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VISITOR ATTRACTION MARKETING ATTRIBUTES AND TOURISTS' BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS TOWARDS THE GARDEN CITY OF PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the effect of Visitor Attraction (VA) marketing attributes (support services and activities) and tourists' behavioural intentions in the tourism sector in 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 containing nine items, with five demographic items. To validate the four hypothesised relationships, inferential statistics were conducted with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The result of the inferential statistical analysis showed that the two VA marketing attributes individually had a direct positive significant effect on tourists'/customers behavioural intentions. The study concluded that support services constitute an important factor that determines customers' behavioural intentions such as revisiting the VAs for touristic purposes. It is recommended that entrepreneurs managing VA should identify, evaluate and provide support services at their sites based on their target market needs. Academic and practitioners' implications are provided.

KEY WORDS

Visitor Attractions. Support Services. Activities. Revisit Intentions



Introduction

Visitor attraction (VA) market is a significant determinant of the movement and direction of tourists in search of recreational value. This makes it one of the components of the tourism product which is expected to be available at the tourism destination region and serves as part of the attractiveness of the tourism destination region. Like other tourism components, the visitor attraction sector is service oriented and is driven by a combination of physical assets, support services and activities (Brooker, 2005). As noted by Sonari-Otobo, and Ekeke, (2020, p.178) “a service oriented industry, great emphasis is placed on customer satisfaction as a condition for survival”.

The quest to achieve customer satisfaction places a demand for managers of visitor attraction market to “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) in the visitor attraction market. This is very important because of the different market segments that patronise various visitor attractions, and their respective needs in terms of the recreational value, and other values sought by tourists/visitors.

Swarbrooke (2002) noted that destinations are made up of various kinds of attractions with appropriate support services wherein the attraction latter evolve into destinations with different kinds of services such as hotels, shopping malls, quick service restaurants, MICE, which complements the attraction activity. The author observed the conflict existing between different activities at attraction sites which calls for a marketing management system capable of reconciling the visitors/tourists needs with the quest for conservation.

Previous studies had examined various issues bothering on marketing and management of VAs. Few examples include: revenue generations for museums and Galleries sector via donations (Jaffry & Apostolakis, 2011), reasons why museums fail (Leiper & Park, 2011), appeals to new market segment through product diversification (Davidson & Sibley, 2011), factors affecting visitor satisfaction and authentic experiences in religious tourism sites (Rivera, 2009), parks management in terms of visitor movement monitoring (Orellana, Bregt, Ligtenberg & Wachowicz, 2012).

Within the context of tourism marketing, several authors studied factors influencing tourists/travellers’ behavioural intentions. For example, in Nigeria authors such as Adeniran, and Fadare, 2018; Oluyisola, George-Kayode, and Ajayi, 2019; examined the effect of airport service quality and physical environment on passengers’ behavioural intentions.

On the other hand, within the context of in flight service, several empirical studies (such as Oluyisola, George-Kayode, & Ajayi, 2019; Wong & Musa, 2011) have also studied the effect of service quality on passengers’ behavioural responses to airlines’ service delivery. Also, Nigerian authors investigated the effect of marketing attributes on behavioural intentions in the Nigerian tourism/hospitality industry: airport marketing attributes and passengers’ word of mouth communication (Sonari-Otobo, & Ekeke, 2020), online marketing attributes and hotel guests’ loyalty (Uboegbulam & Ekeke, 2021) hotel brand attributes and guests’ satisfaction (Ekeke, & Nzei, 2021)

To our knowledge, there is no empirical evidence to show how VAs’ marketing attributes affects visitors’ behavioral intentions in the tourism sector in Nigeria. The quest to close this apparent gap in literature is the focus of this current empirical study. In the light of the foregoing, the objective of the study was to investigate the effect of VA marketing attributes on tourists’ behavioural intentions in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Theoretical Foundations

The Theory of Marketing Mix Elements

Marketing practitioners are aware that to succeed in the competitive marketplace, the basic tactics they require is to develop a combination of the marketing mix elements capable of achieving its marketing objectives. The combination is expected to include everything needed to influence, stimulate or control the demand of a product by the target market. The basic components of the marketing mix elements is the legendary 4Ps of marketing which includes, Product, Promotion, Price and Place (Kotler, 2003).

Kotler (2003) describes marketing mix as a set of marketing tools that an individual or a firm requires to pursue its marketing objectives in the chosen target market. Marketing mix elements constitute a combination of individual building blocks needed for a specific goal. The foregoing 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 this current study, the VA product which includes support services and activities are expected to be made available for tourists/visitors at a reasonable price whenever they need them.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Visitor attractions

Visitor attractions constitute the core of tourism products and therefore considered “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” (Kruezek 2012, p.1). Swarbrook (1995) classified attraction into;

- Natural environments
- Structures that are man-made but not designed specifically for the attraction of visitors
- Structures that are man-made that are specifically designed to attract visitors like the Port Harcourt Pleasure Park in Rivers State Nigeria.
- Special events such as the FIFA organized World Cup tournament

The development of a visitor attraction market requires an integrated approach consisting of physical assets, attraction, support services and the visitor attraction brand (See Figure 1)

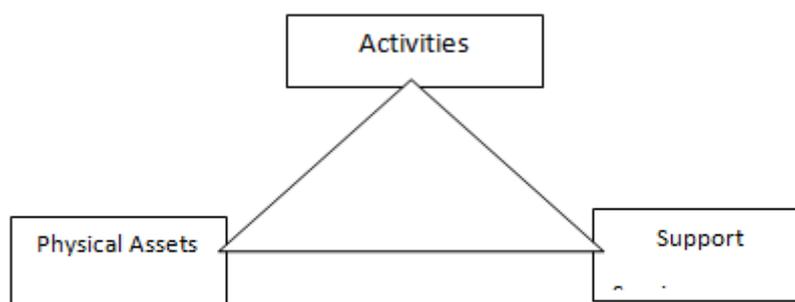


Figure 1: An integrated visitor attraction

Source: Booker (2005) Branding the Visitor Attraction Experience

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.

Physical Assets: This describes the physical evidence of the VA. Examples include infrastructure, buildings (atmospherics, fittings, spaces, etc.). For this current study, support services and activities were considered as the dimensions of visitor Attraction marketing attributes.

Customers' Behavioural Intentions

Customers' behavioural intentions represent the responses of consumers towards brands in the marketplace. It could be physical products and or services. However, the response to organisational marketing programmes of organisations could either be positive/favourable or negative/unfavourable (Zeithaml, et al, 1996; Ladhari, 2009). Extant marketing literature is of the view that behavioural intentions represent a signal whether a customer will like to remain loyal to a brand with or brand switch to a competing brand (Kang, James, & Alexandris, 2002; Alexandris, Zahariadis, Tsorbatzoudis, & Grouios, 2004). Cronin and Taylor (1992) and Zeithaml et al (1996) recommend that customer behavioural intentions is made up of four principal measures: purchase intention, word-of-mouth communications, price sensitivity and complaining behaviour. For this current study, revisit intention towards VAs is used as the latent measure for customers' behavioural intentions.

Empirical Review

VA Marketing Attributes –Tourists/Visitors' Behavioural Intentions

Uboebulam and Ekeke (2021) examined the relationship between online hotel marketing attributes (ease of use and security) and hotel guest loyalty (guest satisfaction and repeat patronage) in the hospitality industry in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research got primary data from 150 guests who were found lodging at the hotels studied, with a well-structured questionnaire containing 14 items, with four demographic items. The result of the inferential statistical analysis showed that ease of use and security had direct positive significant effect on guest satisfaction and repeat patronage respectively. .

Ekeke and Nzei (2021) examined the influence of hotel brand attributes (perceived service quality and brand personality) on hotel guest satisfaction in the hospitality industry in a university community in the garden city of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research generated data from 150 guests who were currently lodging at the five hotels studied, using a well-structured questionnaire containing 23 items, with five demographic items. The result of the inferential statistical analysis revealed that, the two brand attributes individually had direct positive significant effect on brand loyalty, while brand loyalty also had direct positive effect on brand advocacy.

Sonari-Otobo and Ekeke (2020) examined the effect of airport marketing attributes on word of mouth communication at the Sam Mbakwe Airport, Owerri, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research generated primary data from 150 domestic passengers found at the Sam Mbakwe Airport, Owerri during the study period in November, 2019, using a well structure questionnaire containing 14 items in addition to 4 demographic items. The inferential statistical analysis showed that airport terminal facilities and airport security and safety had significant effect on passengers' word of mouth communication.

Ali, Kim, Jun Li, and Jeon, (2016) developed a model to determine the relationship between customer experience and emotions in the context of Malaysian theme parks. The findings showed that physical setting, interaction with staff and interaction with customers had significant impact on customer delight and satisfaction.

We therefore expect that:

H1: Visitor attraction marketing attributes have positive and significant relationship with tourists/visitors' revisit intentions in visitor attraction market in Port Harcourt.

H1a: Support services have positive and significant effect on visitors' behavioural intentions in terms of revisit intentions in visitor attraction market in Port Harcourt.

H1b: Activities have positive and significant effect on visitors' behavioural intentions in terms of revisit intentions in the visitor attraction market in Port Harcourt.

Methods and Material

The descriptive survey research design made use of questionnaire as the major instrument for data collection technique. The questionnaire had two sections: respondents' demographic data (5 items) and the second section that had items on support services and activities. The last section was developed to measure the tourists/visitors

behavioural intentions towards VA marketing attributes 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 developed for the study, while items for customers' behavioural intentions (revisit intentions) were adapted from Jiang, Yang, and Jun (2012), and Ryu, Lee, and Kim, (2012). Convenience sampling technique was adopted for the selection of VA visitors sampled in the research. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed while 89 usable questionnaires were collected during August 2021. Finally, Multiple Regression Analysis was used to statistically determine the influence of VA marketing attributes on tourists/visitors' behavioural intentions.

Demographic Profile of Respondents: Analysis on gender revealed that 47 respondents (52.8%) were male while 42 respondents (47.2%) were female. This implies that male respondents were of the majority. The information on age brackets of the respondents shows that 51 respondents (57.3%) were within 25 – 34 years; 29 respondents (32.5%) were within 35–44 years; 7 respondents (7.8%) were within 45–54 years, while 2 respondents (2.4%) were greater than 55 years. Information on the respondents' level of education revealed the following: OND (27) (30.3%), B.Sc/HND (41) (46%), M.Sc. (16) (17.9%), Ph.D. (5) (5.8%). From the information it shows that respondents with HND/B.Sc were of the majority. On religious status of respondents, 62 respondents (69.6%) were Christians, 14 respondents (15.7%) were Muslims, while 13 respondents (14.7%) belonged to other religions. This information implies that majority of the respondents were Christians. On the frequency of visits of respondents, 69 respondents (77.5%) visited 3-6 months ago, 12 respondents (13.4%) visited 7-12 months ago, while 8 respondents (9.1%) visited 1-2 years ago. This information implies that majority of the respondents visited 3-6 months ago(that is from August 2021).

Research Results
Reliability Analysis

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.989	.990	12

The reliability of the 12-item research instrument was ascertained with Cronbach Alpha with a value of .989 as shown in Table 1. This value which is above the threshold value of .7 as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) showed that the measuring instrument is internally consistent. It was therefore considered helpful and applicable in the measuring of opinions of visitors to VAs on how the marketing attributes affects their behavioural intentions.

Discriminant Validity

Table 2 Correlation Matrix^a

	Support Services	Activities	Revisit Intention
Support Services	1.000	.919	.848
Activities	.919	1.000	.815

Revisit Intention	.848	.815	1.000
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a. Determinant = .042

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 discriminate validity of the study instrument. Fornell and Larker (1981) noted that 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.	.744
Approx. Chi-Square	272.797
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Df	3
Sig.	.000

Table 3 represents the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) performed on 12 exploratory items of VAs’ marketing attributes and customer/visitors behavioural intentions. The result shows that the Bartlett’s test of sphericity is significant at $p<.000$ and KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .744 which is far greater than 0.5 which Kasser (as cited in Wong & Musa 2010, p. 3417) suggested as a minimum level.

Data Analyses and Hypotheses Testing

To ascertain the effect of visitor attraction marketing attributes on tourists’ revisit intention. multiple regression analysis was conducted.

Hypothesis 1 Visitor Attraction Marketing Attributes and Revisit Intention

Multiple Regression Analysis for dimensions of Visitor Attraction Marketing Attributes and Revisit Intention H1, H1a and H1b

Table 4-6 Multiple regression analysis showing the influence of visitor attraction marketing attributes on tourists’ revisit intention.

Table 4 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.853 ^a	.728	.722	.47305

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

Table 4 shows that R is .853, and represents the simple correlation which is very high. R² value (“R” Square) is .728 and adjusted R square is .722. This implies that 72.8% of the variance in revisit intention can be explained by the changes in independent variables of visitor attraction marketing attributes represented by support services and activities 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: revisit intention (Moosa & Hassan, 2015)..

Table 5 ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	51.474	2	25.737	115.014	.000 ^b
Residual	19.245	86	.224		
Total	70.719	88			

a. Dependent Variable: Revisit Intention

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 revisit intention. This implies that the hypothesis (H1) is supported because the relationship between the VA marketing attributes and behavioural intentions in terms of revisit intentions is positive and significant.

Table 6 Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.541	.239		2.266	.026
Support Services	.628	.141	.638	4.463	.000
Activities	.204	.127	.229	1.603	.113

a. Dependent Variable: Revisit Intention

Table 6 provides the multiple regression analysis for the contribution of the two dimensions of visitor attraction marketing attributes used in the study and hypothesised as H1a and H1b respectively. The table shows that unstandardized beta (β) of support services and activities are: ($\beta = 0.638$), and ($\beta = 0.204$) respectively. This specifies that support services made the greatest contribution to the model.

The result of the regression analysis shows that only support services ($\beta = 0.638$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$) provided by the visitor attraction sites in influencing the tourists' revisit intentions made significant contribution to explaining the dependent variable, while activities $\beta = 0.229$, $p=0.113 > 0.05$) did not.

Therefore the model can be written as:

$$\text{Tourists' Revisit Intention} = 0.628(\text{SS}) + 0.204(\text{AT}) + .541$$

The model suggest that by enhancing support services as a dimension of marketing attributes of a visitor attraction, the empirical model can increase the level of tourists' intention to revisit the visitor attraction site for recreational tourism when other factors remain constant. Accordingly therefore, changes in support services of each visitor attraction brand can have the biggest influence on level of tourists' intention to revisit the visitor attraction site for recreational tourism as its beta co-efficient ($\beta = 0.628$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$) is the highest and significant.

Testing of hypotheses 1, 2 and 3

Decision Rule

If $PV < 0.05$ = Hypothesis is supported

$PV > 0.05$ = Hypothesis is not supported

H1: The outcome of analysis show that visitor attraction marketing attributes has positive and significant relationship with tourists/visitors' revisit intentions in visitor attraction market in Port Harcourt. ($R = 0.853$; $COD = 72.8\%$; $p=0.000 < 0.05$).

H1a: The outcome of analysis show that Support services has positive and significant effect on visitors' revisit intentions in visitor attraction market. Port Harcourt ($\beta = 0.628$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$).

H1b: The outcome of analysis show that activities has no positive and significant effect on visitors' revisit intentions in the visitor attraction market in Port Harcourt ($\beta = 0.204$, $p=0.113 < 0.05$).

Discussion of Results

Hypothesis 1 showed a positive and significant relationship between VA marketing attributes in the context of support services and activities and revisit intentions towards VA market in Port Harcourt. Therefore, H1 is supported. This finding is consistent with the findings of Sonari-Otobo and Ekeke (2020). Further statistical analysis showed that for H1a support services had significant effect on revisit intentions VAs in Port Harcourt. This finding is inconsistent with Ekeke and Nzei (2021). For H1b, activities had no significant effect tourists/visitors destination loyalty. This finding is inconsistent with the findings of Ekeke and Nzei (2021).

Conclusion

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

A very important finding of the study is the fact that further statistical analysis on the effect of the two dimensions of VA marketing attributes on visitors' behavioural intentions showed that only support services had significant effect on revisit intention unlike activities. The reason may not be far-fetched, as it could be ascribed to the fact that an average visitor to a visitor attraction will make use of several support services at the site where they are made available. It is also important to note that a modern VA such as Port Harcourt Pleasure Park ensures that support services are provided to the delight of visitors to enhance their overall pleasurable experiences. On the other hand, activities that are available at different VAs may not appeal to all the market segments that visit a particular VA.

It is therefore safe to conclude by stating that the outcome of the research indicates that support services constitute an important factor that determines customers' behavioural intentions such as revisiting the VA again for touristic purposes. It is very important for entrepreneurs managing VA to identify, evaluate and provide support services at their sites based on their target market needs. Purposeful and fruitful implications to both academicians and entrepreneurs (the tourism practitioners) could be provided from this empirical study.

Implications of the Study

The current study is an attempt to examine the influence of marketing attributes of VA as a predictor of visitors behavioural intentions in an African context. To a large extent, the findings of the study are expected to provide fruitful implications to both practitioners and academicians.

On the academic side, this current study makes a significant contribution to the VA brand marketing management literature by systematically exploring the impact of marketing attributes of a VA brand on visitors' behavioural intentions. Overall, the current study findings therefore provide tentative support to the proposition that support services should be recognized as significant antecedents for gaining and sustaining positive visitors' behavioural intentions in VAs in Nigeria.

On the practitioners' side, the important influence of SUPPORT services at a VA site is highlighted. This study therefore argue that visitor attraction marketers can benefit from the implications of these findings. For instance, given the robust relationship between marketing attributes and revisit intention ($R=0.853$), visitor attraction

marketers ought to pay attention to all the perceived marketing attributes of a VA brand in order to build positive tourists' behavioural intentions. For example, by improving the quality of Quick Service Restaurants (QSRs), car park services, security, car rental services, etc., through collaboration strategy, visitors are likely to be satisfied through the resulting experiential value. 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 participants in other visitor attractions in South-South geographical zone of Nigeria. Second, the current study was limited to Nigeria. For results comparison, subsequent researches should be carried out in other developing countries like Ghana and Kenya.

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