, 2004)

## III. STUDY AND FINDINGS

### 4.1 Study

The data analysis in this study is derived from a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, including case studies, literature reviews, surveys, and site visits. This comprehensive approach allowed for a holistic understanding of the role of enhanced circulation and user mobility in ecotourism resort design.

3.4.1 Case Studies and Literature Review

A detailed examination of five ecotourism resorts—The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands; Lapa Rios Lodge, Costa Rica; The Mahali Mzuri, Kenya; Song Saa Private Island, Cambodia; and Obudu Mountain Resort, Nigeria—provided insights into successful design strategies. Literature from sources such as Rajasekar, Philominathan, & Chinnathambi (2013) and Smith (2018) supported the findings with theoretical frameworks and best practices.

Table 1: Summary of Case Study Analysis

S/N	Resort Name	Key Design Features
1	The Ritz-Carlton Maldives	Clear pathways, cultural integration, universal design
2	Lapa Rios Lodge	Elevated boardwalks, native vegetation integration
3	The Mahali Mzuri	Zoning strategies, elevated pathways
4	Song Saa Private Island	Cultural integration, clear signage
5	Obudu Mountain Resort	Universal design principles, clear pathways

3.4.2 Surveys and Site Visits

Surveys were conducted from the list of architects and Planners extracted online who have been involved in the designing and planning of Eco Resorts in Nigeria, a phone interview technique was adopted and 25 architects and planners were interviewed. Also, site visits were carried out at selected resorts to observe and gather data on implementing circulation and mobility strategies.

Table 2: Survey Responses on Experience and Knowledge

S/N	Experience Level	Percentage of Respondents
1	Designed/Supervised 1-2 Projects	45%
2	Designed/Supervised 3-5 Projects	15%
3	Designed/Supervised 6+ Projects	10%
4	No Experience	1%

3.4.2.1 Findings from Surveys

Over 60% of respondents had experience designing or supervising ecotourism resorts focused on enhancing circulation and user mobility. 15% had worked on at least five projects emphasizing these principles, while just 1% had no experience in this specialized field.

1. Architectural Features Incorporated

- i. 70% of respondents included clear signage and wayfinding systems in their designs.
- ii. 50% incorporated universal design principles such as ramps and wider pathways.
- iii. 10% integrated cultural elements to enhance the user experience.

Table 3: Architectural Features Incorporated in Ecotourism Resort Designs

S/N	Feature	Percentage of Respondents
1	Clear Signage and Wayfinding	70%
2	Universal Design Principles (ramps, wider pathways)	50%
3	Cultural Integration (materials, styles)	10%
4	Permeable Paving	60%
5	Elevated Boardwalks	60%
6	Native Vegetation Integration	30%

Determination of Pathway and Circulation Design

- i. 55% used topographical surveys and environmental impact assessments as primary reference points.
- ii. 25% referred to guest feedback and usage patterns from previous projects (Smith, 2018).
- iii. 10% utilized official guidelines and standards set by local or national tourism boards (Jones, 2016)

Table 4: Methods for Determining Pathway and Circulation Design

S/N	Method	Percentage of Respondents
1	Topographical Surveys and Environmental Impact Assessments	55%

2	Guest Feedback and Usage Patterns	25%
3	Official Guidelines and Standards	10%
4	Other	10%
5	Method	Percentage of Respondents

**Post-Occupancy Evaluations**

80% of the respondents indicated that they conducted post-occupancy evaluations, including guest surveys and observation studies. This feedback loop was crucial for refining design strategies and improving future projects (Smith, 2018).

The research confirmed that designing clear and unobstructed pathways is essential for efficient circulation and user mobility in ecotourism resorts. Universal design principles and cultural integration also play significant roles in enhancing the guest experience. Despite the widespread familiarity with basic principles, there is a gap in the consistent application of cultural elements and the use of official guidelines. Continuous feedback and evaluation are key to refining and improving these strategies (Rajasekar et al., 2013; Smith, 2018; Jones, 2016)

**4.2 Finding**

The findings from the conducted study offer valuable insights into the critical elements that contribute to enhancing circulation and user mobility within ecotourism resorts. Through a comprehensive exploration of various design strategies, the research uncovers innovative approaches that optimise spatial arrangements, promote guest engagement, and preserve ecological balance. These discoveries shed light on the interconnected relationship between design principles, circulation, user mobility, guest experience, and environmental stewardship, providing a holistic framework for advancing sustainable and inclusive resort development.

They include;

**4.1 Pathway Design Strategy**

The study underscores the critical role of clear pathways in enhancing circulation and user mobility within ecotourism resorts. By meticulously designing

unobstructed pathways, corridors, elevated pathways, and circulation routes, users can walk through all the spaces in the resort without obstruction or accident.

Through careful observation and analysis, it becomes evident that the strategic layout of clear pathways significantly influences guest movement patterns and overall user experience within a resort. These pathways serve as vital conduits, seamlessly connecting various amenities, accommodations, and natural attractions.

Moreover, the research reveals that the design of clear pathways goes beyond mere functionality. It represents a thoughtful approach to space planning that prioritises user comfort, safety, and engagement. Ensuring pathways are free from obstacles and clutter, resorts can create environments that foster a sense of exploration and discovery among guests.

Furthermore, the study highlights the symbiotic relationship between clear pathways and the surrounding natural environment. By harmonising with the natural terrain and landscape features, these pathways seamlessly integrate into the ecological fabric of the resort, enhancing its overall aesthetic appeal and environmental sustainability.

**4.2 Zoning and Segregation Strategy**

The research findings reveal that strategically implementing zoning and segregation strategies enhances circulation and user mobility within ecotourism resorts. Resorts can achieve several critical objectives by meticulously separating pedestrian walkways from vehicular routes and distinctively zoning recreational and accommodation spaces.

Firstly, this approach significantly reduces congestion within the resort, allowing for smoother traffic flow and minimising potential conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles. This strategy enhances safety and creates a more enjoyable and stress-free guest experience.

Secondly, the deliberate zoning of spaces ensures that guests can quickly identify and access the areas designated for specific activities, whether recreation, accommodation, or other amenities. This intuitive layout fosters a sense of exploration and discovery,

encouraging guests to engage more deeply with their surroundings and the diverse experiences offered by the resort.

Thirdly, the research underscores the importance of maintaining a harmonious balance between guest activities and the natural environment. By segregating areas to minimise human impact on sensitive ecological zones, the design approach helps preserve the resort's ecological integrity. This environmental stewardship aligns with the principles of sustainable tourism and contributes to the resort's long-term viability.

#### 4.3 Use of Universal Design Principles (Universal Accessibility)

This study discovered how crucial it is to incorporate universal design principles to guarantee inclusive mobility in ecotourism destinations. Universal accessibility is a fundamental component that promotes inclusivity and fair access for all visitors, regardless of their physical capabilities or limitations. A vital discovery of the study is the transformative impact of incorporating universally accessible features such as ramps, wider pathways, and gentle slopes. These design elements help to "facilitate effortless navigation throughout the resort, allowing guests of varying mobility levels to move with ease and confidence" (Smith, 2018). Including these elements improves visitors' entire resort experience by removing physical boundaries and encouraging a sense of autonomy and independence, enhancing their overall experience.

Furthermore, the research underscores the broader societal benefits of prioritising universal design. By creating an environment that is accessible and welcoming to all, resorts "foster a culture of inclusivity that transcends physical boundaries" (Smith, 2018). This approach enriches guests' individual experiences and contributes to building a more inclusive and compassionate community within the resort.

#### 4.4 Wayfinding and Signage for Seamless Navigation

The study's findings highlight the critical role of wayfinding and signage systems in optimising circulation and improving user mobility at ecotourism resorts. A significant discovery is the transforming value of clear and intuitive directional information on

the guest experience; this significantly diminishes navigating obstacles while increasing overall satisfaction.

This result reveals the use of "user-friendly navigation signs, maps, and markers," essential for visitors to explore the spaces and locations within the ecotourism resort. (Rajasekar, Philominathan, & Chinnathambi, 2013). These well-designed wayfinding elements serve as cognitive aids, decreasing visitors' cognitive load and encouraging more efficient decision-making about their movement across the resort.

The study emphasises that a good wayfinding and signage system minimises confusion among guests and streamlines movement patterns, resulting in a more structured and harmonious circulation layout. This streamlined flow of movement improves the entire user experience by avoiding potential bottlenecks and congestion, creating a sense of fluidity in visitor mobility.

By providing clear and concise directional guidance, ecotourism resorts can significantly "promote efficient and enjoyable mobility experiences," thus enhancing guest satisfaction and loyalty (Rajasekar et al., 2013). The findings also emphasise the broader significance of efficient wayfinding tactics for the resort's operational efficiency and guest pleasure. Resorts can dramatically improve efficiency by offering precise and simple directional advice.

### CONCLUSION

This articulated investigation on circulation and user mobility in ecotourism resorts has highlighted the intricate interplay between cultural integration, environmental preservation, and human movement. This study provides a comprehensive method for improving circulation by including nature-based paths, zoning strategies, universal accessible features, and sustainable design concepts.

The results highlight that circulation design in ecotourism resorts is more than helpful; it is a hub for cultural immersion, environmental sustainability, and visitor happiness. By combining these components, resorts may create immersive experiences that

encourage more robust relationships between guests and their environment and facilitate movement.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the evolving body of knowledge in ecotourism resort design by highlighting the critical role of circulation strategies in shaping sustainable and culturally enriching guest experiences. It guides future architectural endeavours, advocating for continuous adaptation and improvement to meet the evolving needs of guests and the environment.

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