

Influence of Marketing Strategies on Tourists' Choice of Destination Area in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract Development of tourism destination areas all over the world has increased the international arrivals. The study evaluated tourism destination attractions and the influence of marketing strategies and communication tools on tourists' choice of destination area in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study relied on secondary data from government tourism organizations (GTOs) and private tourism service providers (PTSPs) who are involved in marketing and promotion of tourism products. Also, data was collected through questionnaire survey, interviews, observation and content analysis of tourism brochures. A total of 215 respondents consisting of tourists and staff of GTOs and PTSPs were used for the study. Data generated was analyzed using descriptive and quantitative statistics. The findings revealed that, from the six natures of activities participated by tourists in the destination area, 64 percent of them were involved in leisure/recreational park and historical site/museum activities. The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the level of attractiveness of tourism attractions and events produced F-ratio of 14.245 which was significant at 0.05 level, this established statistical significant difference in the level of attractiveness of tourism products in the destination area. The findings showed that the higher the responses on the level of attractiveness of a product, the higher the population of tourists on that attraction site. It was further discovered that Obudu Ranch Resort was the most attractive site accounting for 91 percent of the responses, while Obubra Crocodile Lake and Akatcha festival were considered not attractive by the tourists based on the nature of marketing strategies and communication tools. Furthermore, the Kruskal-Wallis test (H) for several independent samples was significant at χ^2 (df=5) = 111.76, with $p < 0.05$ establishing significant difference in the level of influence of tourism marketing strategies on tourists' choice of destination area. The study observed that all the marketing strategies were influential on aggregate representing 39 percent, however festivals/events and security/environmental beautification were rated very high as the most influential marketing strategies on tourists' choice of destination attraction. They accounted for 66 percent and 63 percent respectively. The high rating was dependent on the quality of packaging of the programmes in marketing communication methods such as radio and television, internet, magazines/newspapers etc about the destination attractions. Based on the above findings, the study recommended more persuasive and appealing marketing strategies that will have great influence on tourists' choice of destination in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Keywords Attractions, Development, Persuasive, Destination, Marketing Strategies, Events, Attractiveness

1. Introduction

The importance of tourism marketing as emphasized by Hannam (2004) was in recognition of the emerging challenges posed by the growing number of tourists' destinations which have placed at the disposal of a tourist a variety of attractions in abundant quantity from a large number of competing nations. The increasing competitive tourism market has made the products marketing a very important factor in order to gain better destination patronage and to attract more consumption of services and generate repeat businesses and loyalty (Yuju-Wang, 2007).

The development of tourism destination areas all over the world has increased the international tourist arrivals. The review of tourist arrivals over the past ten years indicated clearly that in 2005, an estimated 800 million tourists were documented, a 5.5 percent increase following the 10 percent surge registered in the preceding year. By 2007, the figure appreciated to 940 million, with a growth of 6.6 percent as compared to 2005, while in 2014, over 1.1 billion tourists travelled across the globe for tourism purposes (World Tourism Organization, 2014). Furthermore, the reasons why tourism has been variously advocated as a valued tool for driving development includes, a means of advancing wider international integration within areas such as the European Union (EU), or as a catalyst for modernization, economic development and prosperity in emerging nations especially in developing countries.

Theoretically, marketing strategy is useful in targeting and

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developing new market segments and also helps to improve poor public relations which occurred as a result of several unfortunate events (Dore and Crouch, 2003). Thus, for a destination to gain from the global tourism share, as evident in the present age, the conscious creation and marketing of place products must be held sacrosanct. In effect, these products in other words known as tourism products are important for destination marketing as they influence people's perception of the place and can affect their choice and behaviour towards the place.

However, Bhaita (2006) observed that tourism product is not the tourism destination, but it is about the experience of that place and what happens there. The peculiarity of a tourism product is that, it cannot usually be sampled prior to purchase, it is not like a car or a cooking range of gas burner, refrigerator, or bookshelf which can be inspected before purchase (Seth, 2006). It requires purchase decisions to be made on the basis of available information and the projected and perceived images/brand of the destination. This attribute has made marketing and promotion in tourism clearly an essential factor for sustainable tourism development.

Cross River State has a rich storehouse of resources which can sustain a viable tourism industry. The major tourism drivers of the destination are the cultural and natural endowments. In a bid to develop and promote tourism, government has embarked on massive rehabilitation and development of world-class tourism facilities that can compete favourably with what is obtainable in other parts of the world, as well as making it a preferred destination. The construction of the cable car is Obudu Mountain Resort, building of the Tinapa Leisure and Business Resort, the Marina Resort, National Park, investment in urban beautification through green capping; modern local transport systems are some of the pragmatic steps by Government to improve the destination in order to present different choices to tourists. Other attractions include: the canopy walkway in the rainforest of Boki, Afi mountain wildlife sanctuary, waterfalls in Agbokim, Akamkpa and Esori; and socio-cultural activities such as New Yam festivals, boat regatta, Nkarasi monoliths among others and all these present opportunities to tourists on their choice of the destination. The State also has evolved several marketing purposes of promoting the attractions and destination for tourists from all parts of the world. But this effort is yet to yield meaningful benefits.

Although several studies have been carried in the study area, however, most them are focused on factors affecting ecotourism marketing (Esu, 2006), promoting an emerging tourism destination (Esu and Ebitu, 2010), tourism development (Egboyi, 2007) and tourism and employment structure (Amalu and Ajake, 2012). These studies have not critically considered the influence of marketing strategies on tourists' choice of their destination.

In a service industry such as tourism, Cooper, Fletcher, Flyall, Gilbert and Wanhill (2008), observed that marketing managers are also driving products toward choosing destinations. Eccles (1995) also noted that marketing mix

helps destination management organisation to understand where marketing actions can be initiated in order to improve the acceptability of tourism product and stimulate demand. There is need to intermittently evaluate the tourism marketing strategies of Cross River State in order to determine the level of impacts in promoting the numerous tourism resources that can influence tourists' choice of destination. It is with this background that this study seeks to examine which tourism marketing communication strategies influenced tourists' choice of selecting the destination.

2. Literature Review

Tourism marketing dates back to Pattinson's (1993) work on place promotion by Tourism Board; "The Beautiful Berkshire", during which stakeholders in the tourism industry collaborated and hired by the services of marketing officer to market and promote tourism attractions in the region. Another scenario of tourism product marketing was provided by Bierman (2000) in his publication; "Destination Marketing: The Marketing of Israel and Australia and the South-west Pacific" in which case, the Israel Ministry of Tourism developed a number of tactical promotional materials in their bid to penetrate the religious pilgrimage market.

According to Bhaita (2002) proposed structure, tourism product for any country or region is marketed at two different levels. The national or regional tourism organization will first of all be engaged in marketing campaign to persuade potential tourists to visit the country or region for which it is responsible. In view of the complementarities of tourism services, the predominance of many small and medium-sized enterprises and above all, the benefits of tourism to an economy, the official tourism organizations have important role to play in marketing (Okpoko, 2006). The major objective of these organizations include: seeking to create knowledge of its country's tourism market and persuade visitors in these markets to visit the country. Also, seek to create an image of its country in tourism attractions in the best possible manner so that potential tourists are attracted. The second level emphasized that, various individual firms providing tourism services can market their own components of the total tourism product after the national tourism organizations have launched marketing campaigns to persuade the potential tourists to visit the country or region for which it is responsible.

Similarly, tourism flourishes heavily on customer demand, which if created could generate a heavy traffic flow to a particular destination. This demand can be created depending on marketing strategies that could place the area or region ahead by other competing destinations. According to Okpoko (2006), marketing strategy or "mix" has been viewed by tourism researchers as a package of offerings which are intended to attract and serve the tourist or visitor. Based on this premise, tourism businesses or organizations are enjoined to evolve or develop marketing strategies or "mixes" for different target markets to enable the destination

gain a substantial market share.

Furthermore, there are some specific promotional strategies that are commonly used by successful emerging tourism destinations to publicize attractions. Esu and Ebitu (2010) observed that promotion of tourism destinations can be through small scale businesses. In their opinion, small scale businesses, like the large scale ones, are part of the product offered by destinations. This is because the overall tourist experience is composed of numerous small encounters with a variety of tourism service providers. The promotion of quality and international best practices in service quality delivery in an emerging tourism destination has the potential of enhancing the destination's image and increase tourists traffic to the place. In other words, tourism enterprises will operate profitably in destination where tourists visiting the area will receive higher quality service which can be leveraged for destination positioning, and small scale businesses operating will breed services and broaden target market. About two decades ago, Gray (1989) considered that promoting destinations requires a collective and collaborative effort of all the stakeholders in the destination. He referred to the collaborative process as shared decision making among all key stakeholders in a destination. This process is meant to promote destination through collective and collaborative marketing. Whereas, Hudson and Ritche (2006) argue that destination marketing organizations would be more successful if they were proactive enough in promoting film production in their locations.

The purpose of marketing and communication in the opinion of Bhaita (2006), is to inform, persuade, encourage, or more specifically, to influence the potential customer or trade intermediaries (travel agents, tour operators, reservation services, hotel and charter broker) through communications, to think and act in a certain manner. Communication may be undertaken in a variety of ways, including advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, personal selling and publicity, and public relation. On the other hand, advertising is an activity designed to spread information with a view to promoting the sales of marketable goods and services. It operates in two ways; first by spreading information amongst consumers about the possibilities of consumption, and second, by seeking to influence their judgment in favour of the particular goods or services which are subject of the advertisement (Bhaita, 2006). Marketing involves all promotional activities designed to transmit to the public specific and detail information on aspects of tourism destination such as accommodation, transportation, attractions, prices of services, and other logistics for tourists to make their choices.

Opperman (1999) observed that the success of individual destinations depends on their ability to develop and project a unique and recognizable brand, which is one of the most important developments in marketing in the 20th century. For instance, brands such as Sheraton, Hilton, McDonalds and Nike have strong international recognition and are associated

with professionalism and quality. A few years ago, Tinapa Business Resort and Obudu Mountain Resort were branded and received world attention. This has gradually diminished, and of no consequence in the study are anymore. Therefore, development of an effective brand is not likely to be a characteristic of a destination, but where the major stakeholders are in competition with each other. In summary, Esu and Ebitu (2010) emphasized that destination promotion has the potentials of producing benefits such as:

- (i) Creation of awareness and interest in the destination and the attractions;
- (ii) Differentiate the destination and its product offerings from competing destinations;
- (iii) Communicate the physical and psychological benefits of products packaged by the destination to the market;
- (iv) Build and maintain the overall image and reputation of the destination;
- (v) Persuade tourists to visit the destination and increase length of stay in the destination; and
- (vi) Assist the destination management to level out peaks and valleys result from seasonality of demand.

From the literature reviewed so far, adequate attention appears to have been given to studies of tourism destination promotion (Pattison, 1993; Okpoko, 2002), development of attraction (Okpoko, 2006), tourism attractions marketing strategies (Bhaita, 2006; Esu, 2006; Esu and Ebitu, 2010; Ajake and Amalu, 2012b); purpose of marketing and communication tools (Crouch and Dore, 2002) distribution channels of tourism products (Cooper et al., 2008) among others. In Nigeria and Cross River State, very little or no work has been done to assess the influence of tourism marketing strategies on tourists' choice of any destination area. Several marketing strategies/programmes and large volumes of advertising messages about the tourism potentials of the study areas are made available to persuade tourists to make their choice and which destination to visit. These include festivals/events; packaging souvenirs/gift items; paradise in the cloud; meet me in Cross River; Destination events and security/environmental beautification. In addition, tourism marketing communication tools such as television, radio, internet, handbills, billboards, flyers, family and friends' recommendation, travel agency desk information etc. were considered. These marketing strategies and marketing communication tools requires intermittent evaluation to determine their level of influence on tourists' decision to choose a specific destination for visit. It is at this background that this study will go a long way to fill the gap.

3. Study Area

The study area is Cross River State, Nigeria. The state is located between longitudes 7°40" and 9°50" East of the Greenwich meridian, and latitude 4°40" and 7°00" North of the Equator (Figure 1). The area occupies a landmass of approximately 23,074.43km² with a population of over

2,888,988 people (National Population Commission, 2006). Within Cross River State, the study captured two major tourism hotspots of Calabar and Obudu Mountain Resort. Calabar, the capital city of Cross River State, is located in the Southern part and comprises of the Calabar Municipality and Calabar South Local Government Area. On the other hand, the Obudu Mountain Resort in Obanliku Local Government Area lies at the extreme northern fringes of the state. It is at

an elevation of about 5,700ft (1,576meters) above sea level. This area is Nigeria's premier tourism destination, beautifully developed and structured for business, leisure, travelers and tourists. The Obudu Mountain Resort is about 388 kilometers from Calabar and is awash with expansive beauty, excellent quality services and awesome facilities which one need to experience at least once in a lifetime.

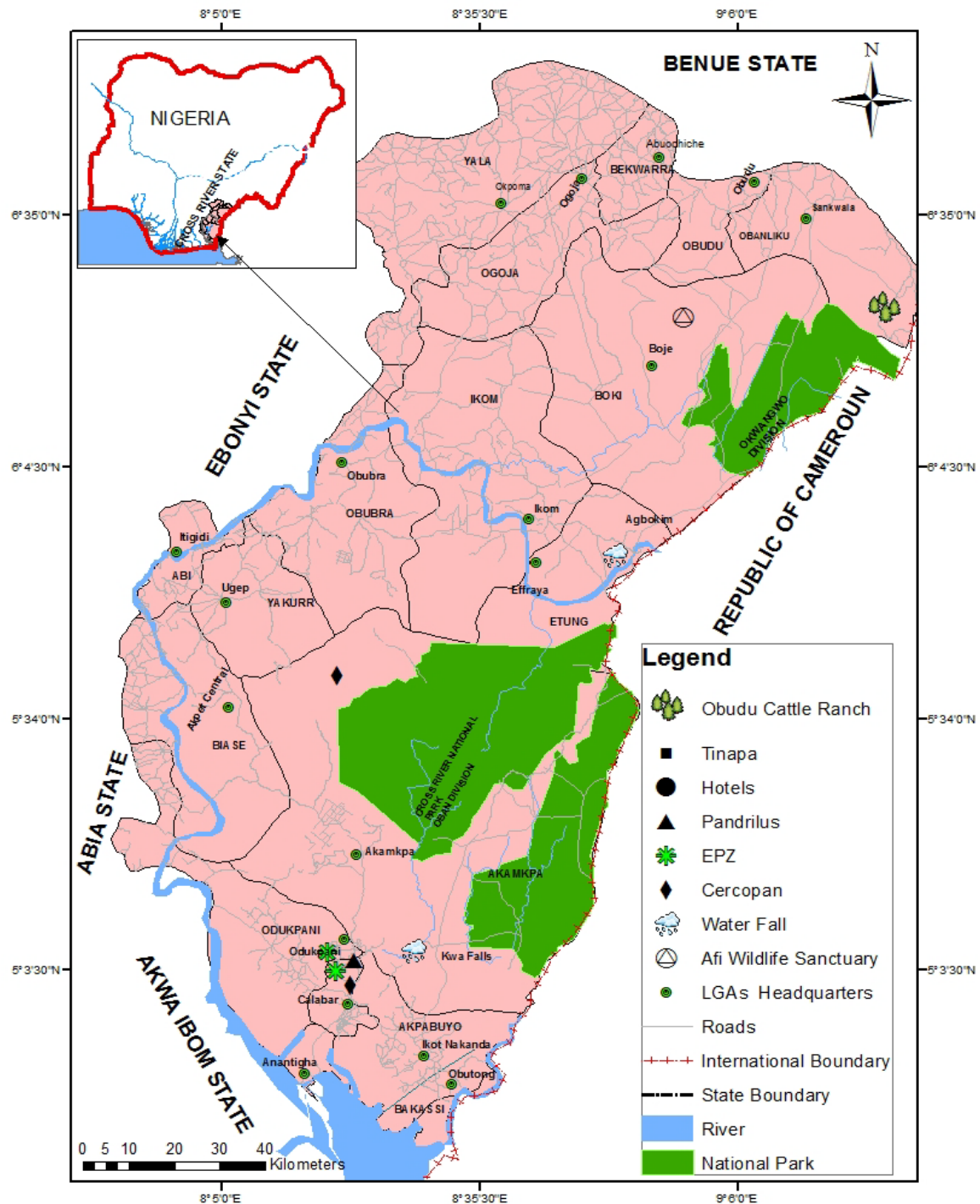


Figure 1. Map of Cross River State, Nigeria showing major tourists' attractions

The climate of the area is characterized by equatorial climatic conditions with double maxima rainfall regime and a break in the months of August and September. The temperature rarely falls below 19°C and average of 27°C all year round. However, the Obudu Mountain Resort is influenced by a fascinating mild temperate climate, with daily temperature of about 15°C. The climatic conditions of this area are influenced by the topography which is mainly mountains and plateau rising to elevation of about 1,576 meters above sea level.

The study area is a rich storehouse with numerous cultural and natural environments which have unique features for tourism purposes. The most striking ecotourism potentials include: waterfalls, National park occupying the rainforest, canopy walkway in the rainforest, drill money rehabilitation centre, Boki mountain wildlife sanctuary, Obudu Mountain Resort, Obubra Crocodile Lake, caves etc., while the socio-cultural potential are: Tinapa Business and Holiday Resort, Old Residency Museum, Leboku New Yam Festival, Akatcha Festival, Nkarasi Monoliths, Calabar Carnival Festival among others. All these are attractions that constitute the basis for tourism development in Cross River State.

4. Materials and Methods

The survey design was adopted for this study. According to Decrop (1999), the survey design permits the examination of the independent variables and their possible relationship with the dependent variable. The study is aimed at assessing the influence of marketing strategies on tourists' choice of destination. The study relied mainly on secondary information on tourists' arrivals from Cross River State Tourism Bureau (CRSTB), Cross River State Tourism Development Commission; private tourism services practitioners such as Remlords Tours and Car Line Services, Executive Travels Nigeria, Transcorp Metropolitan Hotel, African Sun Hotel and Ponet Cable Car and Water Park at the Obudu Ranch Resort. Other data was derived through questionnaire survey, interviews, content analysis of tourism brochures and direct field observation. Two sets of questionnaires were administered; one set was administered to tourists in the sampled areas. The questionnaire also captured certain questions that were presented in likert scale format which were used to assess the influence of marketing strategies on tourists' choice of destination in the area. The scale ranges from one to five, where five = very influential, 4 = influential, 3 = moderately influential, 2 = least influential and 1 = not influential. The other set of the questionnaire was administered to Tourism administrators such as staff of Government Tourism Organisations (GTOs) and Private Tourism Services Provider (PTSPs) who are involved in marketing and promotions.

Interviews were conducted with top executives and heads of marketing departments of GTOs and PTSPs in the study area. Content analysis was also used to analyse brochures of

tour operators with the aim of examining the nature of attractions and influence of marketing strategies. The sampled population was basically tourists and staff of government tourism organisations (GTOs) and private tourism service providers (PTSPs) who are involved in marketing communication tourism attractions of the study area. The respondents were sampled in Calabar and Obudu Mountain Resort which constitute the tourism hotspots of the study area. A total of 215 respondents representing tourists and staff of GTOs and PTSPs in the area were sampled. This sample population is made up of 160 tourists who were found as at the time of this study and 55 staff of GTOs and PTSPs in the study area.

Data collected were analysed and presented using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive techniques include the use of tables, graphs, charts, means, standard deviation and simple percentages.

The inferential statistics such as one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the differences in the level of attractiveness of tourism sites and events in the destination area, while the Kruskal-Wallis Test (H) was applied to compare the mean difference in the level of influence of tourism marketing strategies on tourists' choice of destination.

This variation was determined based on the responses by the individual tourists on the likert scale who indicated to have either been influenced by one or more strategies to visit the destination.

5. Result and Discussions

Based on the focus of this study, the result and discussion of findings were presented accordingly.

5.1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Tourists' Population

The study examined the socio-demographic characteristics of the tourists' population in terms of sex differential(s), age, educational level and nature of employment. The intention was to understand the attributes of tourist who is at liberty for adventure and taking opportunities through marketing strategies in selecting or choosing tourism destinations in the destination.

The result in Table 1 shows that out of 154 sampled tourists, 119 were males representing 77 percent and 35 were females representing 23 percent. This result indicated that more male tourists visited the destination area than females. There are variations in the various destination locations visited by the tourists. For instance, there were more male visitors in Obudu Mountain Resort (33 percent) than those who were in Aqua Vista (5 percent). Furthermore, a total of 11 female tourists representing 31 percent were in Marina Resort than those who went to Transcorp Metropolitan Hotel and Aqua Vista which recorded 2 each, representing 6 percent respectively.

Table 1. Sex differentials of tourists in the study area

Study area	Male	(%)	Female	(%)	No. of respondents	Percentage
Aqua Vista	6	5	2	6	8	5
Marina Resort	28	24	11	31	39	25
Old Residency Museum	11	9	7	20	18	12
Tinapa Business & Leisure Resort	11	9	6	17	17	11
Obudu Mountain Resort	39	33	7	20	46	30
Transcorp Metropolitan Hotel	15	13	2	6	17	12
Drill monkey rehabilitation centre	9	8	0	0	9	6
Total	119	77%	35	23%	154	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Furthermore the study considered the ages of tourists from within and outside Nigeria, the result in Table 2 shows that the dominant age group of tourists who visited the study area was 36-65 years of age that is 97 tourists representing 63 percent. This was followed by 15-35 years having 46 tourists representing 30 percent. Those who are above 65 years of age were 11 tourists representing 7 percent. Therefore, this result indicates that those who visited Cross River State during the period of this research were tourists who are within the established economically productive age that that can contribute positively to tourism development.

Table 2. Age bracket of tourists

Age	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
15 – 35 Young adult	46	30
36 – 65 Old adult	97	63
Above 65 Retirees	11	7
Total	154	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Also, the educational level of all the tourists who visited the attraction sites was considered. The result revealed that more than half of the tourists totaling 127 representing 83 percent have Higher Diploma and First degrees and above. This was followed by those with OND/NCE (19 percent), while secondary school had 4 tourists representing 3 percent (Table 3). This suggests that those who visited Cross River State were highly educated tourists who may have independent opinion on the assessment of attraction sites and the level of influence of marketing strategies on their choice of destination areas.

Table 3. Educational level of tourists

Educational attainment	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Secondary School	4	3
OND/NCE	29	19
HND/B.Sc	95	62
Postgraduate	32	21
Total	154	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Similarly, information about the nature of employment of tourists who visited the destination, in Table 4 shows that 91

respondents representing 59 percent of the total sampled tourists were public servants in their respective countries of origin, while 39 respondents representing 25 percent were engaged in private business or employment.

Table 4. Nature of employment

Occupation	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Private sector employee	39	25
Self-employed	17	11
Public servant	91	59
Others	7	5
Total	154	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014

In addition, 17 respondents representing 11 percent were tourists who are self-employed, while 7 respondents representing 5 percent were tourists engaged in other occupations. This result demonstrates that more government workers visited the study area. It was observed that most tourists take advantage of their official assignment in Nigeria and Cross River State to visit attraction sites in the study area.

From the nature of employment, the study also captured the monthly income of tourists and reveals that 47 tourists representing 31 percent of the sample population earned a monthly income of within N100,000 – N200,000. This was closely followed by income group of people within N200,000 – N300,000 representing 26 percent. The least group of 12 tourists representing 8 percent earned above N300,000 monthly. Income determines the purchasing power of the tourists (Table 5). It was discovered that a greater number of the tourists earned above N100,000 per month. This was quite high in the context of Nigerian economy and explains why economic activities and tourism services are always at a boom level whenever there are influxes of tourists especially during Calabar Carnival and other cultural festival periods. For instance, the interviews conducted during participatory assessment revealed that hotels and other accommodation services are always booked ahead of the period of events. Most times, tourists from other nations outside Africa are engaged in purchasing of native clothes, bangles, costumes, chairs, shoes, local diet, craft, and attending ceremonies with indigenous people.

Table 5. Monthly income level of tourists

Income per month (₦)	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
18,000 - 50,000	21	14
51,000 - 100,000	34	22
101,000 - 200,000	47	31
201,000 - 300,000	40	26
Above 300,000	12	8
Total	154	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014

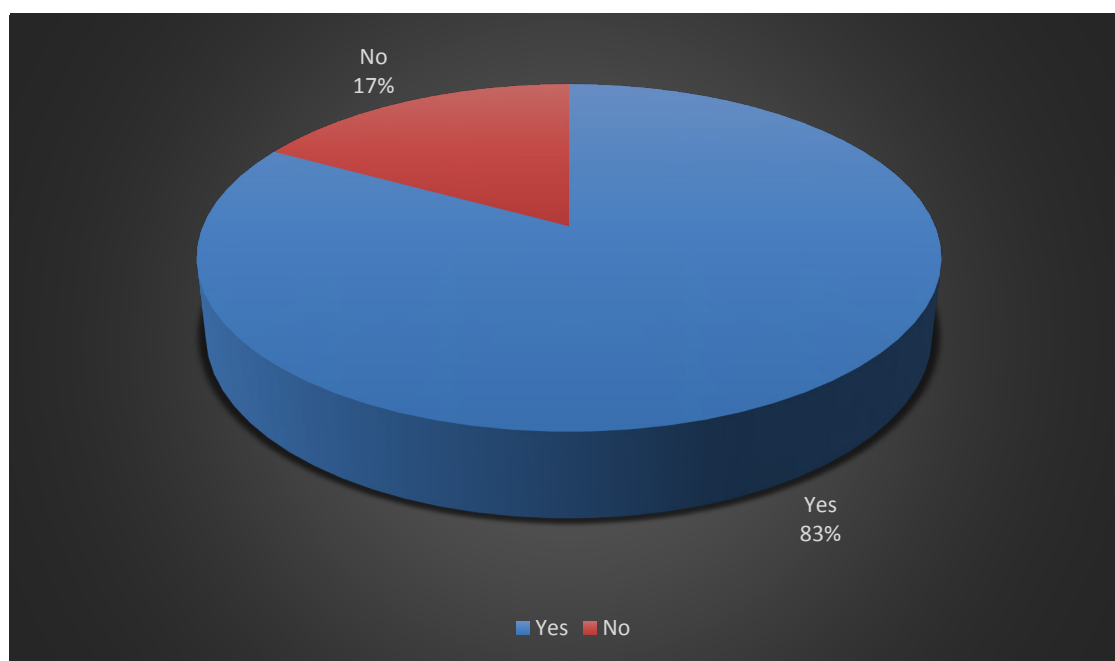
5.2. Attractiveness of Various Tourism Destinations in the Study Area

The attractiveness of various tourism destinations on visitors in the study area in terms of tourists' awareness level of attractions, nature of activities participated by tourists, destination attractions visited by tourists, and level of attractiveness of tourism destination areas were examined. Others include commonly used local transport by tourists, type of accommodation used during their stay and possible reasons for not visiting other attractions/events in the study area. The results are presented accordingly.

In Figure 2, the finding shows that 128 respondents representing 83 percent of the total sampled confirmed by indicating that they were fully aware of tourism destination

attractions in study area, while 26 respondents representing 17 percent said they had no previous awareness before the period of this study. The confirmation of the destination attractions by a significant population of tourists is an indication of the level of publicity through tourism marketing strategies and communication tools. It was observed that the 17 percent of tourists who did not acquire information about the destination attractions before visits were mainly those who participated in conferences held in Cross River State and a few indigenes from within Nigeria who are conversant with the development of tourism sector and destination attractions in the study area.

Also concerning the place of information acquisition about the destination attractions, the result as indicated in figure 3 reveals that, out of 28 tourists who were considered for the study and having previous knowledge of tourism destination attraction, 88 representing 69 percent said they got information in Nigeria (that is, in towns/cities) outside Cross River State, while 40 respondents representing 31 percent heard about the study area outside Nigeria. From further interviews with the tourists, the survey observed that advancement in the marketing of destination area will further increase the population of tourists who will acquire information from outside Nigeria.



Source: Field Survey, 2014

Figure 2. Awareness of tourism destination attractions in the study area

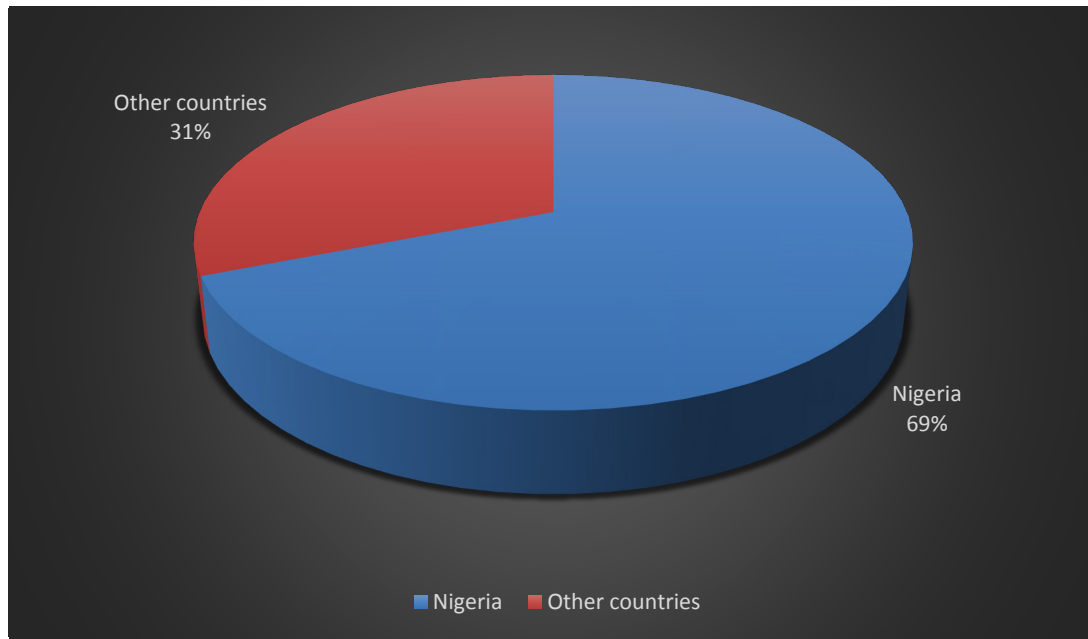
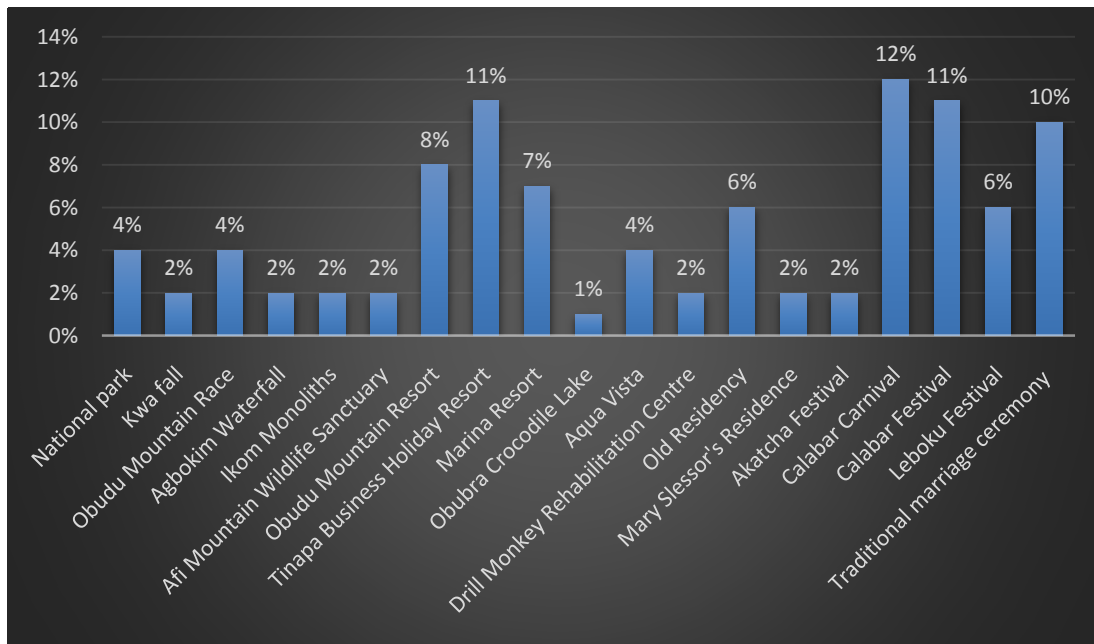


Figure 3. Where tourists acquired information about destination attraction



Source: Field Survey, 2014

Figure 4. Attractions and Events visited by Tourists

Table 6. Nature of activities participated by tourists in destination area

Activities	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Friends and family visit	4	3
Leisure and recreational park	61	40
Historical site/museum	37	24
Traditional ceremonies	19	12
Sightseeing (aesthetics/scenery)	21	14
Shopping for traditional products	12	8
Total	154	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Furthermore, the study considered the nature of activities participated by tourists in the destination area. The result in Table 6 shows that 61 tourists representing 40 percent and 37 tourists representing 24 percent visited the destination area and participated in leisure and recreational park activities and historical site/museum activities respectively. Only 4 tourists representing 3 percent participated in activities organized by friends and families. It was also discovered that some tourists came to see the aesthetic nature and the beautiful natural scenery of the destination area, while others were attracted to traditional ceremonies such as marriages as well as purchasing indigenous products (Table 6).

Also, the investigation on the destination attractions visited by tourists showed an interesting picture. The nineteen attraction sites and events in the study area were all visited by the tourists. The study observed multiple responses on the visit and use of the attraction sites by tourists (Figure 4).

In figure 4, the results shows that Calabar Carnival, Calabar festival, Tinapa Business Holiday Resort and traditional marriage ceremonies are some of the high valued destination attractions and events that have attracted tourists from within Nigeria and outside Nigeria to the study area. These attracted between 10 to 12 percent of the total responses. It is observed that tourists found during this study were from Europe, North America, Caribbean, South America, Australia and Asia. Other important attractions in the area include Obudu Mountain Resort (8 percent), Leboku New Yam festival (6 percent), Marina Resort (7 percent) and Old Residency (6 percent).

The nature of these attractions and events has appealing effects that stimulate tourists' interest to have repeated visits. In addition, Calabar Carnival, Calabar festival and Leboku festival are annual events that attract tourists across the globe into the destination. For instance, while the Calabar festival is a one month event, beginning from 1st to 31st December, the Calabar Carnival is restricted to 26th and 27th December every year. The Leboku New Yam Festival, which is a cultural activity of the Yakurr people holds from 18th – 25th August every year. Over 500,000 people participate in all the events or activities. Most of the participants are indigenous population and tourists from within and outside Nigeria. The number of tourists who participate in these events is an indication of effective publicity through tourism marketing communication strategies.

5.3. Level of Attractiveness of Tourism Destination Attractions in the Area

The study using the likert scale questionnaire assessed the level of attractiveness of tourism destination attractions. The scale was 1-5, where 5 = very attractive, 4 = attractive, 3 = moderately attractive, 2 = least attractive and 1 = not attractive. Based on scoring responses, the values were summed up and result presented accordingly. The analysis from 19 tourism attractions sampled which generated 978 multiple responses from tourists. Table 7 shows that on aggregate all tourism attractions and events are very attractive to the tourists. This accounted for 528 responses representing 54 percent. Details of the analysis reveals that Obudu Ranch Resort, Marina Resort, Obudu Mountain race event, Calabar Carnival and Calabar Festivals are first order

very attractive products in the destination. They accounted for from 65 percent to 91 percent of the tourist responses to the level of attractiveness. Also, the tourists considered Tinapa Business and Holiday Resort (56%), Leboku New Yam festival (56%) and traditional ceremonies (51%) as the second order very attractive products in the destination area. However, the study observed that few attractions in the area are not attractive and therefore received low responses from the tourists. It was noted that, the non-attractiveness of some sites was based on inadequate publicity, while the most attractive sites are products that are covered sufficiently by different tourism marketing, communication tools in the area. Also, it was indicated that all the tourists sampled acknowledged the availability of the attractions and events in the destination area. This implies that, no attraction site identified in the study area that has no national or international recognition. Therefore, encouraging the promotion of these attractions in the destination area will eventually increase the population of tourists utilizing them vis-à-vis ensuring development and economic growth of these areas.

The study further determined the differences in the level of attractiveness of tourism attractions and events in the destination area, using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The data in Table 7 was used for the analysis and result in Table 8 was produced.

The analysis of variance used the F-test which is the ratio of two or more variance (ratio between means variance to within means variance). The result of ANOVA of the level of attractiveness of tourism attractions and events produced F-ratio of 14.245 which was significance at 0.05 level. From this result, it was established that there is statistically significant difference in the level of attractiveness or tourism products in the destination area. These attractions influenced the tourists' decision to choose which attraction site to visit at a given time. The findings further revealed that the higher the responses on level of attractiveness of a product, the higher the population of tourists on that attraction sites. For instance it can be seen that Obudu Mountain Resort was most attractive while Obubra Crocodile Lake and Akatcha festival are not attractive (Table 7). Detail analysis shows that the sum of squares of between groups is 200.243 at 963 degree of freedom with a mean square of 0.781 (Table 7). The result further reveals a total sum of squares of 981 and since $F(18,963) = 14.25$ and $P < 0.05$, it means that there is significant variation in the attractiveness of the various tourism products in the study area. In view of the above, it is therefore concluded that some of the tourism products are more attractive than the others (Table 7).

Table 7. Level of attractiveness of tourism sites and events on tourists

		National Park	Kwa Falls	Agbokim Waterfalls	Ikom Vicinity Monoliths	Afri Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary	Obudu Ranch Resort	Tinapa Business Holiday Resort	Marina Resort	Obubra Crocodile Lake	Aqua Vista	Drill Monkey Rehabilitation Centre	Old Residency Museum	Mary Slessor's Residence	Akatcha Festival	Leboku New Yam Festival	Obudu Mountain Race Event	Calabar Carnival	Calabar Festival	Traditional ceremonies	Total
Very Attractive	Freq. (%)	19 38	5 16	11 37	4 17	7 39	87 91	74 56	68 77	0 0	11 23	10 32	26 34	7 32	0 0	19 56	41 75	38 75	47 64	54 51	528 (54%)
Attractive	Freq. (%)	16 32	12 39	14 47	11 46	9 50	6 6	51 39	18 20	3 50	33 69	9 29	41 53	8 36	2 33	10 29	14 25	7 14	21 29	26 25	368 (38%)
Moderately attractive	Freq. (%)	4 8	5 16	3 10	2 8	0 0	3 3	4 3	2 2	0 0	1 2	2 6	3 4	7 32	1 17	0 0	3 5	1 2	5 7	13 12	57 (6%)
Least attractive	Freq. (%)	5 10	5 16	2 7	3 13	2 11	0 0	3 2	0 0	2 33	2 4	7 23	2 3	5 23	3 50	0 0	0 0	5 10	0 0	4 4	50 (5%)
Not attractive	Freq. (%)	6 12	4 13	0 0	4 17	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 17	1 2	2 6	1 1	1 6	1 17	2 6	0 0	0 0	0 0	9 8	32 (3%)
TOTAL	Freq. (%)	50 5%	21 3%	30 3%	24 2%	18 2%	96 10%	132 13%	88 9%	6 1%	48 5%	31 3%	77 8%	22 2%	6 1%	34 3%	55 6%	51 5%	73 7%	106 11%	978 (100%)

Key: 5 = very attractive; 4 = attractive; 3 = moderately attractive; 2 = least attractive; 1 = not attractive, on ordinal scale

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 8. Results of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) or level of attractiveness of tourism attractions and events in the study area

Source or variation	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean sum or squares	F-ratio	Sig. level
Between Group	200.243	18	11.125	14.245	<0.001
Within Group	752.027	963	0.782		
Total	952.270	981			

* Significant at 0.05 confidence level

5.4. Tourism Destination Services in the Area

The level of attractiveness of tourism products in a given destination is also attributed to certain services that ease and provide comfort to the tourist. The movement of tourists to specific attractions in a destination site was aided by various persons within the vicinity. Table 8 shows that 71 tourists representing 46 percent engaged the services of Tour Group/Guide, 27 of them representing 18 percent were moving on their own, while 56 tourists representing 36 percent were aided by friends and family.

Table 9. Services that aided tourists in moving around attraction sites

Guide services	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Tour Group/Guide	71	46
On your own	27	18
Friends and family	56	36
Total	154	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014

The study observed that, tourists who were moving on their own were those who were familiar with the destination and are from within Cross River State and Nigeria. In most cases, tour groups/guides do not only lead tourists to attraction sites, but also educate the visitors on the nature of tourism resources and their values. This practice is most common among indigenous tour guides and attractions.

Also, the transportation of tourists, especially when it involves long distances from their accommodation was examined. The result presented in Figure 5 shows that 41 tourists representing 27 percent use taxis, 32 respondents representing 21 percent hired rental cars, 23 respondents representing 15 percent drove in their own cars, 22 tourists representing 14 percent used friends and family cars, 19 respondents representing 12 percent rode on tour buses, 12 respondents representing 8 percent boarded public buses, while 5 tourists representing 3 percent engaged in walking around attraction sites.

It was observed that a significant population of tourists who used taxis and hired rental cars came from outside Nigeria, while those driving their own cars, friends and relatives' car as well as walking around attraction sites were mainly Nigerians.

Accommodation is another important component of tourism services investigated. Table 10 shows that 81 tourists representing 53 percent were accommodated by friends and family relatives, 62 tourists representing 40 percent lodged in hotels/guest houses, while 11 representing 7 percent had a nice stay in their own houses. Most tourists that lodged with friends and relatives or their own houses came from other states within Nigeria, while tourists from other countries of Africa, Europe, Asia, South America and Caribbean were accommodated in hotels or guest houses that were located within the attraction sites or a nearby destination.

Table 10. Type of accommodation used by most tourists

Accommodation used by most tourists	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Hotels/guest houses	62	40
Friends and family	81	53
My own house	11	7
Total	154	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014

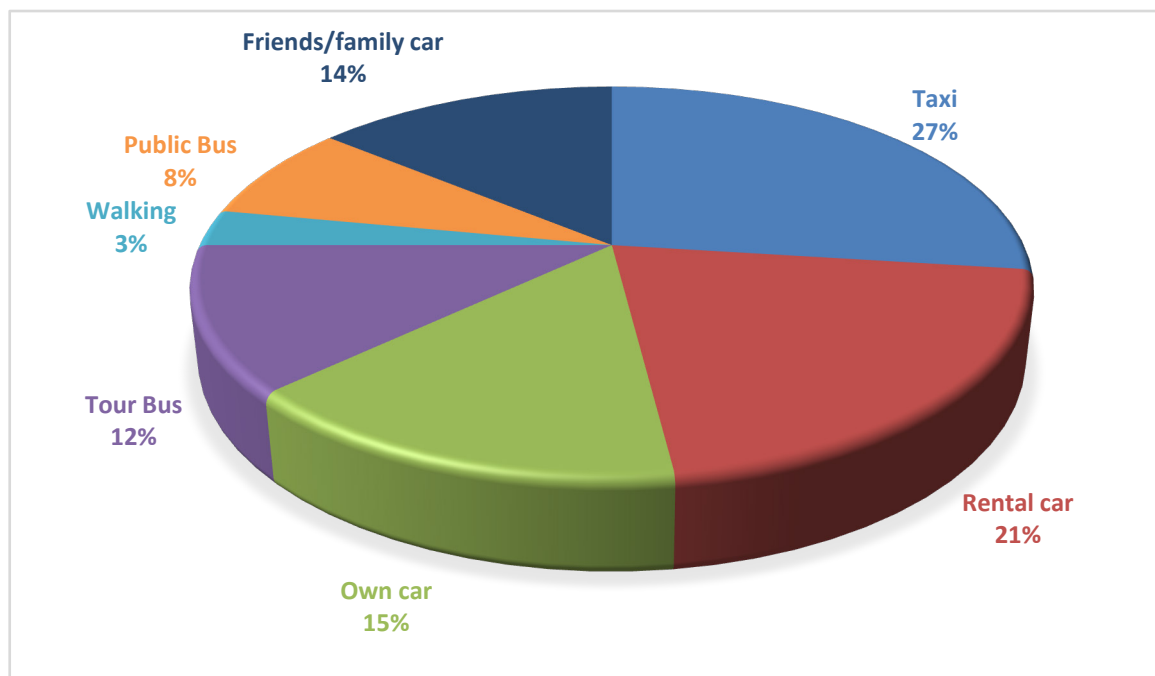


Figure 5. Commonly used local transport by tourists

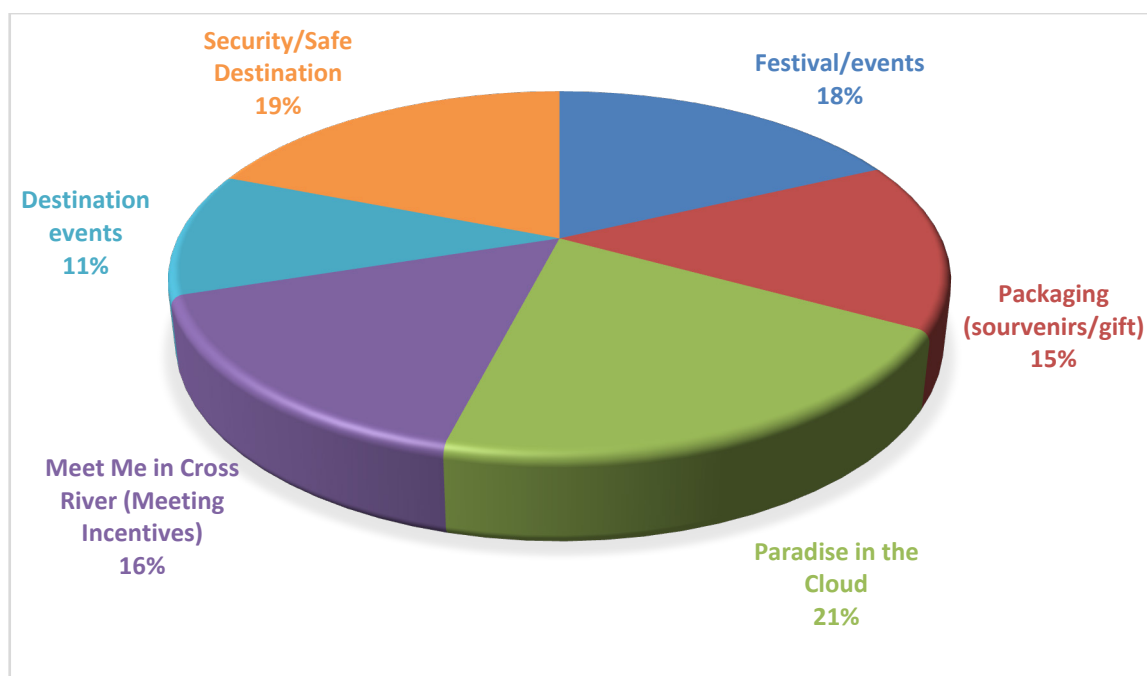


Figure 6. Tourists' opinion on tourism marketing strategies that influenced their choice of visiting attraction sites

Similarly, the reasons why tourists did not visit other attractions and events in the area is presented in Table 10. The result shows that 49 tourists representing 32 percent did not visit other attractions and events in the study area due to inadequate publicity of those attractions/events, 34 representing 22 percent complained about the long and boring journey due to bad road conditions, 31 representing 20 percent said it was due to no flight schedule. Meanwhile, 13 tourists representing 8 percent said it was due to security threats. This was followed by 27 respondents representing 18 percent who affirmed that there was not enough time at their disposal. The study noted that publicity of attractions and events is the main reason influencing the tourists' decision or choice of the place to visit. This clearly explains why certain products such as Obubra Crocodile Lakes and Akatcha festival in Akamkpa were not attractive sites; rather Obudu Ranch Resort and Calabar Carnival are worldwide activities and attractions that are very attractive. Marketing communication strategies are needed for promotional purposes and can easily influence the tourists' decision of visiting a particular tourist site.

Table 11. Tourists' opinion on possible reasons for not visiting other attractions/events in the study area

Possible reasons	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Inadequate publicity	49	31.81
Bad road condition	34	22.07
No flight schedule	31	20.12
Security threats	13	8.44
Not enough time	27	17.53
Total	154	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014

5.5. Tourism Marketing Strategies that Influences Tourists' Choice Destination

The study evaluated the tourism marketing strategies that have been employed in the study area by Government Tourism Organisations (GTOs) and Private Tourism Services Providers (PTSPs) in their bid to publicize tourism attractions in Cross River State and also influence tourists' choice of the destination. Tourists' opinion on possible tourism marketing strategies that influence their choice of visiting the area were identified for the tourists to assess and confirm which of these strategies is more influential. The strategies were packages used by various tourism marketing communication methods to showcase the destination.

The result in Figure 6 shows that 105 tourists representing 21 percent said they were influenced by Paradise in the Clouds, 93 tourists representing 19 percent affirmed that they were influenced by Security/Safe destination. The Paradise in the Cloud is a programme that is used to showcase the beautiful attributes of Calabar as a destination. It has appealing component that attracts tourists into the study area. Similarly, tourists need security and safe environment for leisure and recreation. This explains why significant variation was observed in tourists visit to attraction sites. Furthermore, 91 tourists representing 18 percent indicated that they were influenced by festivals/events. This was followed by 81 tourists representing 16 percent for Meet Me in Cross River (Meeting Incentives-MICE). Also, 75 tourists representing 15 percent said they were influenced by Packaging (souvenirs/gift items), while 53 visitors representing 11 percent upheld the opinion that Destination events influenced their choice of the study area. The packaging of these programmes influenced the tourists' decision of

choosing a destination based on their understanding, activities involved, clarity and the appealing nature of the strategies.

5.6. Assessing the Level of Influence of Tourism Marketing Strategies on Tourists' Choice to Visit the Study Area

The study also assessed the opinion of the tourists on the levels of influence of tourism marketing strategies on their decision to visit an attraction using likert scale questionnaire, where 5 = very influential, 4 = influential, 3 = moderately influential, 2 = least influential and 1 = not influential. The result of analysis from six marketing strategies influencing tourists' choice of destination shows that on aggregate all the marketing strategies are very influential to tourists. This accounted for 196 responses representing 39 percent. Detail analysis reveals that festivals/events and security/environment beautification were rated very high accounting for 66 percent and 63 percent respectively (Table 12). This was followed up by Paradise in the Clouds. The high rating of these marketing strategies is dependent on the quality of packaging of the programmes in marketing communication methods such as radio and television, internet, magazine/newspapers, billboards, handbills, banners, posters etc. about the destination attractions.

The study further observed that all the marketing strategies as identified were influential on aggregate representing 31 percent responses, while non-influential ones were rarely noticed on aggregate. It was also noticed that the festivals and events of national and international recognition and acknowledgement includes: Calabar Carnival; Calabar One Month Festival and Leboku New Yam Festival. DAll these are appealing attributes that constitute these marketing strategies that are rated very high and influential by the tourists.

Furthermore, the study in order to determine the statistical difference in the level of influence of tourism marketing strategies on tourists' choice of destination, used the Kruskal-Wallis Test (H) for several independent samples for the analysis. This test was applied because data was collected on ordinal scale of measurement involving ranking (Udofia, 2011). The data used for this analysis are found in Table 11 and the result presented in Table 13. Usually, in Kruskal-Wallis analysis, the obtained Kurskal-Wallis Statistics is interpreted as a Chi-square value (Ho, 2006). Hence, from Table 12, the Kruskal-Wallis Statistics (shown as Chi-Square Value) is significant at χ^2 (df = 5) = 111.76, $p < 0.05$; since χ^2 (df = 5) = 111.76 and $P < 0.05$, and the study therefore concluded that there is significant difference in the level of influence of tourism marketing strategies on visitors' choice of the destination.

In a bid to achieve successful tourism marketing in Cross River State, attractions such as: the Obudu Mountain Resort, Boki Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Agbokim Waterfalls, Ikom Vicinity Monoliths, National Park, Tinapa Business and Holiday Resort, Marina Resort, Old Residency Museum, Leboku New Yam Festival, Calabar Carnival and the rest have continued to attract frequent promotional publicity through a number of approaches or methods also popularly known as marketing strategies (Crouch and Dore, 2002), as well as communication tools (Yuju-Wang, 2007). These tools include: advertising (broadcast/print media), personal selling (person-person communication between a sales representative and a prospective consumer), sales promotion, public relations, internet and recommendation/word-of-mouth. These methods have bridged the gap between the principal tourism suppliers and the tourists. They disseminate information that possess the attractive power to make a purchase and consumption decision.

Table 12. Level of influence of tourism marketing strategies on tourists' choice to visit the study area

Level of influence	Marketing strategies							Total
		Festival/ Events	Packaging souvenir/ Gift items	Paradise in the Clouds	Meet Me in Cross River (Meeting Incentives, MICE)	Destination Events	Security/ Environmental Beautification	
Very Influential	Freq.	60	8	42	17	10	59	196
	(%)	66	11	40	21	19	63	39%
Influential	Freq.	21	24	45	28	19	19	156
	(%)	23	32	43	35	36	20	31%
Indifferent	Freq.	0	8	10	7	7	4	36
	(%)	0	11	10	9	13	4	7%
Least Influential	Freq.	10	24	6	19	9	9	7
	(%)	11	32	6	23	17	10	1%
Not Influential	Freq.	0	11	2	10	8	2	33
	(%)	0	15	2	12	15	2	7%
Total	Freq.	91	75	105	81	53	92	498
	(%)	18	15%	21%	16%	11%	18%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 13. Results of Kruskal-Wallis test on difference in the level of influence of tourism marketing strategies on visitors' choice of destination

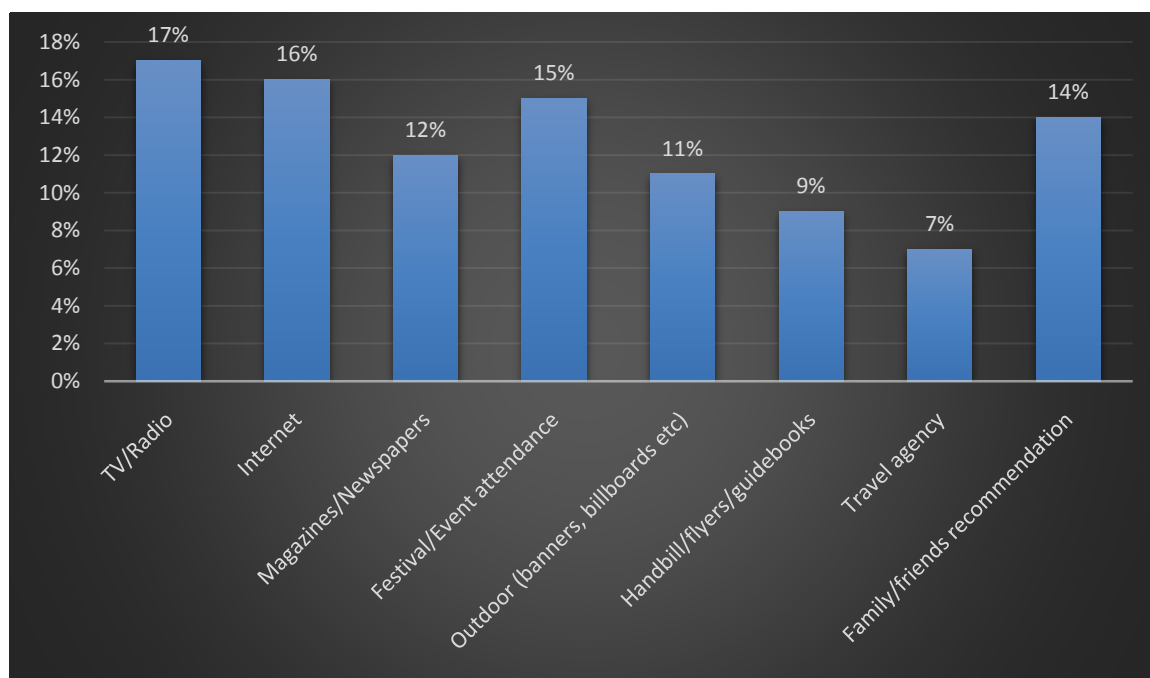
Marketing strategies	N	Mean Rank
Festival/Event	91	323.79
Packaging	75	153.80
Paradise in the Clouds	105	273.09
Meet Me in Cross River	81	191.75
Destination Events	53	187.81
Security/Environmental Beautification	93	312.81
Total	498	
Test statistics	Level of influence	
Chi-square	111.76	
Df	5.	
Asymp. Sig.	<0.001	

Among the methods frequently used in the study area though, according to Cross River Tourism Board, are media such as: advertising in the Cross River Broadcasting Corporation (CRBC) radio and television, documentary programme on Voice of America (VOA) TV, 360 Degrees Magazine, African Travel (ATQ) Magazine, Mofinews (a bi-monthly magazine), Executive Travels Nigeria (ETN), national dailies, printing of shirts, face caps, outdoor banners in airports, hotels, financial institutions and in other public places, billboards and branding of motor vehicles with destination products. Other marketing strategies include: Sales promotion, interpreted through the Calabar Festival, Obudu Ranch Mountain Race, Leboku New Yam Festival, organizing and promoting beauty pageant shows,

participation in trade exhibitions, conferences and workshops. The study presents the different tourism marketing communication methods (information sources) that had been used to publicise attractions in the study area (Figure 7).

The result shows that a total of eight (8) sources of information were sampled on 154 tourists to determine which of the marketing communication methods is available to them. From the multiple responses, it was observed that 104 tourists representing 17 percent identified that TV/Radio (broadcast media) was available to them. 100 respondents representing 16 percent confirmed the attractions through internets, while 92 tourists representing 15 percent knew about attractions in Cross River State during their attendance in a Festival/Event (Figure 7). These three marketing communication methods accounted for about 50 percent of information channel to tourists concerning destination attractions.

Also, 88 tourists representing 14 percent received information through recommendation/word-of-mouth from friends and relations, 72 visitors representing 12 percent source information from magazines/newspapers followed by 68 tourists representing 11 percent who got information from outdoor adverts (that is billboards, banners, posters and motor vehicles). More so, 54 tourists representing 9 percent read about the rich and exotic attractions in Cross River State from distributed handbills/flyers and guidebooks, while 44 tourists representing 7 percent sourced information from desk of Travel Agencies (Figure 7).



Source: Field Survey, 2014

Figure 7. Distribution of tourists by available sources of information to them about tourism attractions/events in the study area

Generally, the study observed that all the tourists contacted during the survey confirmed their source of information about the attraction sites in the destination area through one medium or the other. However, some medium of information dissemination have wider coverage than the others. This is the basis for television/radio, internet services, festival and event attendance, and family/friends recommendations accounted for the highest responses from the tourists. Other marketing communication methods such as handbills, newspapers/magazines, outdoors etc. were considered as being localized and costly to have access.

6. Conclusions

As an emerging economic activity in the face of dwindling oil prices in Nigeria, tourism has become a driving force of development especially in Cross River State. The awareness of the natural and cultural tourists' resources of the destination area is necessary to increase the population of tourists. Tourism marketing strategies are therefore essential tools to present or advertise the attraction sites of the study area to people outside Cross River State and Nigeria. The level of attractiveness of the tourism attraction sites in the study area was dependent on the effectiveness and quality of marketing strategies. Also, from the findings, the study discovered that the level of influence of tourism marketing strategies affect the tourists' choice of destination to visit. Therefore, since the increase of tourists' population has multiplier effect on the economic benefits, infrastructural development and livelihood improvement, more tourists' activities needs to be encouraged and promoted. Although, the study had confirmed that there were some marketing and promotional strategies already in place, it was pertinent to note that more needs to be done to ensure more awareness of the attractiveness and uniqueness of the destination. Consequently, the tourism industry was acknowledged to play a major role in the development of the State based on the increasing number of tourists' and tourists' activities observed in the area as most tourists' visited the destination to spend their leisure and holiday periods in recreational parks and historic sites within the State.

7. Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the study recommended that more persuasive and appealing marketing strategies that will have great influence on the tourists' choice of destination be put in place by making people within the State, Country and even outside Nigeria see reasons why they should visit the destination to be part of the tourism experience it offers and this can be made very effective through the print, electronic and social media. Also, government should reinforce its commitment towards tourism marketing by emphasizing more of the festivals and events as effective communication medium for marketing attractions in Cross River State.

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