

Residents' Awareness and Patronage of Tourism Attractions in Calabar, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study analyzed residents' awareness and patronage of tourism attractions in Calabar. Data for the study were obtained with a structured questionnaire, which was administered to 384 sampled respondents using the systematic sampling technique. The result of the regression analysis ($r = 0.893$, $r^2 = 0.797$, $p = 0.00$, $\alpha = 0.05$) shows that the relationship between awareness and patronage was significant at the 5% level of confidence. Therefore, the level of patronage of the existing tourism attractions in Calabar depends meaningfully on the level of awareness. Calabar Carnival had the highest proportion (98.6%) of awareness (370) to patronage (365), while Brickfield Prison Wall recorded the lowest proportion (43.6%) of awareness (225) to patronage (98). The study also revealed that the major medium of residents' awareness of the tourism attractions was by friends and families, which accounted for 36%. Furthermore, the major constraints militating against residents' patronage of the tourism attractions were poor publicity of tourism attractions, insecurity, and poor residents' purchasing power amongst others. The authors recommend that adequate publicity of the existing tourism attractions should be conducted using various channels to increase patronage.

Also, all identified constraints militating against residents' patronage of the existing tourism attractions should be addressed adequately to put tourism development in Calabar on a sustainable path.

Keywords: Awareness, Constraints, Patronage, Residents, Tourism attraction.

1. Introduction

Globally, it has been acknowledged that tourism plays important role in the development process of communities, states and nations where tourism attractions are located (Eja & Iji, 2018; Ndakara & Boyitie, 2019). Since studies have established that domestic tourists are the major visitors to tourism attractions in Cross River State (Amalu *et al*, 2012; Amalu, Duluora, Otop, Omeje & Emeana, 2017; Eja & Iji, 2018), it is pertinent to know the level of residents' awareness and patronage of these attractions, to maximize the patronage potentials of the residents. Furthermore, residents of a tourism destination are important assets, as their perception and attitude constitute a major consideration in designing strategies for sustainable tourism development (Hateftabar & Chapuis, 2020).

To achieve sustainable patronage of the tourism attractions in Calabar, the domestic tourism market has to be fully developed to have an all season patronage to sustain the investment in the sector and grow the tourism industry. One of the strategies to achieving this goal is through deliberate development of tourism policy that makes adequate provisions for publicity and efficient marketing strategies that would create awareness of the existing tourism attractions in Calabar. Awareness creation of existing tourism attractions in a destination is very important to attracting patronage, because the potential tourist's decision to visit a destination is highly influenced by the level of information on the tourism attractions at the destination. Awareness of the existence of a tourism attraction is the very first step in forming an image of the attraction and destination by the potential tourist. Without having knowledge of the existence of a

tourism attraction in a destination such attraction will not be considered when potential tourists make decisions to travel. This situation perhaps explains why some tourist products suppliers in an attempt to secure certain segment of the market tend to create positive images of their tourism products and destinations in order to attract and stimulate potential tourists' considerations to visit their products or destination (Milman & Pizam, 1995).

It has also been stressed that awareness of a tourism attraction results in curiosity that may lead to patronage or trial (Milman & Pizam, 1995). Therefore, tourism product awareness by potential tourists' is the first stage and necessary step to secure patronage and trial. However, repeat patronage of a tourism attraction is dependent on the satisfaction derived at first trial; hence, tourists' awareness of tourism attractions alone is insufficient to guaranty sustained patronage. For example, a study conducted by Fesenmaier, Vogt, and Stewart (1993) revealed that the information obtained by travelers did not actually influence their travel behaviour. Although awareness of a tourism product may not at all times stimulate potential tourists' interest on the products and subsequent patronage, however, for a tourism product or destination to be successful and command sustained patronage, it must present a positive image of the product or destination through awareness creation. The positive image created could lead to first visit, which could further lead to subsequent visitation if satisfaction was achieved at first visit (Milman & Pizam, 1995).

Several media (words of mouth, friends and family, print and electronic media, tour guide and internet) have been used to create awareness of the existence of tourism attractions in different destinations. The amount and quality of information available about a destination and tourism attraction go a long way to assist potential tourists to form an image about the destination and the product, which may finally influence the decision to visit the destination or not. Therefore, in creating awareness of a tourism product or destination, the tourism supplier should transparently present the

information that potential tourists are most likely going to consider making up their minds on what tourism product or destination to visit.

The needed tourism information can be communicated by a given medium or a mix of media listed above. For example, a study in Cross River State, Nigeria, reported that the major means of awareness of the existing tourism attractions in the state as indicated by the tourists were television and radio (17%), internet (16%), festivals/event attendance (15%) and family and friends (14%). Others were magazine/newspapers (12%), outdoors (banners, billboards, etc, 11%), handbills/flyers/guidebooks (9%) and travel agency (7%) (Ajake, 2015). Today, with the popularity of the internet, it has become a veritable medium of awareness creation about tourism attractions and destinations. A "2006 Travel Activities and Motivations Survey," revealed that in the United States and Canada, 80% and 81% of travelers, respectively used the internet as a source of travel information (Ontario Ministry of Tourism, 2007a, 2007b) as cited in (Hennessey, Yun, MacDonald & MacEachern, 2010). This is so because the internet offers a convenient, quick and far reaching audience at a relatively low cost.

It should be noted at this juncture that sustainable patronage of tourism attraction at a destination can be promoted or inhibited by several factors. For example, Duyen and Thoa (2021) reported that the five major factors affecting tourism development in Southern Red River Delta in Vietnam were quantity and quality of support services (healthcare and banks), quality of human resources in the tourism sector, quantity and quality of servicing rooms, quality telecommunications infrastructure and time factors. The authors submitted that if these factors are available in the right quantity and quality, they impact positively on tourists' improved patronage. In a similar analysis, Scott and Gössling (2015) identified five major dimensions (social, technology, economic, environment and political) that influence tourism development globally based on review of recent literature discussing future of tourism. The dynamic interplay

of these factors from place to place determines the kind of impact they exert on tourism development of a nation, either positive or negative.

In another study, Chang and Gibson (2015) identified the factors influencing leisure tourism broadly into two-universal and situational factors. The universal factors include personal physiological, psychological and socioeconomic factors; while situational factors include environmental and social resource aspects. A study conducted in South-South region of Nigeria asserts that lack of tourists' interest in leisure and recreation was the most significant factor inhibiting the patronage of tourism attractions in the region (Nadube & Akahome, 2017).

From the identified factors influencing sustainable patronage of tourism attractions highlighted above, it can be seen that the dynamic interplay of various factors would either act as a pull or push factor to a prospective tourist in making decision to visit a tourism destination or not. This situation calls for close monitoring of these factors to ensure that any with potential negative impact on tourist's patronage of the tourism attractions in Calabar is addressed promptly to grow the tourism sector. Hence, this study is aimed at the analysis of residents' awareness and patronage of tourism attractions in Calabar. Based on the premise that awareness of the existence of tourism attractions by potential tourists could boost patronage, this study posed the following research questions and hypothesis:

Research questions: What is the level of residents' awareness and patronage of the existing tourism attractions in Calabar? What are the factors that hinder residents' patronage of the existing tourism attractions in Calabar?

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between residents' awareness and patronage of existing tourism attractions in Calabar.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Description of Study Area

Calabar is the administrative headquarters of Cross River State, Nigeria. It is situated in southern part of Nigeria, within latitudes 4° 53' and 5° 10' North of the Equator and longitudes 8° 15' and 8° 34' East of the Greenwich meridian (see Figure 1). Calabar comprises of two Local Government Areas-Calabar Municipal and Calabar South Local Government Areas and occupies an area of 406km² with a 2021 projected population of 605,000 persons (United Nations Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019). Calabar experiences a tropical monsoon climate (Koppen Am classification), with a long wet season extending for almost eight months and dry season of about four months. The average monthly temperature is about 28°C and annual rainfall of about 3000mm (Ndakara & Eyefia, 2021). The vegetation type is the tropical rain forest, which still retains its pristine nature in some few locations despite incursion into the forest.

Calabar housed several tourism attractions, which has made it to be one of the major tourism destinations in Nigeria and Cross River State in particular. Some of the popular tourism attractions in Calabar are the Calabar Carnival, Marina Resort, Drill Ranch, Tinapa Business & Leisure Resort, Old Residency Museum, amongst others. The annual Calabar Carnival has attracted so many tourists (domestic and foreign) into Calabar, which has also helped to increase patronage of the other less publicized attractions. In order to develop the tourism industry in the state, the Cross River State Government set up a Tourism Bureau. In the enabling law establishing the Bureau, the first item under the functions of the Bureau is, “to encourage people resident in the state to take their holidays therein and people from abroad to visit the state” (Law Nigeria Admin, 2018). This underscores the importance of residents’ patronage for the sustainable development of tourism in Cross River State. To successfully execute this function, the Bureau must identify the tourism attractions in the state and create awareness of their existence. For this reason, the study analyzed residents’ awareness and patronage of tourism attractions in Calabar.

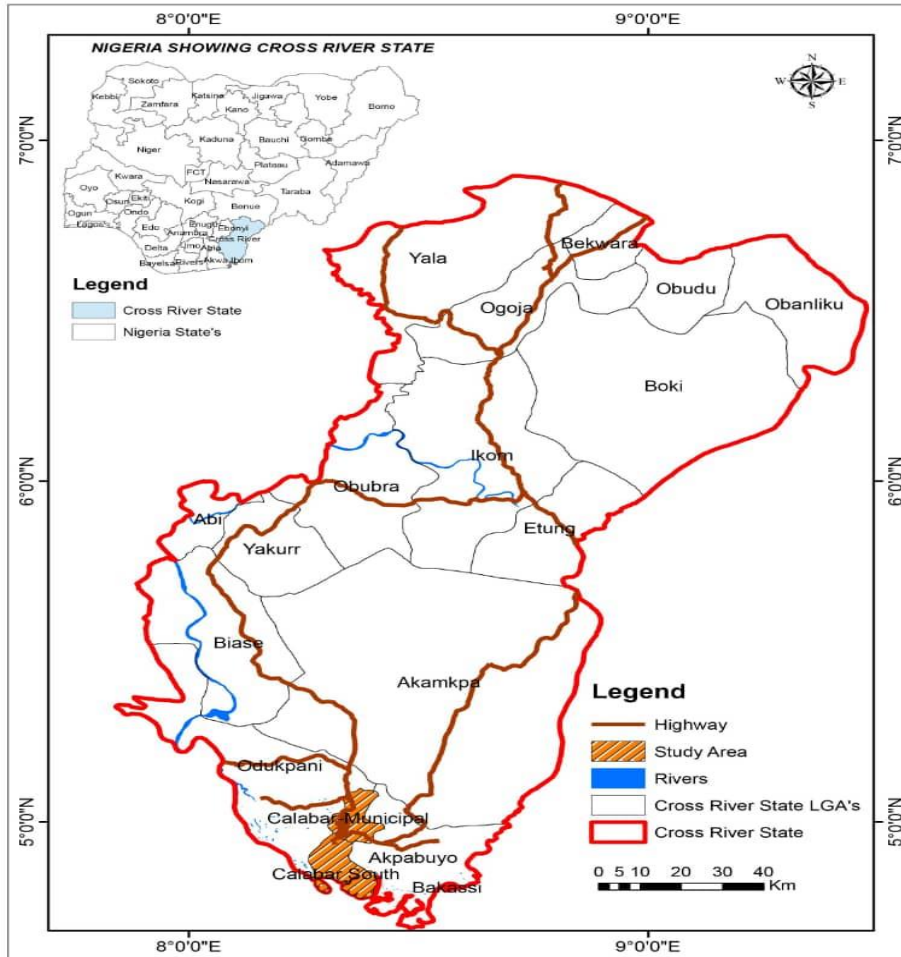


Figure 1: Cross River State Showing the Study Area

Source: GIS Laboratory, Department of Geography and Environmental Management, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, 2022

2.2. Data Collection and Treatment

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design, which involved the physical observation of the tourism sites and the administration of a structured questionnaire that contains questions on residents' awareness and patronage of tourism attractions in Calabar, which was designed by the authors. The questionnaire was structured into four sections (A-D). Section A, focused on respondents' demographic characteristics, Section B, on residents awareness of tourism attractions, Section C, on

patronage of tourism attractions and Section D, on constraints to the patronage of tourist attractions, which was presented on a 4-point weighted Likert scale (strongly agree, 4; agree, 3; disagree, 2 and strongly disagree, 1). In order to determine the representative sample size for the study, the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample determination of respective population was used to arrive at 384 sample size, from an estimated population of 605,000 for 2021 (United Nations Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019).

The design and administration of the questionnaire was preceded by a reconnaissance survey, which involved the identification and visit to the tourism attractions in Calabar with the aid of a tour guide. From the exercise, 15 tourism attractions were identified, which represented the tourism attractions in Calabar. Thereafter, the questionnaire was administered using the classified and systematic sampling techniques. Firstly, Calabar was classified into four zones (East, West, North and South). Secondly, from each of the zones, 96 sets of questionnaire were administered, respectively by direct physical contact to sampled household heads, using systematic sampling technique.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data for the study were obtained from the responses to the respective questions in the administered questionnaire. The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (tables, frequency, percentage, mean & chart) and inferential statistic (regression analysis). Data on demographic characteristics and respondents' awareness and patronage of existing tourism attractions were analyzed using frequency and percentages; while data on factors that hinder residents' patronage of existing tourism attractions were analyzed using mean. Since the responses were based on weighted 4-point Likert scale, the criteria score was: 2.50 points ($4+3+2+1/4$). Using the criteria score, any calculated mean value that was 2.50 points and above signifies that the respondents agreed that the factor hinders residents' patronage of the existing tourism attractions in Calabar; while values less than 2.50 points indicate disagreed. The regression statistic

was used to test the relationship between residents' awareness and patronage of existing tourism attractions in Calabar, with the aid of the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS), version 15.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Respondents' Socioeconomic Characteristics

The questionnaire was administered to 384 respondents but 375 (97.7%) were retrieved. The socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. From the table, the sex distribution shows that 52.8% were male, while 47.2% were female, which shows adequate representation of both sexes. For age distribution, 25-45yrs had the highest (42.4%) responses, while above 65yrs had the lowest (5.9%). Since 69.6% of the respondents were 45yrs and below, clearly show that the population is youthful and could be very adventurous. The table also shows that there were more married (55.5%) than single (37.6%) respondents; while divorced and widowed respondents were 7%. The educational status of the respondents shows that 84.2% either had secondary or tertiary education, which indicated that the respondents are educated enough to provide reasonable responses to the issues under investigation. For occupational distribution, majorities (30.1%) of the respondents were into business, which was closely followed by self employed (29.6%) and the least was public service (17.3%). The household size with the highest responses was 4-6 persons (43.7%), while the lowest was 10 persons and above. The income range with the highest responses was ₦75,001-₦120,000 (27.5%), while above ₦165,000 (12.5%) had the lowest responses, with another group of respondents (15.5%) earning below ₦30,000, which is the National Minimum Wage. This is not surprising because Cross River State is one of the four states that have not started the implementation of the National Minimum Wage act, after three years of its enactment.

Table 1: Respondents Socioeconomic Characteristics

S/N	Questionnaire Variable	Response Variable	Response	Percentage
1	Sex	Male	198	52.8
		Female	177	47.2
2	Age	Below 25 yrs	102	27.2
		25- 45 yrs	159	42.4
		46-65 yrs	92	24.5
		Above 65 yrs	22	5.9
3	Marital Status	Married	208	55.5
		Single	141	37.6
		Widowed	10	2.7
		Divorced	16	4.3
4	Educational Status	No formal Education	27	7.2
		Primary	32	8.5
		Secondary	176	46.9
		Tertiary	140	37.3
5	Occupation	Public service	65	17.3
		Self employed	111	29.6
		Business	113	30.1
		Others	86	22.9
6	Household size	1-3	138	36.8
		4-6	164	43.7
		7-9	49	13.1
		10 and above	24	6.4
7	Income per month	Below ₦30,000	58	15.5
		₦30,001- ₦75,000	93	24.8
		₦75,001- ₦120,000	103	27.5
		₦120,001- ₦165,000	74	19.7
		Above ₦165,000	47	12.5

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2021

3.2. Residents' awareness and patronage of tourism attractions in Calabar

In order to answer the first research question, "what is the level of residents' awareness and patronage of the existing tourism attractions in Calabar?" Respondents were presented a list of 15 tourism attractions located in Calabar, and were asked to indicate whether they are aware of their existence and have visited the tourism attractions. The respective responses to each of the 15 listed tourism attractions are presented in Table 2. The responses to awareness of the tourism attractions indicated that 10 (66.7%) of the tourism attractions had 60% and above affirmation, with Calabar carnival having the highest (98.7%) level of awareness; while the Great Duke Ephraim's 1826 complete Brass Chair had the lowest affirmation of 22.9%. This shows that largely, the tourism attractions are known to majority of the residents, especially the popular ones. It was not surprising that Calabar carnival had the highest responses, almost 100%, because, it's an annual event that usually held at the end of the year and usually given very wide publicity. In addition, some residents partake in several of the activities for the carnival and it has also recorded one of the highest foreign tourists' visitations to Nigeria and Calabar in particular. This finding agrees with Amalu *et al* (2017) that 24% of the interviewed tourists that visit Calabar do so to witness the Calabar carnival, which is a major tourism attraction for both domestic and international tourists.

One major factor that has accounted for the low awareness of some of the tourism attractions apart from poor publicity is the obscure locations of some of the attractions. A very good example was the Great Duke Ephraim's 1826 complete Brass Chair, which was located in a private residence that is not known to so many people. This attraction would have enjoyed more patronage if it was located in a more easily accessible public location. Tourism attractions with less than 50% level of awareness were the Great Duke Ephraim's 1826 complete Brass Chair (22.9%), King Eyamba V's 1836 Brass Bell (24.3%), Botanical Garden (46.9%) and Calabar Monoliths (49.9%). Although awareness of the tourism attractions is not a guaranty for patronage, however, the data in Table 2 on

patronage of the attractions suggest close relationship with level of awareness. For example, of the 15 tourism attractions, 10 (66.7%) had over 60% of patronage of those who were aware of the existence of the attractions. The five attractions that had below 60% patronage were Botanical Garden (48.9%), Brickfield Prison Wall (43.6%), Garment Factory (50%), King Eyamba V's 1836 Brass Bell (56%) and Calabar International Convention Centre at Summit Hill (51.7%). One major reason advanced by some of the respondents for not visiting these five attractions was that they do not considered them as tourism attractions. Calabar Carnival had the highest proportion (98.6%) of awareness (370) to patronage (365), while Brickfield Prison Wall recorded the lowest proportion (43.6%) of awareness (225) to patronage (98), respectively.

In order to test the hypothesis that states, "There is no significant relationship between residents' awareness and patronage of existing tourism attractions in Calabar," the regression statistical analysis was conducted. The result of the analysis ($r = 0.893$, $r^2 = 0.797$, $p = 0.00$, $\alpha = 0.05$) shows that the relationship between awareness and patronage was significant at the 5% level of confidence. Therefore, the level of patronage of the existing tourism attractions in Calabar depends meaningfully on the level of awareness (see Table 3). This finding agrees with other studies that tested the relationship between awareness and patronage of tourism attractions. For example, a study by Abimbola (2017) shows a significant relationship between residents' awareness and patronage of tourism attractions in Osun State; with a correlation coefficient of 0.966. This value indicates strong positive correlation, which implies that as the level of awareness of residents on tourism attractions in the state increases, there will be a corresponding increase in the level of patronage. Ajayi (2012) have also confirmed that awareness of tourism attractions and destinations positively influence patronage by potential tourists; while Hunt (1975) asserted that "the perception held by potential visitors about an area may have significant influence upon the viability of that area as a tourist recreation region."

Table 2: Residents' Awareness and Patronage of Tourism Attractions in Calabar

S/N	Questionnaire Variable	Awareness	%	Patronage	%
1	Calabar Marina Resort	289	77.1	194	51.7
2	Drill Ranch	254	67.7	179	47.7
3	Botanical Garden	176	46.9	86	22.9
4	Brickfield Prison Wall	225	60.0	98	26.1
5	Hope Waddell Training Institute	268	71.5	200	53.3
6	Calabar Carnival	370	98.7	365	97.3
7	Calabar Monoliths	187	49.9	133	35.5
8	Garment Factor	292	77.9	146	38.9
9	King Eyamba V's 1836 Brass Bell	91	24.3	51	13.6
10	European Cemetery where Mary Slessor was buried in 1915	302	80.5	261	69.6
	Great Duke Ephraim's 1826 complete Brass Chair	86	22.9	52	13.9
11					
12	Calabar International Convention Centre at Summit Hill	205	54.7	106	28.3
13	Tinapa Business & Leisure Resort	333	88.8	215	57.3
14	Rice City	234	62.4	148	39.5
15	Old Residency Museum	282	75.2	213	56.8

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2021

Table 3: Regression Analysis between Resident's Awareness and Patronage of Tourism Attractions in Calabar

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	98.720	21.980		4.491	.001
	Patronage	.864	.121	.893	7.152	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Awareness

In order to have an insight on the media of awareness of the tourism attractions, respondents were asked to indicate their major means of awareness of the existing tourism attractions they know. From the responses as shown in Figure 1, friends and family constituted the major means of information dissemination on the tourism attractions in Calabar as indicated by 36% of the respondents, which was followed by tour guide (21%), internet/social media (14%), electronic media (11%), newspapers (9%) and accidental (6%). Similar response pattern was also reported by Amalu *et al* (2018). Surprisingly, the Tourism Bureau Agency that is charged with tourism development in Cross River State was the least indicated (3%). This clearly shows that the government through the Tourism Bureau is not doing enough to bring to the awareness of the residents the various tourism attractions in the state.

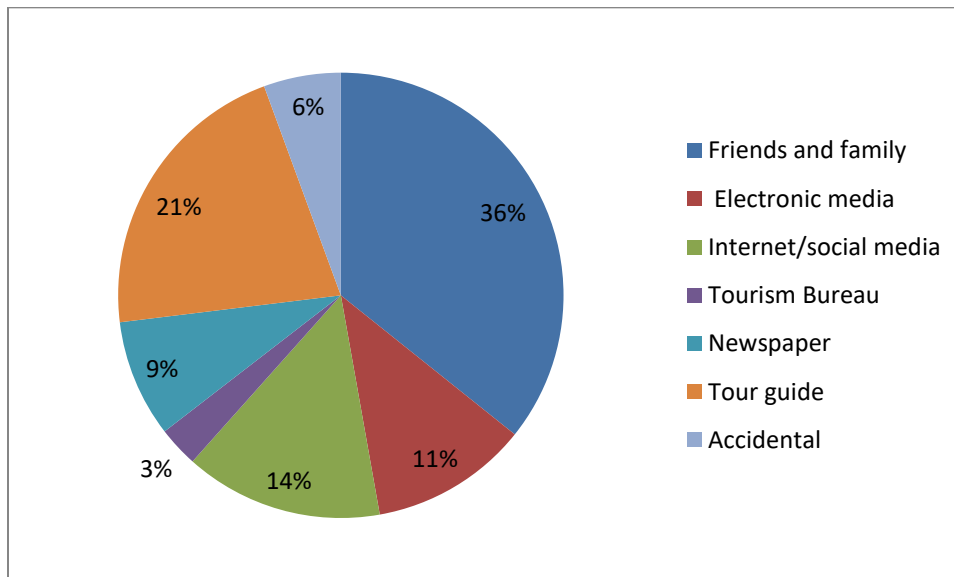


Figure 1: Major Medium of Awareness of Tourism Attractions

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2021

3.3. Constraints to Residents' Patronage of Tourism Attractions in Calabar

The second research question on the factors that have hindered residents' patronage of the existing tourism attractions in Calabar was answered by asking respondents to

indicate their level of agreement to ten sets of constraints that possibly hindered their non patronage of the listed 15 tourism attractions in Calabar. The response was based on a 4-point weighted likert scale of “strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1)” as presented in Table 4. As stated in the method of study, the criteria score was 2.50points. This means that responses to any of the constraints variable with a mean score of 2.50points and above signifies agreed; while values less than the 2.50points critical threshold signifies disagreed. From the table, the calculated mean values ranged from 2.29-2.87; with poor accessibility and deplorable road network having the lowest value (2.29) and poor publicity of tourism attractions having the highest value (2.87). This implies that poor accessibility and deplorable road network was the least rated constraint, while poor publicity of tourism attractions was the highest rated constraint militating against tourists’ patronage of the tourism attractions in Calabar. This agrees with the findings of a study in South Africa, where 40% of the respondents stated that their lack of awareness accounted for their non visit to the tourism attractions in Mahikeng in the past two years (Litheko, & Potgieter, 2016).

Other major highly rated constraints that impact patronage of the tourism attractions apart from poor publicity were poor residents’ purchasing power and insecurity, which had a mean rating of 2.76 and 2.77points, respectively. Although awareness of an attraction is the first stimulus for patronage of an attraction, however, effective patronage can only be determined by availability of funds to embark on the trip and the assurance of safety at the site location. Considering the fact that 67.8% of the respondents earned N120,000 (\$200) and below in a nation experiencing hyper-inflation, the immediate concern of most residents is to make ends meet by working round the clock, with less drive for recreation. This is so because studies have established that economic instability affects people’s perceptions and behaviour (Voon &Voon, 2012; Garau-Vadell, Diaz-Armas, & Gutierrez-Tano, 2014).

The economic woes of the nation have also impacted on the security situation in almost all parts of Nigeria, including Calabar. The security situation of Calabar has deteriorated over the years, just as in many parts of the country. Since people are no longer guaranteed of their safety, the natural tendency is to stay away from places where the probability of security breaches may be high. This assertion is supported by several other studies that have noted that personal safety and security constitute major considerations in the choice of tourism destination (Hua & Yoo, 2011; Seabra, Dolnicar, Abrantes & Kastenholtz, 2013; Lai, Hitchcock, Lu & Liu, 2018; Adeloye & Brown, 2018). In all, respondents agreed that seven (70%) of the ten listed constraints constituted major impediment to the patronage of the tourism attractions in Calabar. The only three constraints they disagreed with were low interest in recreation and leisure (2.41 point), poor facility aesthetics at the destination (2.38 points) and poor accessibility and deplorable road network (2.29 points) in Calabar. These ratings tally largely with the researchers' observations in the field. For example, the road networks connecting most of the attractions were fairly in good conditions, which confirmed the findings of Nadube and Akahome (2017) that road network was considered the least constraint influencing the non patronage of tourism attractions in South-South Nigeria, where Calabar is located.

Table 4: Constraints to Residents' Patronage of Tourism Attractions in Calabar

S/N	Constraint Variable	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean $\Sigma(n_1-n_4)/N$	*Decision
1	Unqualified and untrained hospitality manpower	320	402	214	54	2.64	Agreed
2	Poor facility aesthetics at the destination	168	438	208	83	2.38	Disagreed
3	Poor residents purchasing power	404	393	188	49	2.76	Agreed
4	Insecurity	400	402	172	64	2.77	Agreed
5	Poor accessibility and deplorable road network	256	240	268	96	2.29	Disagreed
6	Low interest in recreation and leisure	324	318	150	113	2.41	Disagreed
7	Poor publicity of tourism attractions	468	423	140	47	2.87	Agreed
8	Poor development of tourist sites	320	381	216	60	2.61	Agreed
9	No time for visitation	344	369	182	75	2.59	Agreed
10	Non attractiveness of some of the tourism sites	376	339	186	75	2.60	Agreed

Source: Authors' fieldwork, 2021

n = Number of responses to weighted constraint variable; N = Total number of responses to all weighted constraint variable; *Decision = Values 2.5 and above 'agreed'; below 2.5 'disagreed'

4. Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that the patronage of tourism attractions by residents in Calabar is largely a function of awareness of the existing attractions, because other

considerations influencing tourists patronage are only reviewed when the existence of the attraction has been established. This was confirmed by the regression analysis between residents' awareness and patronage of the existing tourism attractions in Calabar. Therefore, to maximize residents' patronage of the tourism attractions in Calabar, the State Government through the Tourism Bureau, should setup strategies to publicize the tourism attractions in the state to residents and other potential tourists (domestic and foreign). In addition, all other identified constraints militating against residents' patronage of the existing tourism attractions should be addressed adequately. Carrying out these measures would boost the patronage of the attractions and put tourism development in Calabar on a sustainable part.

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