
SOCIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING TOURIST CHOICE OF DESTINATION IN DELTA STATE

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ABSTRACT: *The study: “social and infrastructural factors affecting tourist choice of destination in Delta State” was carried out in Gordon Hotel Resort, Abraka and source of River Ethiope, Umuaja in Delta State. It investigated the social and infrastructural indicators available in the host communities. The research design was a critical survey method. For data collection, the use of a simple random sampling technique gave a sample of 144 respondents. A semi-structured questionnaire was engaged to gather information from respondents. Data analyses were done by building the data into percentage, frequency tables, means standard deviation and Z-test were applied. Important findings revealed that male respondents (68%) were more than female with grater respondents (83%) who attained educational status of National Diplomat and above. Respondents majority (71%) were 30 years and above. The most significant social factors affecting tourism were friendly reception (mean = 3.32) and security and safety (mean = 3.31). While, the infrastructural factors in tourism dynamics were mostly good destination accessibility (means = 3.10) and mode of transport service (mean = 2.83). The study implied that well located tourism destination with good infrastructure and friendly environment inspires agricultural business set up. The study concluded that social and infrastructural factors contributed to tourists’ choice of desirable destination in the State. It was recommended that recreational facilities should be provided for maximum comfort.*

KEYWORD: choice, destination, infrastructure, tourist, social

INTRODUCTION

Tourism as an industry is made up of various components identified that tourism is an industry that has some products to offer and these product come under the following categories: attractions, access, accommodation, amenities and awareness Attractions deals with tourists that are motivated to leave their normal place of residence (the origin market) and travel to destinations (Okpoko, Okonkwo and Diminyi, 2008). The degree of aesthetic gratification and nature of any destination attracts both local and international tourists. The vicinity of a tourist center is typical of nature inheritance and human developmental efforts to add value to nature. The antique importance, natural or man-made environmental magnificence or pleasurable sites and prospects include historical places, monument zoos, museums and art galleries botanical gardens, building and structures e.g. castles, libraries, former prisons, skyscrapers, bridges)

national parks and forest, theme parks and carnival, ethnics enclave communities, historic trains and cultural events (Richards, 2001).

Access component of tourism is concerned with transport needed to physically move tourist from where they live to where they are visiting. Globally, air transport dominates the movement of international visitors. Locations with standard roads tend to proffer better chances for accessibility of visitors with cars. A good physical arena, sound topography, vegetation, horticultural designs serve as serene environment for lodging tourists (Ukabuilu, 2007).

Accommodation accessibility component of tourism referred to all destinations need accommodation nearby otherwise tourists will have nowhere to sleep. This appears rudimentary enough but stockholders will only devote finance in accommodation, lodging infrastructure if there is satisfactory economic profit. Numerous parts of Nigeria are gifted with exceptional magnetisms and are enthusiastically reachable but with a setback of tourist lodging ability or in built accommodation (Okpoko, Okonkwo and Diminyi, 2011). In retrospect, the industry has seen a spread of accommodation categories from elementary camping and backpacking amenities to mega-resorts (Okoli, 2001). Prosperous and desirable lodging centers and accommodation development, which is competitive, depend on building the accurate type of facility to match the requirement of the industry and contribute to profitability in the commerce segment of the economy (Idowu and Bello, 2010).

Facilities or amenities are rudimental services that are essential to meet the felt needs of tourists while in transit from his/her original home. The amenities vary but include toilets, retail shopping, cafes and restaurants, telecommunications and emergency services (medicals) support (Igbojekwe, 2005). Possession the finest attractions, accessibility, accommodation and amenities in any part of the world is absolutely useless if the awareness factor is misplaced. The concept of awareness here is in a tripartite implication ingrained in the push and pull motivational factors (Kassean and Gassita, 2013).

Firstly, the host community must appreciate the industry and have positive orientation toward tourism activities. There should be joint perception of sense of ownership to ensure business sustainability otherwise there will be decadence in the industry.

Secondly, a positive developmental attitude is essential in human, material and environmental improvement to ensure tourists welfare. This includes the availability of shops, e-business activities, post offices, road, houses and the many other businesses that come in contact with tourists, not just the hotels and restaurants. Generally, the local community should contribute to value addition and awareness creation of tourism as an industry.

Thirdly, market awareness is of great consideration. Tourism as an industry is big market opportunity. The destination or more important, the destination's image must be a strong, positive one and firmly implanted in the tourists' mind (Crouch, 2014). Enugustatetourismboard.com/structural component and element of tourism industry Sports activities and events create significant role in the tourism attraction in Nigeria, People from all works of life visit the study area for different indoors and outdoors sport activities. Accessibility to sport facilities in a serene environment with typified geographical view surface area of the destination and price affordability are some of the pull factors leading to tourist choice and influence of destination (Kassean and Gassita, 2013). Okoli (2001) opined that tourist choice of destination attraction is important in income generation and redistribution, development of infrastructure, stimulation and growth of economy, improvement in living standard and quality of life:

Objective of Study

This study was undertaken to identify the factors that influence tourists' choice of a destination. However, specific objectives of the study were to establish the extent to which:

- i. Infrastructure availability affect tourist choice of destination in Delta State.
- ii. Social factors influence tourist choice of destination in Delta State.

Hypotheses

Based on the stated objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

H₀₁: Service infrastructures do not have significant influence on tourist choice of destination.

H₀₂: Social factors do not have significant influence on tourists' choice of destination.

Development of Conceptual Framework for Tourists' Destination Choice

The concept behind this study lies on factors influencing the tourists' destination choice. It became imperative that the destination choice of tourists were influenced by cultural, social, environmental and service infrastructure factors. The extent to which these factors contributed to the choice of destination was discussed in chapter four of this study. However, the first circle (A) represented the tourist atmosphere of decision making from various factors which led to a chosen destination (Figure 1), the smaller and second circle (B). In a similar study, Idowu and Bello (2010) discovered that exogenous variables such as political instability, crime rate and endogenous variables such as world income are not the major determinants of tourist arrivals to African destinations and that service infrastructure variable was a major determinant. However, in this study only the social and infrastructural components of the framework were considered.

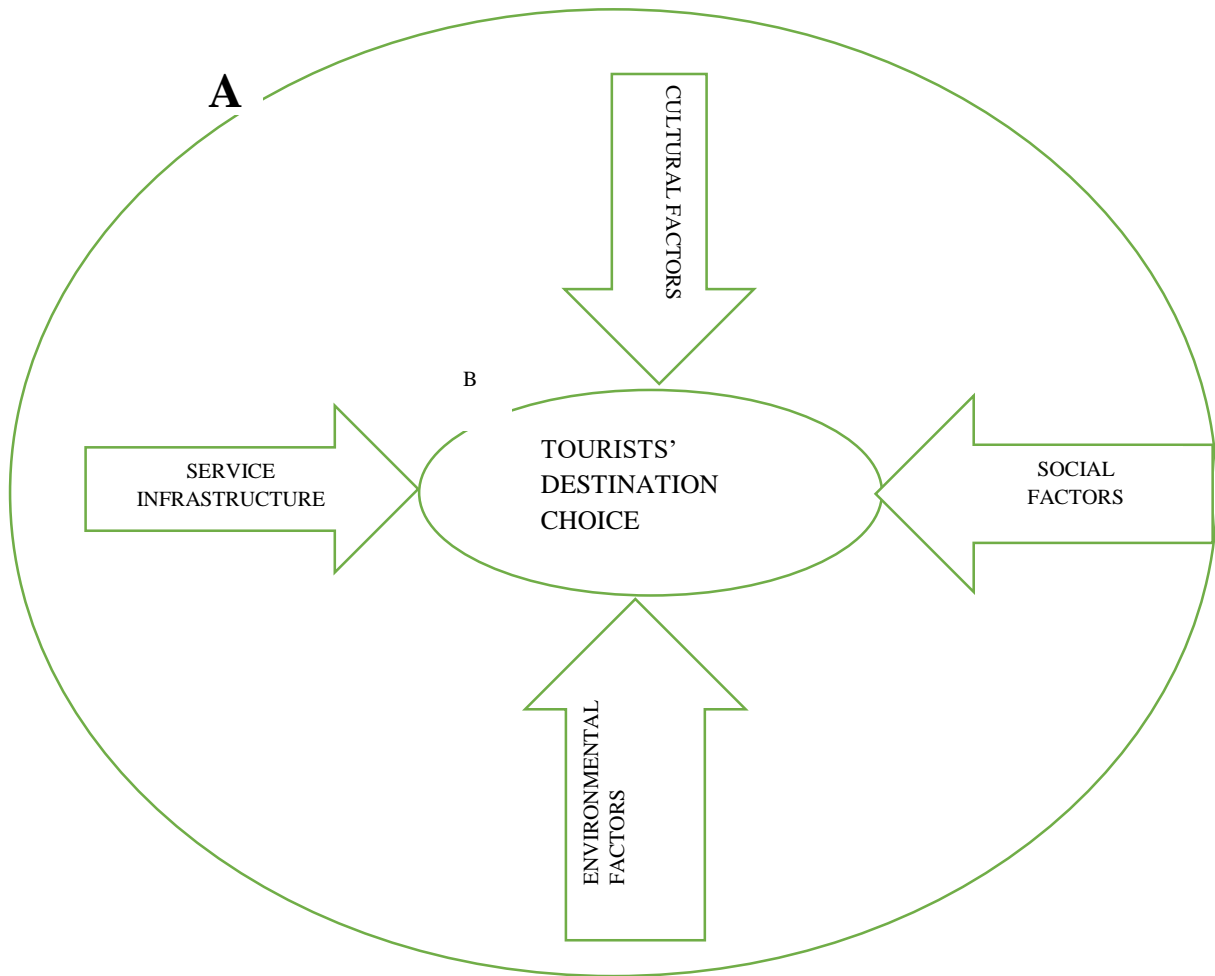


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework revealing Factors influencing Tourists' Destination Choice

METHODOLOGY

The Survey method in accordance with (Anyanwu, 2000) was employed in which the investigation of the behaviour, opinion or other manifestations of a group of people by questioning them were considered. The survey research is the best available method to for the study design. Individuals are usually the unit of analysis as they constitute the respondents.

Study Area and Sampling Techniques: The study area was located in Gordon's Hotel Resorts, Abraka and Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria. A purposive sampling procedure was used to select the study area based on increased regularity of tourist activities all year round. On record, it was discovered that over two thousand clients visited the tourist site. Based on this, a sample of one hundred and forty four (144) sample size was drawn from the population to be sampled for about three months during their visits. Primary data was generated through the use of oral interview and a structured questionnaire administration. The items on the questionnaire were based on the key variables highlighted

with respect to the set objectives of the study. Secondary data was generated through textbooks, journals, internet sources and official publications.

Data Analysis Techniques: Sprent (1981) notes that the purpose of statistical analysis is to reduce a massive data into a compact and precise form which shows general trends and relationship between variables". Data collected were put in frequency distribution and percentages. The Z-test statistical technique was used to test the hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic features of respondents (Table 1) showed that males (68%) were more committed to the tourism business. This might be related to the itinerant lifestyle of most men in pursuit of business, politics, religion, weekend relaxation and vacation trips. Okoli (2001) in a survey discovered that men were more in transit and tourism activities than women. Respondents (83%) had academic qualification of above National Diplomat. A good possession of tertiary degree and better academic qualification is an added advantage to tourism participation. Okpoko *et al.* (2008) sees involvement in tourism activities enhanced by having educated elites in the tourism sector. Respondents 26% and 45% were 31 – 40 and above 45 years of age respectively. This infers that youths and adults were more functional and active in the tourism industry. Okpoko *et al.* (2011) observed that youths and adults in Nigeria were more committed to tourism and other sectors of the society.

Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents.

Sex of Respondents	Percentage
Male	98 (68.06%)
Female	46 (31.94%)
Academic Qualifications	
ND Certificate and above	120 (83.33%)
WASC/ O' level certificate	24(16.67%)
Age Bracket	
Above 40 years	65(45.14%)
31 – 40 years	38(26.39%)
20 – 30 years	25 (17.36%)
Less than 20 years	16 (11.11%)

Source: Field responses

Social Factors affecting Tourism

Information in Table 2 reveals the importance of hospitality of the host community. Among the social factors affecting tourist destination, the issue of being 'welcome by friendly local people' (mean =3.28); and also the importance of security and safety (mean = 3.31) were of highest consideration. The overall mean for social factors is 3.05 which is significantly higher than the 2.5 cut-off mean. It was observed that about 80% of the respondents indicated the importance of hospitality of the host community.

Safety and security are subset of social system and are also important. The protection of people and their property, simply refers to these conducts and structures put in place to prevent any form of hazard. Because of the rising crime waves in our society, it has become necessary for

management of our tourism institutions to take adequate measures to protect lives and property of both the employees and guests. No tourist will like to go to a destination where safety and security of his property and live are not assured. Tourists are very much concerned with the social and political stability of destinations. Tourists will not go to destination where there are any fears or possible social unrest and violent change of government, political and social disturbance do not pave way for tourism development (Igbojekwe, 2005). The atmosphere must be peaceful and secure. In this study, respondents indicated the importance of safety and security and other social issues (overall mean = 3.05). Hospitality of host community was rated as an important factor. The implication of this is that the host community must not exhibit hostile disposition in any manner towards tourists. The role and involvement of local people in tourism planning and development should be appreciated (Kassean and Gassita, 2013).

Table 2: Respondents' relation to social factors issues in tourism

Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
	%	%	%	%	
Welcome by friendly local people	6.94	11.11	29.16	52.8	3.28
Making new friends with local people	13.89	20.83	37.5	27.78	2.79
Safety and security	8.33	10.0	25.0	56.7	3.31
Status of tourist destination	13.9	20.83	33.33	31.94	2.83
Overall mean scores	10.77	15.62	31.25	42.37	3.05

Source: Field responses

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Infrastructural Factors in Tourism Dynamics

Entries in Table 3 reveals the importance of accessibility, and mode of transport service (means 3.10 and 2.83 respectively). It was noticed that all the factors affecting the dynamics of infrastructure availability have means that are significantly higher than 2.5 except recreational facilities. However, recreational facilities mean of 2.42 is significantly lower than 2.5 (cut-off mean). The overall mean score of 2.7 signifies that quality service infrastructure is necessary for the attraction of tourists to any destination. Over seventy three percent (73%) of the respondents agree that accessibility to tourist destination is an important factor. Also, close to sixty percent (60%) of the respondents agree that transportation is an important factor. About 56% indicated the importance of accommodation and catering services.

Findings in this study revealed the importance of quality service (service infrastructure) particularly in transportation, accommodation and catering services, shopping, accessibility and entertainment as presented in Table 3. These views expressed here are similar to those of Gnoth (1997); Mill and Morrison (1998); Crouch (2000) and Kassean and Gassita (2013). In agreement at separate studies reported that infrastructural development of a tourist site is an uppermost priority to attract various travelers and tourist to destination of choice in a given period with top maintenance culture in display.

Table 3: Responses to issues on infrastructure availability

Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
	%	%	%	%	
Accessibility to destination	8.3	19.44	29.16	43.10	3.10
Mode of transportation services	19.44	27.78	30.56	29.16	2.83
Shopping services e.g. Arts and crafts	13.88	29.2	29.2	27.78	2.71
Learn about/ Experience local Drinks	19.44	26.4	30.56	25.0	2.64
Learn about/ Experience local foods	19.44	25	29.16	26.9	2.63
Accommodation & catering	18.05	26.4	27.78	27.78	2.71
Recreational facilities	29.86	29.86	25.0	19.44	2.42
Overall mean scores	18.4	26.28	28.94	28.56	2.72

Source: Field responses

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁ was stated thus: The extent to which service infrastructures affect tourists' choice of a destination is not significant. To test this hypothesis we used the data (overall mean of 3.05 and std. dev. = 1.12) as extracted from information in Table 2. The Z calculated ($Z = 2.65$) was greater than the Z tabulated ($Z_{tab} = 1.65$) indicating that the sample (observed) mean is significantly higher than the expected mean of 2.5; hence the hypothesis was rejected. It was therefore concluded that infrastructural availability played significant role in attracting tourists to the sites under study.

The H₀₂ was stated thus: The extent to which social factors influence tourists' choice of a destination is not significant. To test this hypothesis we used the data (overall mean of 2.72 and std. dev. = 1.09) as extracted from Table 3. The Z calculated ($Z = 4.74$) was greater than the Z tabulated ($Z_{tab} = 1.65$ at 0.05) demonstrating that the observed sample mean was significantly greater than the expected mean of 2.5; hence the hypothesis was rejected. In conclusion, social features played significant role in attracting tourists to the sites or destinations. This outcome is supported by Fodness (1994) who emphasized on rich social attributes of communities as basic attractions and motivations to tourism.

Implication of the Social and Infrastructural Factors in Tourism

The study discovered the existing social and infrastructural position of the study area in attracting tourist to desirable and glamorous locations in Delta State, Nigeria. With the tendency to diversify the nation's economy from a crude oil economy as major source of income, there comes the need to welcome commerce, industries and agriculture among others to additional sources of employment and income generation to boost the macro economy indicators of the country. The gross possession of social and infrastructural attributes of the state is an influential pointer to appeal to the conscience of development practitioners particularly in agricultural investment. The essence is to harness the existing agricultural possibilities in the state and make available raw materials for the commerce and industry sectors. This implies that tourist investors as a result of exposure to agro-business opportunities become potential agro-entrepreneur. Thus, the agro-business initiatives were stimulated by tourist activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was able to disclose hidden factors and some values backing the attraction of tourists to desirable destinations. Some of the useful social profiles of the tourists were that more males, educated elites, youths and adults were more involved in the tourism industry based on the study area, Gordon Hotel Resort, Abraka and the source of River Ethiope, Umuaja in Delta State. It was concluded that both social and infrastructural factors were significant to the attraction of tourists to choice of desirable destination. Furthermore, the study implied that agro-businesses due to environment friendliness of the destination and infrastructure availability are possible investment opportunities accrue from tourism experience.

On recommendation, tourism policy makers and business practitioners should lay emphasis on more provision of recreational facilities as indicated or desired by tourists to enhance their comfort ability during transit.

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