

Financial Risk Systems and Sustainable Development of Tourism and Hospitality in Developing Economy

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Introduction

Due to the unprecedented growth in the tourism industry in the last five decades as literatures reveal, “image of a destination has become a crucial determining factor of a destination development and success”. According to Chan & Tsai quoted in, ‘image plays a major role in travel decisions and choice of destination’. As a result, for a destination to be successful must project an attractive and positive image [1].

The aim of this study is to investigate Nigeria’s leisure tourism destination image. In order to achieve this aim specific objectives are set to guide the study. The objective of this study is to identify potential image characteristics of Nigeria’s leisure tourism destination. The study examined the perceptions of potential tourists about Nigeria as a leisure tourism destination. Specifically, the set objectives for this study include:

1. To examine the differences in the image formed by respondents who have visited Nigeria and those who have not visited.
2. To investigate the effect of safety and security attributes of Nigeria on its leisure tourism as perceived by potential tourists.
3. To identify which sources of information mostly influenced the image formed by the respondents.
4. To explore perceptions of the subjects on health and hygiene attributes of Nigeria in relation to its leisure tourism destination.

According to “tourism industry is becoming more dependent on image as there are more and more areas of the world being developed for tourism, making more choices available for tourists to choose from” [2]. Hence, it is very important for an “emerging tourism destination” like Nigeria to key into this development by promoting good images that can attract tourists at international level [3].

According to “Nigeria’s tourism is beginning to emerge” and with much emphasis on destination images the Nigeria destination is likely to face the challenges of competing with other destinations for international tourists [3]. Destination image has now become a major consideration by international tourists when making decision of where to spend their holiday, and such has been recognised as significant determinant of destinations success and development. Hence, the need to project a positive and attractive image in order to survive the stiff competition for international tourists becomes imperative. [2] Argued that “the growth of tourism globally has made available more choices of tourism destinations for tourists”. As a result “tourism marketers are now faced with influencing consumers’ decisions making in an increasingly complex and competitive global market place”. This development is a big challenge for emerging tourism destination like Nigeria if the country has to survive the competitive global market as the need to ‘favourably’ and ‘strategically’ position the destination in the mind of tourists becomes imperative. One approach to overcoming such challenge is to carry out an in-depth study on potential tourists perceptions of the destination and to find out its competitive advantages among other destinations. This step will help the marketing institution of the destination design strategic plans that could help to promote the images of the destination.

Literature Review Destination Image

The study of destination image has been a subject of interest and has received much attention in relation to academic literature, and has made a greater understanding of tourist behaviour [2,4]. Academic literature reveals that there is a general agreement that image of a place plays a significant role in the process of tourist decision making when choosing a holiday destinations. Argued that, “despite the increasing interest in the study of destination image and its importance in understanding tourists’

behaviour in destination choice, the studies carried out to date are insufficiently theory-based, resulting in a lack of framework or solid conceptualization [4]. They added that “various authors agreed while the concept is widely in empirical context still lacks a solid conceptual structure and is loosely defined”.

Definition of destination image

According to Bignon et al. (1998) quoted in Styliadis et al (2008) destination image has many definitions depending on the researcher. For instance Crompton (1979) defines image as the sum of beliefs, idea and impressions that a person has of a destination, while Hunt (1975) cited in Styliadis et al (2008) defines image as perceptions held by potential tourists about an area. Hose & Wickens (2004) cited in gives a different definition which states that “destination image is any visual, oral, or written representations of tourism location that is recorded and can also be transmitted to others” [5]. This definition seems to consider only information sources that influence image formation but did not include the tangibility attributes of a destination. Destination image is formed from the knowledge of different factors or attributes of a destination. These attributes include tangible and intangible attributes. As such a complete definition of destination image should include the elements of tangibility and intangibility. Hose and Wickens definition explain why destination image can be perceived differently by individuals due to the sources of information and how the information is transmitted or received. Thus, the image formed by visual (for instance information received from internet, televisions documentary); oral (such as word of mouth, information from friends and relatives); written information sources (such as internet and all form of publication about a destination) can be different depending on how the information were passed and how they were received by the individual.

However, proposed a theoretical model to define image in terms of four characteristics: complex, multiple, relativistic, and dynamic [4,6]. Following the above proposed model it is understandable that the measurement of destination image will carry with it great varieties of methods due to the complexity, multiplicity, relativistic, and dynamic features of individual destination.

Measurement of Destination Image

According to [4] “there is no universally accepted, valid, and reliable scale for the measurement of destination image” hence, they proposed a frame incorporating every aspect of a destination which could be used as an instrument of measurement. Thus, every aspect of the destination and attributes are included in the scale as factors influencing the image assessment made by individuals and these attributes involve: *natural resources, general infrastructure, tourist infrastructure, tourist leisure & recreation, (culture, history & art), political & economic factors, natural environment, socio-environment, and the atmosphere of the place*. They added that it is not necessary that all the attribute most be used but selection of the attributes of each destination will depend largely on the attractions of each destination, its positioning, and the objectives of the assessment of perceived image, which also determine whether specific or more general attributes are chosen. As a result this study focused more on leisure tourism destination’s attributes rather than the general tourism attributes of the Nigeria destination. In other to achieve this it will be important to understand how image of a place is formed.

Characteristics of Individuals

Individuals, personal characteristic are unique and different from one another. Though there could be similarities to some extent. In terms of consumer behaviour individual characteristics refers

to socio-demographic attributes (gender, age, education level, family cycle, lifecycle, social class, place of resident etc.) Argued that “personal characteristics affect one’s cognitive organisation of perceptions, thus also influencing the perceptions of the environment and the resulting image” [4]. Hence, the perceived image will be formed by the image displayed by the destination and the individual’s characteristics. As a result the individual tends to have different evaluation of a destination at a given point in time [7]. However, this study will not evaluating the individual, personal characteristics in terms of image formation about Nigeria leisure tourism destination. On the other hand, the demographic data will only be considered in the level of representativeness in terms of how many male or female students responded either positively or negatively to the research questions. It is therefore suggested that the analysis of demographic characteristics of respondents can be included in future study.

Conclusion

Researchers attempting to define the concept ‘image’ discovered its complexity as no single definition has been accepted. As such the term destination image has been defined by researchers to suit the purpose of the study being carried out. However, suggested a model to define image in terms of four characteristics namely complex, multiple, relativists, and dynamic [4,6]. Due to the fact that destination image reflects the four characteristics mention above makes it difficult to adopt a general scale for its measurement. Therefore, proposed that destination image could be measure by its attributes [4]. Destination attributes refers to the “pull” factors that attracts tourists to want to visit a destination. This Awaritefe (2004) termed “tangible and intangible tourism resources; easily recognised and recall by visitors [8]. Attractions of a destination [9]. Success and development determinant by [10].

In order to measure a destination image it is important to know how the image of a place is formed. Formation of destination images has been addressed extensively by academic literature and different models have been designed to explain how image of a place is formed by tourists. For example, explained that image of a place is formed base on the perceptions of the individuals which is related to the impact of internal and external factors [10]. Gunn (1998) cited in argued that image are formed in two levels which he refers to as induced and organic [5]. Identified two related component in image formation which they refer to as cognitive and affective components [4]. The diversities of image study matches Gallarza et al (2002) model which has the characteristics of multiple, complex, relativistic and dynamic [11-33].

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