

Marketing Attributes of Visitor Attractions and Tourists' Destination Loyalty Towards the Garden City of Port Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria

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Abstract: The study examined the effect of marketing attributes of Visitor Attractions (VAs) (activities and support services) on tourists' destination loyalty in the tourism industry of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research generated primary data from a sample of 100 tourists/visitors who patronised the VAs selected for the study using a well-structured questionnaire made up of nine items, with five demographic items. Inferential statistics was conducted with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to validate the four hypothesised relationships. The statistical results of the inferential statistical analysis revealed that support services had direct positive significant effect on tourists destination loyalty, while activities did not have significant effect on destination loyalty. The study concluded that support services constitute an important marketing attribute that determines the loyalty of tourists to a particular destination for touristic purposes. It is recommended that entrepreneurs managing VA should identify, evaluate and collaborate with tourism service providers providing support services at their sites based on their target market needs. Academic and practitioners' implications are provided.

Keywords: Visitor Attraction Market. Tourists. Support Services. Activities. Destination Loyalty.

Introduction

Visitors behavioural intentions towards tourism destinations is directly affected by the attractiveness of the Visitor attraction (VA) market in each destination. This is because the VAs' product spread is a significant determinant of the inflow of tourists/visitors into the destination in search of touristic experience. This explains why Ekeke (2009, 6) noted that, "product spread facilitates market diversity and distinctiveness" in the marketplace. In the context of VA marketing, the typology of activities at the VA will account for the visitors/tourists' revisit intentions to the destination where the VA is situated.

A typical visitor attraction sector is driven by a combination of activities physical assets, and support services and is service oriented (Brooker, 2005). Sonari-Otobo, and Ekeke, (2020,p .178) compliments the foregoing by noting that in "a service oriented industry, great emphasis is placed on customer satisfaction as a condition for survival".

The ability to achieve visitor/tourist satisfaction in the visitor attraction market demands that the marketing managers must "seek and have a better understanding of their respective target markets' perception of the quality of service deliverable by the service providers" (Sonari-Otobo, & Ekeke, 2020, p.178). The implication is that marketing managers must take cognisance of the different tourism market segments that patronise each visitor attraction, in terms of the recreational value and other values sought by tourists/visitors. The essence is to enhance the degree of revisit intentions towards the VAs and invariably the destination concerned.

In the same vein, knowing the factors enhancing the revisit intention of international visitors makes it possible for tourism destination managers to craft effective tourism marketing and management strategies that is capable of building up travel motivation to attract visitors. For such marketing strategies to achieve their pre-stated marketing goals, they are expected to enhance quality service delivery.

There are several studies covering several issues in VA marketing and management. Few examples include: visitor preferences (Vong & Ung (2012); Haukeland, 2010; Colombino & Nese, (2009) visitor segmentation (Farmaki (2013); Sutcliffe and Kim (2014), visitor and crowd behaviour (Ramkissoon, Weiler

& Smith, 2012; Arbuthnott, Sutter & Heidt 2014); Heung Tsang, N., & Cheng, 2009; Chen & Chen, 2010), visitor satisfaction and valuation (Krešić, Mikulić, & Miličević, 2013; Okello & Yerian, 2009; Ramkissoon, Weiler & Smith, 2012; Trinh & Ryan, 2013; Vong, 2013; Kim, 2012; Su & Hsu, 2013; Crilley, Weber & Taplin, 2012; Arabatzis & Grigoroudis, 2010; Ryan, Shuo & Huan, 2010; Dwyer, Butler & Carter, 2013),

From the foregoing, it could be seen that studies linking visitor attractions and the overall destination loyalty of tourists seems lacking. This current study is geared towards filling this gap by systematically exploring the influence of the marketing attributes of VAs on the loyalty of tourists towards Port Harcourt as a destination.

Theoretical Foundations

The Theory of Marketing Mix Elements: Marketing practitioners are aware that the product remains the core component of the marketing mix elements deployed as a competitive tool in the marketplace. In marketing literature the basic tactics required is to develop a combination of the marketing mix elements capable of meeting the needs of the target market with every other element ‘dancing around’ the product to make it acceptable in the marketplace. The aim is to help marketing organisations to achieve their marketing objectives. The combination of the elements includes everything needed to stimulate and control the demand of a product by the target market. The basic core components of the marketing mix elements is the legendary 4Ps; Product, Price, Promotion, and Place (Kotler, 2003). For services marketing, additional three Ps becomes desirable: People, Physical Evidence and Process. Kotler (2002) describes marketing mix as a set of marketing tools that a firm or individual requires to seek acceptance in the chosen market segment and to pursue its marketing objectives. On the other hand, The marketing mix elements is a combination of individual building blocks needed for a specific marketing goal. The two perspectives suggest that the marketing mix represents the marketers decision and planning aimed at producing the desired response from the target market. For example, the right product should be produced for the right person (customer), at the right price and delivered at the right place at the right time.

In the context of Visitor Attraction Marketing, the development of the visitor attraction product which forms part of the destination product is the foundation required to attract visitors to the destination. This implies that a good visitor attraction market that satisfies the visitors to the destination will be able to enhance destination loyalty on the part of the tourists. This is the trust of the current study.

Conceptual Review

Visitor attractions

A visitor attraction is any product or visitor service that is perceived to have recreational value which tourists would enjoy to visit or use. However to qualify as a visitor attraction, it should be accessible and/or findable. For example, it should be clearly located on maps with appropriate directions provided. Without an attraction, travelling at least touristically will not be feasible. That is why Kruezek (2012, p.1) regards it, “as a key component of the tourism market and an important element in the tourism system, for they stimulate interest in travelling to a destination and provide people visiting these sites with satisfaction” Swarbrook (1995) classified showed that attraction could be natural environments, special events, man-made structures that were not originally designed to attract visitors and man-made structures designed specifically for visitors like the Port Harcourt Pleasure Park in Rivers State Nigeria.

Support Services: Attraction sites constitute the core component of the tourism industry. In addition to the VA core product (such as a beach), support services required to make the stay of visitors in the attraction site attractive must be made available. Support services in a typical VA include car parking lot, visitor information points, visitor amenities, signage, tour guide, interpretation, lavatories, shopping malls, catering services, etc.

Activities: Each VA has a set of activities for the consumption of visitors. For example, beach tourism offers sun bathing, sightseeing, etc., while mountains offer hiking and skiing. Some other VAs offer festivals, dancing, swimming, cruising, climbing, etc.

Destination Loyalty

Destination Brand loyalty

In the traditional market environment, consumer loyalty to a particular brand is viewed in three perspectives: behavioural, attitudinal, and composite loyalty. The behavioural perspective views repeat purchases as a manifestation of brand/customer loyalty towards the brand (e.g., Ehrenberg, Uncles, & Goodhardt 2004). In the context of tourism marketing, the behavioural view, manifests in a tourist revisiting a holiday destination. Extant literature is of the view that behavioural approach tend to provide a more realistic picture of the competitive advantage of a brand in the market in relation to competing brands (O'Malley, 1998).

An attitudinal loyalty approach describes the personal attitude and emotions that contributes to showing loyalty to a destination. For example, the intention to revisit a visitor attraction/destination in the future is a manifestation of attitudinal loyalty.

The composite approach views loyalty to be a biased behavioural purchase practice resulting from a psychological process (Jacoby, 1971). This implies that the overall evaluation of a customer's loyalty to a brand demands a simultaneous consideration of attitudes and purchase behaviour (Dick & Basu, 1994).

Empirical Review

Marketing Attributes of VAs–Tourists/Visitors' Destination Loyalty

In Malaysia, Nadarajah, and Ramalu, (2017) examined the effects of service quality, perceived value and trust on destination loyalty and intention to revisit among international tourists. The quantitative study generated primary data from 385 international tourists in Penang, Malaysia, using purposive sampling. The hypotheses were tested with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results showed service quality, perceived value and trust individually had significant effects on destination loyalty and intention to revisit respectively in the context of festivals that were celebrated every year.

Thiumsak, and Ruangkanjanases, (2016) conducted a study in Bangkok to determine the key factors influencing visitors to revisit Bangkok in the future.

The quantitative research used the questionnaire to collect primary data from a total sample of 189 international tourists. The simple and multiple regression analysis were the statistical tools to test the hypotheses. The results indicated that the key factors, which are statistically significant in influencing or predicting the revisit intention of international tourists to Bangkok, included the perceived satisfaction on accommodation, shopping, and attitude of Thai people, the overall satisfaction, the perceived attractive on accommodation, shopping, restaurant & food, and attitude of Thai people, the tourists' motive of relaxation & recreation, and the overall destination image. These factors were also positively related to the revisit intention. The loyal tourists expressed their likelihood to revisit and recommend Bangkok to others is in likely.

do Valle, Silva, Mendes, and Guerreiro, (2006) examined the relationship between travel satisfaction and destination loyalty intention. The

research gathered primary data from 486 tourists visiting Arade, a Portuguese tourist destination. The statistical results from the structural equation modelling (SEM), showed that tourist satisfaction is a determinant of destination loyalty. The categorical principal components analysis (CATPCA) revealed the increased likelihood of future repeat visits and a keen willingness to recommend the destination to others.

Som, Shirazi, Marzuki, and Jusoh, (2011) assessed destination loyalty by investigating the influence of satisfaction and image factors on international tourists who had visited Penang. Statistical results showed that was a strong relationship between satisfaction, image and destination loyalty. Also, 'friendliness of people' was found to be significant for foreigners while 'cleanliness of environment' was not significant. Foreigners found to be satisfied with image factor were willing to recommend Penang as a destination to others.

In Spain, Ruiz, González, and Zamora, (2018) in the context of cruise tourism analyzed the different types of cruise passengers who landed at the port of Malaga and their perception of the city through destination image, satisfaction and destination loyalty. A cluster analysis identified the existence of four different groups of passengers whose opinions confirmed that attractions accounted for the tourists' satisfaction and destination image and also improved the destination image.

We therefore expect that:

H1: Visitor attraction marketing attributes has positive and significant relationship with tourists/visitors' destination loyalty in visitor attraction market in Port Harcourt

H1a: Activities has positive and significant effect on visitors' destination loyalty in visitor attraction market in Port Harcourt.

H1b: Activities has positive and significant effect on visitors' destination loyalty in the visitor attraction marketing in Port Harcourt

Methods and Material

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design which made use of questionnaire as the instrument for primary data collection technique. The questionnaire had two sections: respondents' demographic data (5 items) and the second section that had items on the marketing attributes of visitor attractions (support services and activities) and destination loyalty by means of a 5 point Likert type scale. A total of 12 items were derived from the literature review. The items for support services and activities were essentially developed for the study, while items for destination loyalty were adapted from Bazazo, Nasseef, Al-Zawaideh, Al-Zawaideh, and Al-Dhomidat, (2017). Purposeful sampling technique was adopted for the sampling process for obvious reasons.

The eighty-nine (89) questionnaires retrieved out of the total of 100

distributed were subjected to statistical analysis. They were collected in the month of August 2021 at the selected visitor attraction sites including the popular Port Harcourt Pleasure Park. Finally, Multiple Regression Analysis was used to generate statistically the influence of VA marketing attributes on destination loyalty.

Research Results

Reliability Analysis

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.984	.988	9

The reliability of the 9-item research instrument was ascertained with Cronbach Alpha. The value of the Cronbach Alpha is .988 based on standardized items as shown in Table 1. This value is above the threshold value of .7 as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The implication is that the measuring instrument is internally consistent and therefore helpful and applicable in measuring opinions of tourists on how loyal they were to the destination based on the marketing attributes of VAs.

Discriminant Validity

Table 2 Correlation Matrix^a

	Support Services	Activities	Destination Loyalty
Support Services	1.000	.919	.931
Activities	.919	1.000	.882
Destination Loyalty	.931	.882	1.000

a. Determinant = .020

Discriminant validity is defined by Hair Jr, Black, Babin, and Anderson, (2010, p.126) as the “the degree to which two conceptually similar concepts are distinct”. For this study, Table 2 above shows the correlation matrix used to determine the discriminant validity of the study instrument. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981) discriminant validity occurs if the diagonal elements are higher than all the off-diagonal elements in their columns and rows. This requirement is ascertained in Table 2, thus confirming the discriminant validity.

Sampling Adequacy

Table 3 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.762
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square 336.770 Df 3 Sig. .000

Table 3 is a representation of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) which was performed on 12 exploratory items of support services, activities and destination loyalty. The result shows that Bartlett’s test of sphericity is significant at $p < .000$ and KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .762 which is far greater than 0.5 which Kasser (as cited in Wong & Musa 2010, p. 3417) has been suggested as a minimum level.

Data Analyses and Hypotheses Testing

To ascertain the effect of Visitor Attraction Marketing Attributes on tourists’ destination loyalty multiple regression analysis was conducted.

Hypothesis 1 Visitor Marketing Attributes and Destination Loyalty

Multiple Regression Analysis for dimensions of Visitor Attraction Marketing Attributes and Destination Loyalty H2, H2a and H2b

Table 4-6 Multiple Regression analysis showing the effect of Visitor Attraction Marketing Attributes on tourists’ destination loyalty.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.933 ^a	.870	.867	.32687

a. Predictors: (Constant), Activities, Support Services

Table 4 shows that R is .933, and represents the simple correlation which is very high. R² value (“R” Square) is .870 and adjusted R square is .867. This implies that 87% of the variance in destination loyalty can be explained by the changes in independent variables of support services and activities which represent visitor attraction marketing attributes at the various visitor attraction sites. As a general rule, this model is considered as a ‘good fit’ as the linear regression model is able to explain above 60% (threshold) of variance in the dependent variable: destination loyalty (Moosa & Hassan, 2015).

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	61.755	2	30.878	288.993	.000 ^b
	Residual	9.189	86	.107		
	Total	70.944	88			

a. Dependent Variable: Destination Loyalty

b. Predictors: (Constant), Activities, Support Services

The *p* value .000 is <0.05 in the ANOVA Table 5 is an indication that the regression model statistically significantly predicts destination loyalty. This implies that the hypothesis is supported

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.350	.165		2.121	.037
	Support Services	.764	.097	.774	7.855	.000
	Activities	.152	.088	.170	1.725	.088

a. Dependent Variable: Destination Loyalty

Table 7 provides the multiple regression analysis for the contribution of the two dimensions of visitor attraction marketing attributes to destination loyalty used in the study and hypothesised as H2a and H2b respectively. The table shows that un-standardized beta (β) of support services and activities are: ($\beta = 0.764$), and ($\beta = 0.152$) respectively. This specifies that support services made the greatest contribution to the visitor attraction marketing attributes –destination loyalty model.

The result of the regression analysis shows that only support services ($\beta = 0.764$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$) provided by the visitor attraction sites in influencing the tourists’ destination loyalty made significant contribution to explaining the dependent variable, while activities $\beta = 0.152$, $p=0.088 > 0.05$) did not.

Therefore the model can be written as:

$$\text{Destination Loyalty} = 0.764(\text{SS}) + 0.152(\text{AT}) + .350$$

Testing of hypotheses 1, 2 and 3

Decision Rule

If $PV < 0.05$ = Hypothesis is supported
 If $PV > 0.05$ = Hypothesis is not supported

H1: The outcome of analysis show that Visitor attraction marketing attributes has positive and significant relationship with tourists/visitors’ destination loyalty in visitor attraction market in Port Harcourt ($R = 0.933$; $COD = 0.870$; $p=0.000 < 0.05$).

H1a: The outcome of analysis show that support services has positive and significant effect on visitors’ destination loyalty in visitor attraction market in Port Harcourt ($\beta = 0.764$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$).

H1b : The outcome of analysis show that activities has positive but no significant effect on visitors’ destination loyalty in the visitor attraction marketing in Port Harcourt ($\beta = 0.152$, $p=0.088 < 0.05$).

Discussion of Results

Hypothesis 1 posited a positive and significant relationship between VA marketing attributes in the context of support services and activities and destination loyalty towards VA market in Port Harcourt. With ($R = 0.933$; $COD = 0.870$; $p=0.000 < 0.05$) the relationship is positive and significant. This result is consistent with the prediction of H2 and is therefore supported. Thus, a higher level of support services and activities provided by VAs is associated with a high propensity by tourists to remain loyal to the destination where the VAs are situated. This finding is consistent with the finding of Nadarajah, and Ramalu, (2017) and do Vaile et al (2006). Further statistical analysis showed that for **H2a** support services had significant effect on destination loyalty towards VAs in Port Harcourt. This finding is inconsistent with Nadarajah, and Ramalu, (2017) and Som et al, (2011) For **H2b**, activities had no significant effect tourists/visitors destination loyalty. This finding is not consistent with Nadarajah, and Ramalu, (2017).

Conclusion

The empirical study investigated the relationship existing between VAs' marketing attributes in Port Harcourt and visitors' destination loyalty in the Visitor attraction market segment of the tourism market in the Garden City of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The empirical results supported one main hypothesis and one sub hypothesis while the remaining sub hypothesis was not supported.

A very important finding of the study is that only support services had significant effect on destination loyalty, unlike activities. This reason may not be far-fetched, as it could be ascribed to the fact that support services is a significant component of the overall tourism product. Therefore, its availability at the visitor attraction market will enhance the memorable touristic experience of the tourists.

It is therefore safe to conclude by stating that the outcome of the research indicates that support services constitute an important factor that determines the satisfaction level of tourists and by implication tourists' behavioural intentions such as being loyal to the destination. Purposeful and fruitful implications to both academicians and entrepreneurs (the tourism practitioners) could be provided from this empirical study.

Implications of the Study

On the academic side, this current study makes a significant contribution to the VA brand marketing management literature by systematically investigating the impact of marketing attributes of a VA brand on visitors' brand loyalty. Overall, the current study findings therefore provide tentative support to the proposition that the total product concept should be recognized as significant contributor to enhancing and sustaining positive tourists' behavioural intentions in terms of destination loyalty in Nigeria.

On the practitioners' side, the important influence of support services in the VA market is highlighted. This study therefore argues that visitor attraction marketers can benefit from the findings of the study and its implications. For instance, given the robust relationship between marketing attributes and revisit intention ($R=0.853$), and destination loyalty ($R=0.933$) visitor attraction marketers ought to pay attention to both all the perceived marketing attributes of a VA brand in order to build positive tourists' behavioural intentions. For example, by collaborating with tourism service providers who render the support services (such as security, Quick Service Restaurants (QSRs), car park services, security etc.), appropriate marketing strategies could be developed with the aim of enhancing the overall satisfaction of visitors. Eventually, the tourists will become loyal to the VA brand from a service brand that satisfies their needs. This calls for developing management capabilities in managing the tourism total product concept in a VA.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite how useful this current study is as discussed above, the research has its limitations. First and most significantly, the study can be improved upon by increasing the sample size and including other nationals other than using only Nigerians. Secondly, visitors utilising other visitor attractions in Nigeria should also be sampled.

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