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ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM FEATURES' DEFICIENCIES AND TOURIST DEMAND OF DESTINATIONS IN THE NIGER DELTA, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Tourism is important for the growth and development of any economy, either national or regional, thus, it is essential to pay attention to the factors that motivate tourist demand for a destination. In the Niger Delta, policies on tourism are not well articulated and one of the consequences of this is that the recreational needs of both local and foreign tourists are not adequately met. In light of the foregoing, this study sought to investigate tourism features deficiencies and tourist level of demand for the destination in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. The Service Quality Theory (SQT) was the theoretical framework that guided the study. Twelve tourist destinations were chosen from six states that comprise south-south Niger Delta, inclusive of Ossosso and Igarra tourist destinations in Edo State, Rivotel hotel and Gordon Resort hotel in Delta State, Ox-Bow lake and peace park tourist destinations in Bayelsa State, Port Harcourt Zoo and Pleasure Park in Rivers state. Ibeno beach and Garden hotel Resort in Akwa-Ibom state, as well as the National Museum and Tinapa tourist destination in Cross River State. A total of 950 respondents across the 12 tourist destinations constituted the sample size for this study and primary data through the use of well-structured questionnaires were extracted from these respondents. The Crumbach Alpha method was used to measure the validity of the instrument, and result shows a strong positive reliability of the instrument. The data was analyzed first by using descriptive statistics while the multiple Regression technique was used to test the study hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed that there is significant difference among tourist destination in their deficiency of tourism features. The findings also revealed that features which were lacking in tourist destination but needed urgent provisions are variety of affordable food and drinks, horse and donkey ridding, standard zoo and museum, affordable and comfortable accommodation. Others include: student hostels, picnics, attractions and medical facilities. In light of these findings, the study recommended among others that tourist facilities, considered lacking should be adequately provided and tailored to cater for the diverse needs of tourists in destination centers in the Niger Delta.

Keywords: Assessment, tourism, deficiencies, demand, destinations, respondents

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INTRODUCTION

For a destination to be chosen for holiday, all the components of destination amalgam such as infrastructures, superstructures, amenities, access, retailing, accommodation, food and beverages and other ancillary services (which combined to bring about satisfying experience) should be readily available in tourism destinations. (Awaritefe & Ebunu, 2014). Tourism is the temporary movement by tourists to destinations outside the normal home and work place, the activities undertaken during the stay and the facilities created to carter for the needs of the tourists ("Matheson and wall, 2002). By the definition of tourism, it is obvious that a destination has to be attractive enough to attract tourists to visit the destination.

Thus, the quality of a destination attributes, puts the destination at a competitive edge over others in terms of its patronage by tourists. Furthermore(Goodall, 2020), maintained that for a destination to be chosen for holiday, the main task of tourism providers is to understand the characteristics of the products they plan, control and manage as well as understand the characteristics of various group of tourists which they intend to serve.

The lack of coordination and improper implementation of tourism policy in the Niger Delta have led to haphazard development of tourism. Additionally, many tourist destinations lack features and facilities that are most highly desired by tourists. Some tourist sites are without electricity, water, and sewage disposal systems. In most cases too, the facilities needed by tourists for recreation, leisure, entertainment, relaxation, accommodation, to mention but few, are either lacking, inadequate, dysfunctional, substandard or obsolete. The consequence of all this, is that the recreational needs of both local and foreign tourists are not adequately met leading to low patronage.

In a study carried out by, he opined that the lack of provision of adequate and functional features/facilities in a destination center is one of the major causes of low level of tourism development and low patronage of destination centers in third world countries. Goodall (2020), further explains that tourists show high level of correspondence between the problems or hindrances they encounter in specific destination and tourist destinations demanded. Saayman (2022), explained that a wide range of problems in tourist destinations such as non-availability and dysfunctionality of tourism features and facilities have inadvertently, negatively, affected the overall quality experience available to tourism patrons, culminating into low patronage of such destinations. Thus it is important to have knowledge of tourists needs and preferences to make adequate provision for them in destination centers. Tourism providers should make it a priority to examine and understand tourist needs because the provision of adequate and functional features and facilities in a destination gives it competitive edge over others and enhances the increase in the patronage of the destination.

Environmental Quality/Defficiency and Tourist Demand

An important aspect to a tourist choice of destination is the image of the destination which is dependent upon quality service supply. Thus, image will obviously affect an individual's preference and motivation towards tourism as it will provide a "pull" effect resulting in different demand schedules (Awaritefe, 2014). Saayman (2022), Lam and Hsu, (2021), Berli and Martins (2023) observed that images held of a destination are major determinants of visitation or destination selection, or a return holiday. If tourists are satisfied with their trips, a positive destination image will translate into their intention to revisit/or recommend the destination and vice versa. Petrick (2021) maintained that there should be consistency between image portrayed and the actual product quality offered at the destination.

Consequently, they opined that image of insecurity as well as poor service and lack of hospitality related attributes in any destination leads to negative image. According to Lam and Hsu (2021), the ability to attract tourist and spell success or failure for the destination depends

largely on tourists' motivation based on image that tourists have of the destination.

They maintain also that the destination attractiveness as well as good accommodation, Sunlust, clean beaches, motivate tourists to demand a destination. Allen Gonzalez et al (2022), in his study of destination image observed that destination image of infrastructures, amenities and facilities act as pulling force on tourists to travel. He observed that unavailability of tourism features hinders demand.

George (2024), Gallaza (2023) and Formica (2023) corroborating the findings of Mill and Morison (2020) maintained that there should be consistency between the image portrayed in promotional activities and the actual product quality offered at destinations. Buttler (2021), Cardoso, Araujo and Dias (2024), World Tourism Organization (2021), Al-Ababneh (2023) maintained that "There is no amount of advertising and public relation can fool the public for long, if the reality fail to match the image portrayed of a destination". They observed that nobody is ready to visit a country for tourism if for reason he or she dislikes the image. The role of destination images in the holiday selection process is succinctly presented by Goodall ((2020) and Lee (2024) who observed that unless a given destination figure amongst a would be tourist current set of mental image, it has no chance of being selected or chosen as a holiday base. World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2021) noted that nobody is ready to visit a country for tourism if for reason he/she dislikes its image.

Kozak (2022), Lam and Hsu (2021) maintained that the success or failure for the destination depend largely on tourist perception of the image of the tourism destination which is dependent upon the quality service supply. Furtherance to the explanation of the importance of image in destination selection, Law (2009) propounded a theory called AIDA. The Theory explained the role of image in destination selection. AIDA means: Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action.

The Theory suggests that before a tourist select a destination, he/she must be aware of the destination and have the interest and desire before action to visit the destination. This assertion is corroborated by Mill and Morrison (2020) who maintain that destination selections is dependent upon the potential tourists perception of the ability of the destination to satisfy the tourist needs for travelling. They maintained that the inability of destinations to supply the actual features needed by tourists could spell failure for the destination. Yeledour (2022), maintained that tourist satisfaction in a destination brings about positive image. However a lack of satisfaction resulting from a lack of certain facilities at the destination can have negative impact on the tourist motivation choice satisfaction relationship.

The existing studies have widely suggested that there is a relationship between destination features supply and tourist motivation. In order words, past studies maintained that consumer satisfaction is a function of expectation related to certain important attributes of a destination. Factors that attract tourist to demand destination include favourable environment , infrastructures, attractions, recreational activities, reception, hotels, resturants, picnics, events. Huang and Xiao (2019) maintained that the deficiency of these motivation variables can discourage tourist and potential tourist from visiting a destination.

Research problems.

Past research such as that by Awaritefe(2014),has proven that the most prominent motivation for choice of tourism destinations in third world countries are attractiveness of a destination, quality service, facilities, and amenities, as well as favourable locations and accessibility of Centers. All these

emerged as important factors in tourist's destination choices. That means their non availability or dysfunctionality at the destination center may result in boycott or no demand for the destination. Olsen and Cassee (2020), have identified six forces that influence choices of a destination. These are safety, security, accommodation, accessibility, transport and attractions. According to them, tourists have high preferences for places that have adequate and functional features/facilities as well as security for lives and properties. They further maintained that if adequate security measures are not put in place, can cause hinderances to tourism demand.

However, Studies on motivation of environmental quality as factor of tourist demand in the Niger Delta is fraught with abysmal negligence. This is in contrast to what is obtainable in the developed countries of the world. It is important to note that information on the influence of environmental attributes on tourist demand dates back to 1950s in the developed world, but in Niger Delta, there's a dearth of information on motivation of tourist demand for destination, and this may have resulted to haphazard development of tourism in the region. Furthermore, the lack of tourism planning and plan implementation by government and other stake holders could have also led to lack of or inadequate provisions of destination features most desired or needed by local and foreign tourists in tourist destinations in the Niger Delta.

In the light of the foregoing, this study investigated tourism features deficiencies with a view to identifying the features most highly needed by tourists but were not available in destinations in the Niger Delta.

The objective of study

The objective of this study is to:

Identify variations in Environmental features deficiencies in relation to tourist needs in various destinations in the Niger Delta.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis tested in this study is: Ho: There is no significant difference among tourists destinations in their deficiencies of tourism features in relation to tourist needs in destinations in the Niger Delta.

Theoretical Framework

The Theory which is used for this study is that developed by Parasuraman (1985). It is called the Service Quality Theory (SQT). This theory emphasizes on supply of good quality tourism products by tourism providers in order to arouse tourist patronage of a destination. According to Parasuraman(1985), tourists show correspondence between quality of tourism products provided at destination centers and their level of patronage of that destination. This Theory of supply influencing demand is the framework for determining the level of tourist patronage which is a function of supply quality. In other words, the ability or inability of tourism operators to adequately conceptualize the needs of tourists of various groups and translate them into quality products supply will determine the level of patronage of a tourist destination.

It is therefore possible to assume that since tourists' needs are changing, intermediaries should also adapt their strategies and that the offer would consequently take this evolution into consideration in order to arouse tourists' patronage of destinations (World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 2023). In the Niger Delta where the tourism industry is at the embryonic stage, the service quality theory provides basic framework for tourism development in the context of adequate provision of tourist needs in tourist destinations. In the late 1970s, the British Airways suffered from a considerably slow growth rate, but in 1983 the company was reorganized in the context of the service quality theory which recognized Customer's needs and which eventually led to the company's rapid growth thereafter.

METHODS

This study is designed to use questionnaire to obtain data from 950 respondents who spread across the 12 destination centers. Data for this study were obtained from questionnaire survey. The study required data to analyze the destination features deficiencies in relation to tourist's needs in various destinations in the Niger Delta. A pre-study was carried out to obtain preliminary information on the location of the tourism destinations for study in the Niger Delta. Thereafter, a questionnaire was drawn. The questionnaire focused on tourists' general assessment of the destinations they have visited

or are currently visiting, such as things liked and disliked, problems encountered, features/facilities that are available and not available in various tourist destinations, and suggestions for improvement of destinations visited.

Validity of Instrument.

The research instrument was validated by the expert judgment of the Head of Department of Geography two lecturers in the Department of Geography and Environmental Management, University of Delta, Agbor.

Reliability of Instrument.

To test the reliability of the research instrument, thirty (30) copies of questionnaires were administered on two different occasions. Fifteen (15) questionnaires were administered to respondents on each occasion three weeks apart. The result was subjected to Crumbach Alpha method which revealed Alpha value of 0.89. The

Alpha value of 0.89 is an indication of high positive reliability. This means that the questionnaire is reliable.

Sampling Method

Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday of each week for two months were used for questionnaire survey of tourists. The respondents were intercepted for questionnaire surveys on arrival at the destination centers. The questionnaires were delivered by hand and the respondents were allowed adequate time to fill the questionnaires and return them before leaving the destination centers. A total of 1060 questionnaires were administered to tourists in the study area. Out of this figure, 950 questionnaires were retrieved from respondents, while 110 were not retrieved, (see Table 1)

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaires in the study Area

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The 6 Tourism Regions	The 12 Tourist Destination	Number of Questionnaires Distributed	Number of Questionnaire Returned	Number of Questionnaire not Returned	Percentage of Questionnaire Returned	Percentage of Questionnaires Returned
Ossosso/Igarra Tourism	Ossosso Tourist Centre, Ossosso	86	75	11	87.20	12.79
	Igarra Tourist Destination, Igarra	74	70	4	94.59	5.40
Region River Ethiope Abraka Tourism Region	Rivotel Hotel and Golf Resort Hotel	102	92	10	89.19	9.80
	Gordons Resort Hotel and Mccarthy Beach, Abraka	110	88	22	80	20
Yenagoa Tourism Region	OxBow Lake Tourist Center Yenagoa	76	71	5	93.42	6.57
	Peace Park Tourist Destination, Yenagoa	66	62	4	93.93	6.06
Port Harcourt Tourism Region	Port Harcourt Zoo, Port Harcourt	80	75	5	93.75	6.25
	Port Harcourt Pleasure, Port Harcourt	112	101	11	91.07	9.82

Eket Toursim Region	Ibeno Beach, Ibeno, Eket	84	73	11	86.90	13.09
	Grace Garden Hotel and Resort, Eket	96	88	8	91.66	8.33
Calabar Tourism Region	National Museum Calabar	70	63	7	90	10
	Tinapa Tourist Centre Calabar	104	92	12	88.46	11.53
	Total	1060	950	110	91.56	7.44

Deficient but needed Tourism Features in Tourist Destinations.

The objectives of this study is to identify variations in tourism features deficiencies in various destinations in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. In other words, the purpose of this study is to identify tourism features needed by tourists but were not available in the destinations visited. A total of 27 features were identified by tourists as deficient or lacking in various destinations in Niger Delta.The responses of tourists regarding the features that they desired but were not available or deficient at the tourist destinations as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Deficient But Needed Tourism Features in Tourist Destinations

	Ossosso/Igarra Tourism Region, Edo State		River Ethiope/Abraka Tourism Region, Delta State		Yenagoa Tourism Region, Bayelsa State		Port Harcourt Tourism Region, Rivers State		Eket Region, Akwa-Ibom State		Calabar Tourism Region, Cross River State		
Deficient But Needed Destination Features	Ossosso Tourist Destination, Ossosso	Igarra Tourist Center, Igarra	Rivotel Hotel and Golf Resort, Abraka	Gordons Resort Hotel and Mccarthy Beach, Abraka	Ox-Bow Lake Tourist Center, Yenagoa	Peace-park Resort Destination, Yenagoa	Port Harcourt Zoo, Port Harcourt	PortHarcourt Pleasure Park, Port Harcourt	Ibeno Beach, Eket	Grace Garden Hotel and Resort, Eket	National Museum Calabar	Tinapa Resort Destination, Calabar	Total
Constant electricity	5 (6.66)	7 (10)	10 (10.86)			10 (16.12)							32 (3.36)
Constant water supply										4 (5.47)			4
Cheap accommodation			6 (6.52)	10 (11.36)	7 (9.85)	6 (9.67)	11 (14.66)	14 (13.86)		10 (11.36)		14 (15.21)	78 (8.21)
Medical facilities	7 (9.33)	6 (8.57)	6 (6.52)	12 (13.63)		7 (11.29)	9 (12)	10 (13.69)					57 (6)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total
Low cost of transport											5 (5.68)	7 (11.11)		12 (1.26)
Unpolluted Swimming Pool/beach	7 (9.33)	6 (8.57)												13 (1.36)
Zoo	4 (5.33)	7 (10)	15 (16.30)	12 (13.63)	6 (8.45)	9 (14.51)	10 (13.33)	14 (13.86)				11 (11.95)		78 (13)
Museum features	4 (5.33)	6 (8.57)	12 (13.04)	13 (14.77)	6 (8.45)	7 (11.29)	10 (13.33)	10 (9.90)				12 (13.04)		80 (8.4)
Good toilet cystern		4 (5.71)												10 (1.05)
Supermarket/mall	4 (5.33)	5 (7.14)												9
Communication network		4 (5.71)												4
Students Hostel	6 (8)	7 (10)	15 (16.30)		7 (9.85)		12 (16)	11 (10.89)					14 (15.21)	72 (7.57)
Facilities for games/sports					9 (10.22)		9 (12)	4 (3.96)				7 (11.11)		29 (3.05)
Facilities for indoor and outdoor games	6 8				8 (12.92)				10 (13.69)	14 (15.90)		14 (22.22)		50 (5.26)
Amusement park/Attractions/Picnics	6 8	5 (7.14)		10 (11.36)	10 (11.36)				10 (13.69)	12 (13.63)		10 (15.87)		63 (6.63)
Horse/Donkey riding	7 (9.33)			15 (17.04)	7 (9.85)	9 (14.51)		16 (15.84)	8 (10.95)	9 (10.22)		7 (11.11)	15 (16.30)	93 (9.78)
Boat/canoe racing														23 (12.42)
Cinema viewing	6 (8)		9 (9.78)						15 (17.04)					30 (3.15)
Facilities for clubbing/relaxation/entertain	6(8)	7 (10)			9 (10.22)				18 (24.65)			8 (9.09)		48 (15.05)

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Feature													
ment/parties													
Adequate Security	4 (5.33)							4 (3.96)					8
Variety of affordable food			8 (8.69)	8 (9.09)	6 (8..45)	6 (9.67)	14 (18.66)	13 (12.87)	8 (10.95)	23 (26.13)	10 (15.87)	18 (19.56)	114 (12)
Religion Center			2 (2.17)	2 (2.17)					7 (9.58)				11 (1.15)
Prompt services	3 (4)	3(4.28)											6
Quiet/clean environment					4 (5.63)			9 (8.91)				8 (8.69)	21 (2.21)
Free Women		3 (4.28)											3
Business transaction			5 (5.43)										5
Facilities for video shooting			4 (4.34)	6 (6.81)									10 (1.05)
Total	75 (100)	70 (100)	92 (100)	88 (100)	71 (100)	62 (100)	75 (100)	101 (100)	73 (100)	88 (100)	63 (100)	92 (100)	950 (100)

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 2 above shows the tourism features that were needed by tourists but were deficient or lacking in the tourist destinations visited by tourists. This issue according to the tourist, posed as problems and needed urgent solutions. The deficient but needed destination features in the various destination centers are presented and discussed below.

1. Ossosso Tourist Destination, Ossosso

In Ossosso Tourist Destination, Ossosso, tourists expressed great desire for: the provision of swimming pool (9.33%), medical facilities (9.33%), horse and donkey riding (9.33%), students hostel (8%) as well as facilities for indoor and outdoor games (8%). Tourists in this destination center, also crave for the provision of amusement park, picnics and attractions (8%), facilities for relaxation, entertainment parties and clubbing (8%), cinema viewing (8%) and constant electricity (6.66%). Others include the provision of zoo (5.33%), adequate security (5.33) and museum (5.33%).

2. Igarra Tourist Center

Table 2 reveals that the destination features which are deficient and requiring provision in Igarra tourist center are: constant

electricity (10%), zoo (10%), student hostel (10%) and facilities for clubbing, entertainment, relaxation and party (10%). These destination features tie equal weight in terms of their urgent need in this tourist destination. Other items that are of priority need in this tourist center and which also tie weight include medical facilities (8.57%), swimming pool (8.57%) and museum (8.57%). Next are amusement park and picnic (7.14%) and good toilet cistern (5.71%).

3. Rivotel Hotel and Golf Resort, Abraka

In Rivotel Hotel, tourists crave the need for the provision of zoo (16.30), Students hostel (16.30%), museum (13.04%) and constant electricity (10.86%). Other features requiring urgent provision in this destination center include: cinema viewing (9.78%), variety of affordable food and drinks (8.69%). Cheap accommodation (6.52%) as well as medical facilities (6.52%).

4. Gordons Resort Hotel and McCarthy Beach, Abraka

In this destination center, tourist indicated as their priority, the need for the provision of Horse and donkey riding (17.04%), museum (14.77%), zoo (13.63%) as well as medical facilities (13.63%) both the zoo and medical facilities tie equal weight in terms of their priority needs in Gordons Resort Hotel, Abraka. Other perceived deficiencies requiring provisions are cheap accommodation (11.36%) and variety of affordable food and drinks (9.09%).

5. Ox-Bow Lake Tourist Destination, Yenagoa

In Table 2, the details shows that 11.36% of the tourists desire amusement park, picnics and attractions. Other perceived deficiencies are facilities for games and sports (10.22%), facilities for relaxation, entertainment, parties (10.22%), both of which tie equal weight in terms of urgent priority needs and provision. Other destination features which also tie equal weight in terms of urgent provision in this center are horse and donkey riding (9.85%), students hostel (9.85%), cheap accommodation (9.85%), zoo (8.45%), museum (8.45%) and affordable food and drink (8.45%).

6. Peace Park Destination Center

Tourists in Peace Park resort destination, Yenagoa, indicated the need for the provision of constant electricity (16.12%), zoo (14.51%), horse and donkey riding (14.5%).

Furthermore, the details in Table 4.11 also shows that tourists features requiring provisions in this destination center include: museum (11.29%), facilities for indoor and outdoor games (12.92%), accommodation (9.67).

7. Port Harcourt zoo, Port Harcourt

Table 2 shows that variety of affordable food and drinks (18.66%), students hostel (16%) and cheap accommodation (14.66%) rank highest as the most deficient but needed features in Port

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Harcourt zoo destination center, followed by the provision of many species of animals and birds in the zoo (13.33%). This item tie equal weight with the provision of museum (13.33%) in terms of priority needs in this destination center. Next is medical facilities (12%) and facilities for games and sports (12%).

8. Port Harcourt Pleasure Park, Port Harcourt

The features desired most by tourists in Pleasure Park tourist destination are horse/donkey riding (15.84%), zoo (13.86%), cheap accommodation (13.86) as well as variety of affordable food and drinks (12.87%). Other priority needs of tourists in this center include: students hostel (10.89%), clean and quiet environment (8.91%), museum (9.90%) and adequate security (3.96%).

9. Ibeno Beach Ibeno, Eket

The following facilities were indicated by tourists as being deficient or lacking in Ibeno beach, Eket, of which tourist crave their urgent provisions. These facilities are: facilities for relaxation, entertainment, parties (24.65%), followed by medical facilities (13.69%), variety of affordable food and drinks (10.95%) as well as facilities for indoor and outdoor games (10.95%). Others include horse/donkey riding (10.95%), religious center (9.58%) and constant water supply (5.47%).

10. Grace Garden Hotel and Resort, Eket

Here in Grace Garden Hotel, the most desire facilities by tourists according to their priority needs are: variety of affordable food and drinks (26.13%), cinema viewing (17.04%), facilities for indoor and outdoor games (15.90%). Others include amusement park, picnics and attractions (13.63%), cheap accommodation (11.36%), horse/donkey riding (10.22%) and low cost of transportation (5.68%).

11. National Museum, Calabar

In this destination center, tourists indicates their priority, the need for the provision for both indoor and outdoor games (22.22%). variety of affordable food and drinks (15.87%), amusement park, picnics and attractions (15.87%), both of which tie weight in terms of priority needs of the tourists in national museum, Calabar. Other deficient but needed features or facilities in this destination center include: facilities for relaxation, entertainment, reception (9.09%), low cost of transportation (11.11%) and facilities for games and sports (11.11%).

12. Tinapa Tourist Resort, Calabar

The details in Table 2, shows that 19.56% of the tourists in Tinapa resort destination desire the provision of variety of affordable food and drinks. Other perceived deficiencies include horse/donkey riding (16.30%), students hostel (15.21%), cheap accommodation (15.21%), zoo (11.95%) museum (13.04%) and quiet clean environment (8.69%).

Statistical Test for Hypothesis of the Study

Based of the findings presented above, we ought to test hypothesis of the study which states: Ho that there is no significant difference amongst tourist destinations in their deficiencies of tourism features. The alternative hypothesis (HI) states that: there is significant difference amongst tourist destinations in their deficiencies of tourism features.To test the hypothesis of this study, the multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether or not significant difference exist among tourists destinations in their deficiencies of tourism features.To test the hypothesis of this study, the multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether or not significant difference exist among tourists destinations in their deficiencies of tourism features. This was done by identifying the deficiencies in tourist destinations. To ascertain whether this observation could have occurred by chance, the Multiple regression analysis was carried out. The results from the analysis shows that: significant difference exist amongst tourist destinations in their deficiencies of tourism features. We therefore accept the alternative hypothesis (HI) and reject the null hypothesis (Ho).

The multiple regression result revealed variations in destination features deficiencies in tourism centres as presented below;

1. Ossosso B-117, t=92.7, p=0.00<0.05

2. Igarra ß=.111, 1-80.388, p=0.01<0.05

3. Rivotel Hotel B-98, t=79.728, p=0.00<0.05

4. Gordons Resort-B-.391, 1-9.962, p=0.00<0.05

5. Oxbow Lake B=.125, t-85.203, p=0.00<0.05

6. PHC Zoo-B-.105, 1132.304, p=0.00<0.05

7. PHC Pleasure Park-B-.123, t-79.96, p=0.00<0.05

8. Ibeno Beach-B-.119,1-110.82, p = 0.00<0.05

9. Grace Garden-B-.116, t-93.717, p=0.00<0.05

10. National Museum-8=.118, 1-72.632, p=0.00<0.05

11. Peace Park-B-.108,1-119.091, p=0.00<0.05

12. Tinapa Calabar-B-.118, 1-85.220, p=0.00<0.05 mutiple

The multiple regression results depict that there is significant difference among the tourist destinations in their deficiencies of tourist features. This suggestive that destination centres with better and attractive features are visited by tourists while those deficient in destination features are less visited. The results from the analysis shows that significant difference exists amongst tourists' destinations in their deficiencies of tourism features. We therefore accept the alternative hypothesis (H1) and reject the null hypothesis (Ho): that there is no significant

difference among tourists' destinations in the deficiencies of tourism features.

Findings

Table 2 detail reveals the destination features/activities which were lacking or deficient but needed urgent provisions in the various tourist destinations in the Niger Delta and in accordance with their level of indications by tourists are presented below:In Ossosso tourist destination the features requiring urgent provisions are swimming pool (9.33%), medical facilities (9.33%), Horse and Donkey riding (9.33%) and students hostel (8%), facilities for indoors and outdoor games (8%) as well as facilities for clubbing, relaxation, entertainment (8%). In Igarra tourist destination, the features desired most by tourists include: constant electricity (10%), Zoo (10%), students hostels (10%) and facilities for relaxation, clubbing, parties (10%). Tourists in Rivotel hotel and Golf resort needed the provision of Zoo (16.30%) student hostel (16.30%), and museum (13.04%). Tourists in Gordons Resort Hotel and McCarthy beach required Horse/Donkey riding (17.04%), museum (14.77%), Zoo (13.63%).Tourist to Ox-Bow lake destination center need the provision of amusement park, picnics, attractions (11.36%) facilities for games/sports (10.22%) and also students hostel (9.58%).

In peace park tourist destinations tourist required constant electricity (16.12%), zoo (14.51%), horse/donkey riding (14.58%) and museum (11.29%). In Port Harcourt zoo, tourist needed variety of affordable foods/drink/s (18.66%), students hostel (16%) and cheap accommodation (14.66%). In Pleasure Park, Port Harcourt, tourist were desirous of horse/donkey riding (15.84%) and cheap accommodation (13.86%). Tourist in Ibeno beach, Ibeno needed the provision of facilities for relaxation, entertainment, reception (24.65%), medical facilities and affordable food and drinks (10.95%) as well as facilities for indoor and outdoor games (10.95%).

Tourists in Grace Garden Hotel and Resort desired affordable food and drinks (26.13%). cinema viewing (17.04%), facilities for indoor and outdoor games (15.90%), amusement park/attractions/picnics (13.63%), cheap accommodation (11.36%), horse/donkey riding (10.22%). The priority desires of tourist who patronized National Museum were facilities for indoor and outdoor games (22.22%), variety of affordable food and drinks (15.87%) as well as amusement park, picnics, attractions (15.87%). The details in Table 11 reveals that the tourist in Tinapa tourist resort desire the provision of variety of affordable food and drinks (19.56%). other perceived deficiencies in this tourist center are horse/donkey riding (16.30%), students hostel (15.21%) cheap accommodation (15.21%), museum (13.04%) and zoo (11.95%).

Conclusion

A major issue worthy of mention from the study is the recognition of the challenges faced by destinations in meeting tourist expectations. The discrepancies between promotional images and the actual

experiences offered at destinations often lead to dissatisfaction, which can have long-term implications for the sustainability of tourism in the region. Addressing these gaps requires a concerted effort from stakeholders to improve infrastructure, enhance service quality, and ensure that the reality of the destination aligns with its marketed image. This is particularly crucial in an era where tourists are increasingly discerning and have access to a wealth of information that shapes their expectations.

Looking ahead, the findings of this study have significant implications for the future of tourism development in the Niger Delta and similar regions. As the global tourism industry continues to evolve, destinations must adapt to changing traveler preferences and emerging trends. There is a growing demand for authentic, immersive experiences that allow tourists to connect with local cultures and environments. This presents an opportunity for the Niger Delta to leverage its unique natural and cultural assets to attract a broader audience. However, achieving this will require strategic planning, investment in sustainable tourism practices, and collaboration between government, private sector, and local communities.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of continuous research and data-driven decision-making in tourism management. By understanding the motivations and preferences of different tourist segments, destinations can tailor their offerings to meet specific needs, thereby enhancing visitor satisfaction and fostering repeat visitation. As the region moves forward, it will be essential to prioritize

innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability to ensure that tourism development benefits both visitors and local communities. In doing so, the Niger Delta can position itself as a competitive and resilient tourism destination in the years to come.

Recommendations

The Niger Delta region, with its rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and diverse tourist tractions, has immense potential to become a leading tourism destination in Nigeria. However, for it to fully realize this potential, practical and achievable measures must be implemented to address existing challenges and enhance the overall tourist experience. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to guide tourism development in the region.

First, addressing infrastructure deficiencies is critical to improving the tourist experience. Tourists highlighted issues such as inconsistent electricity and water supply, inadequate medical facilities, and limited affordable accommodation. To resolve these challenges, destination managers should ensure reliable utilities by investing in standby generators, solar power systems, and water treatment facilities. Affordable lodging options, such as hostels and budget-friendly hotels, should be developed to cater to the needs of tourists of low-income tourists. Furthermore, well-equipped medical centers should be established in tourist destinations to address

emergencies and ensure the safety and well-being of visitors.

Second, the provision and upgrading of key tourist features and facilities should be prioritized. Sports activities, recreational facilities, and cultural attractions were identified as significant motivators for tourists. For instance, expanding and modernizing sports facilities such as basketball courts, volleyball pitches, and badminton courts will cater to the preferences of tourists. Similarly, enhancing cultural and historical attractions, such as museums, and historical sites, will appeal to tourists of different segments. Additionally, investing in relaxation and entertainment amenities, including amusement parks, picnic spots, and nightlife options, will attract a broader range of tourists.

Third, effective promotion and marketing strategies are essential to attract both domestic and international tourists. Targeted campaigns using radio, television, social media, and print media should highlight the unique features of each destination, emphasizing their appeal to specific tourist segments. Additionally, promotional materials should accurately reflect the actual features and experiences available at cach destination to avoid discrepancies between expectations and reality. Improving transportation networks and providing clear directions to tourist sites will also enhance accessibility and convenience for visitors.

Fourth, the development of wildlife and adventure tourism presents a significant opportunity for the region. Tourists expressed a strong desire for game reserves and wildlife attractions, which are currently underdeveloped. Establishing standard game reserves and wildlife parks will attract tourists interested in nature and adventure tourism.

Fifth, given that the majority of tourists are Nigerians, efforts should be concentrated on promoting domestic tourism. Local campaigns that highlight the cultural, historical, and recreational attractions of the Niger Delta will encourage Nigerian citizens to explore their own country. Engaging local communities in tourism activities will create a sense of ownership and ensure sustainable development.

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