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Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development: The Review of Marketing Implications in Nigerian Tourism and Hospitality

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Abstract

In the past few decades tourism industry has been faced with the challenges of destination images. Much emphasis has been placed on destination positive image due to the important role it places in tourist behaviour towards choosing a destination for holiday. This study aims to investigate the perceptions of tourists about Nigeria as a leisure tourism destination. The outcome of the study shows that Nigeria has a lot of attractions that can support successful leisure tourism, but lack a strong and positive image that can act as a pull factor for its tourism demand.

Keywords: Marketing, tourism, destination, development

Introduction

Due to the unprecedented growth in the tourism industry in the last five decades as literatures reveal, “image of a destination has become a crucial determining factor of a destination development and success”. According to chan & Tsai quoted in Lepp et al (2011), ‘image plays a major role in travel decisions and choice of destination’. As a result, for a destination to be successful must project an attractive and positive image.

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

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

Thus, the research questions asked in relation to the set objectives are as follow:

1. Is there any difference in the image formed by those who have visited Nigeria and those who have not visited?
2. Do potential tourists and those who have visited a destination view the issue of safety and security differently?
3. Is there any difference in image formed through primary and secondary sources of information?
4. Will health and hygiene issues in Nigeria prevent tourists from visiting Nigeria for a holiday?

According to Echtner & Richie (2003) “tourism industry is becoming more dependent on image as there are more and more areas of the world being developed for tourism, making more choices available for tourists to choose from”. Hence, it is very important for an “emerging tourism destination” like Nigeria (Esu & Ebitu, 2010) to key into this development by promoting good images that can attract tourists at international level.

Rationale

The study of destination image has been a subject of interest which has received much attention from academic researchers in the field of tourism (Etchner and Richie, 2003). According to Prayag (2010), “the proliferation of research works carried out on this subject is due to the importance of the role it plays in the process of tourist decision making when choosing a holiday destination. Destination image is also seen as a ‘determinant’ of a destination success and development (Prayag, 2010). However, among the numerous studies carries out on destination image very few and limited cases are related to Nigeria destination, although there are more works based on Africa as a continent. Specifically, Awaritiefie in 2004 and 2005 respectively carried out a research on Nigeria in this subject and addressed the area of ‘destination image difference between culture and nature destination visitors, and secondly, motivation and other considerations in tourist destination choice’. Esu and Ebitu (2010) also carried out a study on promoting emerging tourism destination though not directly on Nigeria but on a particular region (Calabar) in Nigeria. However, the issue of tourist

perceptions of Nigeria as a leisure tourism destination has not been addressed directly. As a result of this development this study is aim to investigate what image potential tourists associate with Nigeria as a leisure tourism destination.

According to Esu and Ebitu (2010) “Nigeria’s tourism is beginning to emerge” and with much emphasis on destination images the Nigeria destination is likely to face the challenges of competing with other destinations for international tourists. Destination image has now become a major consideration by international tourists when making decision of where to spend their holiday, and such has been recognised as significant determinant of destinations success and development. Hence, the need to project a positive and attractive image in order to survive the stiff competition for international tourists becomes imperative. Echtner and Richie, (2003) argued that “the growth of tourism globally has made available more choices of tourism destinations for tourists”. As a result “tourism marketers are now faced with influencing consumers’ decisions making in an increasingly complex and competitive global market place”. This development is a big challenge for emerging tourism destination like Nigeria if the country has to survive the competitive global market as the need to ‘favourably’ and ‘strategically’ position the destination in the mind of tourists becomes imperative.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate potential tourists’ perceptions of Nigeria as a leisure tourism destination with the hope of generating useful information that could be handy for the promotion and marketing of Nigeria tourism destination. Several studies have shown that destination images are very significant as they influence tourists’ behaviour, and there is a general consensus that “destinations with strong, positive images are more likely to be considered and chosen in travel decision process” (Goodrich, 1978; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989). Nigeria, being an Africa country shares the general perceptions of international tourists about Africa tourism destination categorised to have ‘weak and negative’ images (Nuade & Saayman, 2004).

Most importantly, due to lack and limited research on tourists’ perceptions of Nigeria as leisure tourism destination the research would be particularly useful to the Nigeria tourism marketing institution. By carrying out this study new knowledge is being added to the body of academic literature of tourism research which could serve as a platform for future studies. The information that would be generated could be also useful to some Africa destinations that have similar challenges like Nigeria. It is possible to propose this framework for tourism destination management.

Figure 1. Sustainable tourism destination management framework



Source: <http://www.sustainabletourisonline.com/destinations-and-communities/implementation/ongoing-management/tourism-success-factors> , accessed on 7/28/2016

Studies on destination image have often followed either qualitative or quantitative approach. However, Echtner & Richie (1993) quoted in Styliadis et al., (2008:9) stated that a combination of both quantitative and qualitative can be used to assess a destination image in order to capture the complex assessment of the destination. As a result this study adopts both structured and unstructured questionnaire design to gather primary data. In order to validate the responses from the questionnaire some Nigerian's tourism board executives were interviewed to have a clearer picture of the image issues about Nigeria. By triangulation Nigeria leisure tourism image is measured from two points of view (that is from potential tourists and from the Nigeria tourism board executives). According to Veal (2011) triangulation is a method which involves the use of more than one research approach in a single study to gain a broader or more complete understanding of the issues being investigated. This approach makes it possible to assess the validity of the outcome. The questionnaire design include a set of scales questions to measure the common attributes based components of Nigeria leisure tourism

destination; and open-end questions to capture the holistic components of the destination (O’Leary & Deegan, 2003). Following Echtner & Richie (2003); Beerli & Martin (2004) suggestions on the use of destination attributes in measuring its image, specific attributes relating to leisure tourism were included in the scale question.

Importance of the study

The study of tourists’ perceptions of a destination image is very important to understanding of tourists’ behaviour in terms of choice or demand for any destination. As such it becomes imperative for every destination to know its competitive advantages and position through research among global destinations competing for international tourists. The best way of knowing this is to carry out a study on the targeted tourists (tourism segment) by exploring their views or perceptions about the destination. According to Marino (2007:2) “understanding potential tourist differences in image perceptions and motivations towards a destination is very key to comprehending and predicting tourism demand and its impact on the tourism destination”. This process provides basis for effective and more efficient future strategic planning of a destination. Sirakaya et al (2001) quoted in Marino (2007) sees the study of tourists’ perceptions of a destination image as a prerequisite to a successful marketing strategy. Pike and Ryan (2004) quoted in Marino (2007) see the study as a “major objective of any destination positioning strategy which should reinforced positive images already held by the targeted audience, correct negative image, or create new image. This however, can only be possible by evaluating the result or outcome of such study. Carrying out a research on a destination image is very fundamental to developing a tourist area. Marino (2007) argued that destination marketers need to evaluate the strengths and weakness of their tourism area, as it is important to traveller”. One of the ways of successfully achieving this is through research by analysing and evaluating the research outcome.

To this end understanding the perceptions of potential tourists about Nigeria leisure tourism destination image become very critical as a destination identified to be emerging. Nigeria is rich in tourism resources (The Report: 2010) and this make the country particularly attractive for all kinds of tourists, especially leisure tourists.

Literature Review

Definition of destination image

According to Bignon et al. (1998) quoted in Styliadis et al (2008) destination image has many definitions depending on the researcher. For instance Crompton (1979) defines image as the sum of beliefs, idea and

impressions that a person has of a destination, while Hunt (1975) cited in Styliadis et al (2008) defines image as perceptions held by potential tourists about an area. Hose & Wickens (2004) cited in Marino (2007:4) gives a different definition which states that “destination image is any visual, oral, or written representations of tourism location that is recorded and can also be transmitted to others”. This definition seems to consider only information sources that influence image formation but did not include the tangibility attributes of a destination. Destination image is formed from the knowledge of different factors or attributes of a destination. These attributes include tangible and intangible attributes. As such a complete definition of destination image should include the elements of tangibility and intangibility. Hose and Wickens definition explain why destination image can be perceived differently by individuals due to the sources of information and how the information is transmitted or received. Thus, the image formed by visual (for instance information received from internet, television documentary); oral (such as word of mouth, information from friends and relatives); written information sources (such as internet and all form of publication about a destination) can be different depending on how the information were passed and how they were received by the individual.

For the purpose of this study, destination image would be defined as sum of beliefs, ideas, impressions, and perceptions that individuals have of a place in relation to its attributes (tangible and intangible) as a result of exposure to information about the place or through personal experience (first-hand experience or personal visit to the place). This definition is coined from the definition of Crompton (1979), Hunt (1975), and Hose & Wickens (2004).

However, Gallarza et al (2002) proposed a theoretical model to define image in terms of four characteristics: complex, multiple, relativistic, and dynamic (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Following the above proposed model it is understandable that the measurement of destination image will carry with it great varieties of methods due to the complexity, multiplicity, relativistic, and dynamic features of individual destination.

Measurement of Destination Image

According to Beerli & Martin (2004) “there is no universally accepted, valid, and reliable scale for the measurement of destination image” hence, they proposed a frame incorporating every aspect of a destination which could be used as an instrument of measurement. Thus, every aspect of the destination and attributes are included in the scale as factors influencing the image assessment made by individuals and these attributes involve: *natural* resources, general infrastructure, tourist infrastructure, tourist leisure & recreation, (culture, history & art), political & economic factors, natural

environment, socio-environment, and the atmosphere of the place. They added that it is not necessary that all the attribute must be used but selection of the attributes of each destination will depend largely on the attractions of each destination, its positioning, and the objectives of the assessment of perceived image, which also determine whether specific or more general attributes are chosen. As a result this study focused more on leisure tourism destination's attributes rather than the general tourism attributes of the Nigeria destination. In order to achieve this it will be important to understand how image of a place is formed.

Image Formation

Image formation is based on the perceptions of the individual which is related to the impact of internal and external factors. Marino (2007:4) explain that “the internal factors are the knowledge and the emotional feelings the individual have about the place while the external factors refers to influence of friends and relatives, publications, advertisement, news reports, word of mouth. According to Gunn (1998) cited in Marino (2007:5) images are formed at two different levels which he terms organic and induced level. That the organic image developed internally as a result of actual experiencing or visiting the destination while the induced image is formed as a result of externally received and processed information such as information received from conventional advertisement in mass media, information from tour operators, trip advisors, documentaries about a destination, films and movies, internet etc. Marino also added that image is formed on the basis of an exchange of value between the value sought and expected and the effort made to get these values. Marino quoting Gunn (1988) argued that images are formed through multiple processes or stages from first time accumulation of mental images of the destination which are modified by further information received through induced process. Researchers have argued that familiarity with a destination has appeared to be a significant determination of destination image, for instance, Baloglu (2001) cited in Marino (2007). It is also argued that there is a link between high degree of familiarity and positive image. This argument of image formation process leads to another objective of this study aiming to explore the impression of tourists about Nigeria overall image if there is difference in the image formed before and after visiting Nigeria. According to Marino (2007) that “the more the tourist is familiar with the tourism destination the better the image he or she has of that destination”. Law (1995) quoted in Marino (2007) stated that “the perceptions of the majorities of tourists who have experienced other destinations tends to be influenced by comparing among facilities, attractions, and services standard. Due to the fact that

images are formed in different ways they open to changes to some extent in different ways according to Vaughan (2007).

Information Sources

It is generally agreed that individual perception of an image of a destination results from the amount and the various nature of information sources they are exposed to. Information consulted and the information used by tourist according to Frias et al (2008:165) is generally believed as one of the potential factors influences formation of destination image. McCartney et al 2008 quoted in Chang & Lynch (2011) suggested that a detailed understanding of the influences of information sources can help destination marketers to create effective destination marketing promotional strategies. Thus, the use of official and appropriate media becomes very important. Literature review on destination image reveals that tourists get information about a destination from varieties of sources which could be paid or unpaid sources. Paid sources may include mass media news, broadcasting documentaries and television programmes, while unpaid sources may include information from printed documents like books magazines, newspapers, films, travel programmes, and especially, recommendation from families and friend who may have visited the destination. One of the objectives of this study is to find out the major sources of information through which potential tourists formed their opinions about the image of Nigeria leisure tourism destination. The information source was termed by Baloglu & McCleary (1999a) as stimulus factors or image forming agents, and Gartner (1993) as forces influencing the formation of perceptions and evaluation. According to Gartner (1993) image formation information sources can be classified into five categories and with the fifth category ending the continuum of the forming process. The five categories include:

- Overt induced – information received from conventional advertising in mass media, relevant institutions in the destination, tour operators and wholesalers
- Covert induced – information received from destination reports or articles
- Autonomous - information received from mass media, broadcasting new, documentaries, films, television program, internet
- Organic – information received from people like friends and relatives, giving information about places based on their knowledge or experience either by request or volunteered
- First hand information – visit to the destination

Beerli & Martin in explaining Gartner (1993) model of image formation added that the first four categories of information sources (overt induced, covert induced, autonomous, and organic) are usually the one

perceived before experiencing a destination and are referred to as “secondary image” and the last category forms the primary image according to Phelps (1986), by actual visitation of the destination involved.

Characteristics of Individuals:

Individuals, personal characteristic are unique and different from one another. Though there could be similarities to some extent. In terms of consumer behaviour individual characteristics refers to socio-demographic attributes (gender, age, education level, family cycle, lifecycle, social class, place of resident etc.) Beerli & Martin (2004) argued that “personal characteristics affect one’s cognitive organisation of perceptions, thus also influencing the perceptions of the environment and the resulting image”. Hence, the perceived image will be formed by the image displayed by the destination and the individual’s characteristics. As a result the individual tends to have different evaluation of a destination at a given point in time (Bramwell & Rawding, 1996). However, this study will not evaluating the individual, personal characteristics in terms of image formation about Nigeria leisure tourism destination. On the other hand, the demographic data will only be considered in the level of representativeness in terms of how many male or female students responded either positively or negatively to the research questions. It is therefore suggested that the analysis of demographic characteristics of respondents can be included in future study.

Destination Attributes (the “Pull Factor”):

Destination attributes are the centre of attractions which are regarded as the ‘pull’ factors of tourism destinations. Those resources found in individual destination which could be tangible or intangible (Awaritefe, 2004), natural or man-made, cultural & historical resources that make a tourism destination unique and different from every other destination (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996), which are easily “recognised and recall by visitors”. The composition of the tourism resources of a destination are the ‘pull’ factors that make people want to visit such places in addition to the perceived “holistic” images of that destination. The ‘pull’ factors attract the individuals towards a destination due to its situation/region and perceived attractiveness of the destination (Joyathsing et al, 2010). The pull factors are also seen as responsible for the success and development of a destination (Prayag, 2010).

For a leisure tourism destination tourist would be looking for what will satisfy their holiday needs. Trends in tourism indicate that people are becoming more experienced in travelling and careful in their choice of destination (Bonarou, 2011:327). Among the basic needs of most leisure traveller is safety and security.

According to Boakye (2011:328) “security and safety is an important element in leisure tourism”. Boakye argued that “any destination that ignore the responsibility of providing security for tourists stands to lose out of the keen competition for tourists dollars”. He further pointed out that in order to provide security for tourists their views about the security matter have to be sorted. Hence, one of the objectives of this study is to examine how potential tourists perceive Nigeria as a leisure tourism destination from the perspective of security and safety attributes. Boakye (2011:328) quoting Sonmez & Graefe, (1998) said that “security is perhaps the single most important determinant of destination’s ‘allure’ as a result all destinations strive to present themselves as paradise”. For emerging tourism destination like Nigeria a study of safety and security from the tourists’ perspective become imperative and cannot be ignored. However, tourists perceive the issue of safety and security differently and this borders on cognitive fear of current issues as perceived by the tourist, affective (emotional) behaviour towards safety and security as categorised by Vandereen (2006:13) cited in Boakye (2011:328). Thus given the current issues of safety and security of a destination, according to Boakye, tourists’ reaction will depend on how they perceived the situation and the emotional attachment they have about the whole thing. While some tourists may react sharply expressing their concerns and anxieties about safety and security of a destination others may not bother so much about the issue. The result of this difference lies on the fact that people see and feel things differently. Hence, while some tourists will react negatively to spending a holiday in a destination perceived to be unsafe others tend to see the destination’s attributes that can meet their holiday requirement as a result will not be looking at safety and security as top priority. The latter category of tourists is argued by Michalko (2003) cited in Boakye (2011) as tourists who enjoy the thrill of danger as an attraction giving the examples of Naples and New York. However, no matter what tourist perceptions are about the safety and security of a destination the impact of negative safety and security impact could be enormous. For example it could result in suppressed demand for the destination, cause shift in demand to other destinations and the consequence of negative image as a result of different perceptions by tourists.

Destination attributes are also referred to as the perceptions and expectations of travellers in terms of destination attributes which influences destination choice and how travellers form the ‘image’ of the destination (Baloglu and Uysal, 1996). Researchers like Beerli and Martin (2004); Baloglu and McCleary (1999); Gartner, 1993; and Meng et al. (2008) argued that destination ‘image’ have long been recognised as “influential pull factors” in a destination choice. Klenosky, (2002) added his point that the ‘pull’ factors are described as those attributes influencing when, where, and

how people travel and relates to the features, attractions or attributes of the destination. He also argued that “the relative importance of ‘pull’ factors seems to differ for visitors in different socio-demographic subgroup (Andrue et al (2005); Kim et al (2003); Klenosky, (2002). Prayag, (2010) added that “the pull factors determines the attractiveness of a destination for tourists given the initial desire to travel”. In addition, Hunt (1975) quoted in Prayag (2010) stressed that “the importance of the intangibility of a destination attributes” by adding that “images, beliefs, and perceptions that people have about a destination can influence the growth of a tourist area as much or even more than tangible resources”.

More also, Witt and Mountinho (1989) quoted in Prayag (2010) classified ‘pull’ forces into three important factors namely static factors (including climate, distance to travel facilities, natural and cultural landscapes, historical and cultural features); dynamic factors (including accommodation, service levels, entertainment, sports, political atmosphere, and trends in tourism); current decision factors (including pricing, marketing strategies, projected/induced image of a destination). Other researchers recognised pull factors as been universally important in destination selection” (Prayag, 2010). Destination attributes in tourism though may vary from one destination to the other, are the factors influencing the competitiveness of every destination. For any destination to survive and be successful among other destinations internationally in the phase of the stiff competition for tourists, destination marketing and promotion become imperative.

Destination Marketing and Promotion:

There are different ways of strategically marketing and promoting a destination images to potential tourists. Such strategic methods could include advertisement which may play important role in promoting a tourism destination by creating awareness of the destination as a possible place to visit. Advertisement helps to create positive image of destination and at the same time motivates potential tourists to visit the destination. The significance of advertisement is link to the fact that the formation of images of a place is influenced by varieties of information. Extensive use of travel brochures, films, independent tourism information could be another means of strategically disseminating information about a destination to the targeted audience. Also, Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) could organise a familiarisation trips for travel media and sponsors who could help to create more awareness of a destination. A destination Marketing Organisation is charged with the task of convincingly appealing to potential tourists as such attracting them to their destination. It is generally acknowledged that tourists do not constitute a homogenous group, therefore,

Destination Marketing Organisation is faced with the challenge of identifying sub market of tourists. According to McCartney et al (2008) cited in Chang & Lynch (2011:3) “a key challenge facing tourism organisation is the effectiveness and relevance of marketing and promotional practices to enhance destination selection in today’s fierce competitive environment. The internet, television is another medium which is becoming more widely use in tourism marketing by showcasing a destination image that can stimulate tourists to demand for such destination.

However, following the outcome of the study carried out by Govers et al (2007) the findings suggested that tourism promotion does not have major impact upon the perceptions of travellers and that “other sources of information have a much greater bearing on the formation of destination image” Govers et al (2007:16) and that tourism authorities should understand that successful tourism promotion is dependent on broad range of external influences”. Promotion of destination image is usually intended to portray favourable and positive image which Govers et al (2007:16) described as “largely skewed towards a set of favourable experiences”. They argued that “if visitors encounter settings or experiences that are different from their expectation to a greater extent, their evaluation can be very negative”. To this end, Govers et al pointed out that promotion projected by tourism industry should be anchored to some extent on true destination identity and if the tourism products of a destination are not communicated in line with true identity of that destination can create a tourism development gap”.

Conclusion

Destination images have been recognised to play a vital role in the development and success of destinations (Beerli & Martin, 2004). This is due to the influence it has on tourists’ behaviour in the process of choosing a destination for a holiday. It is believed that tourists will prefer a destination with strong and positive images than one with weak and negative images. This phenomenon is the reason behind the proliferation of research works carried out in the field of tourism industry. The outcome of such study could help to understand tourists and how they form images of a place. With such understanding the marketing organisations would be able to strategically plan and put in place marketing and promotional techniques that can favourably display positive images in the mind of tourists.

Researchers attempting to define the concept ‘image’ discovered its complexity as no single definition has been accepted. As such the term destination image has been defined by researchers to suit the purpose of the study being carried out. However, Gallarza et al (2002) suggested a model to define image in terms of four characteristics namely complex, multiple, relativists, and dynamic (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Due to the fact that

destination image reflects the four characteristics mention above makes it difficult to adopt a general scale for its measurement. Therefore, Beerli & Martin (2004) proposed that destination image could be measure by its attributes. Destination attributes refers to the “pull” factors that attracts tourists to want to visit a destination. This Awaritefe (2004) termed “tangible and intangible tourism resources; easily recognised and recall by visitors (Baloglu & Uysal (1996); attractions of a destination (Joyathsing et al, 2010); success and development determinant by Prayag (2010).

In order to measure a destination image it is important to know how the image of a place is formed. Formation of destination images has been addressed extensively by academic literature and different models have been designed to explain how image of a place is formed by tourists. For example, Marino (2007:5), explained that image of a place is formed base on the perceptions of the individuals which is related to the impact of internal and external factors. Gunn (1998) cited in Marino (2007) argued that image are formed in two levels which he refers to as induced and organic. Beerli & Martin (2004) identified two related component in image formation which they refer to as cognitive and affective components. The diversities of image study matches Gallarza et al (2002) model which has the characteristics of multiple, complex, relativistic and dynamic.

Images are argued to be formed by tourists as a result of information they are exposed to or information they consult. Sources of information have been identify to be crucial factor influencing formation of a destination image (Frias et al, 2008:165).

Understanding of tourists’ perceptions of a destination is seen to be very crucial to the marketing organisations in making appropriate plans and strategically using appropriate marketing and promotional techniques to favourably portray a favourable and positive image in the mind of tourists. McCartney et al (2008) quoted in Chang & Lynch (2011:5) argued that effective and relevance marketing and promotional practice is a key challenge facing tourism organisation as much emphasis is given to positive destination image.

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