ISSN: 2714-3643
October, 2023

INFLUENCE OF TOURISTS' DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS ON VISIT DECISIONS TO DESTINATIONS IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

[1]Olatunji C. A. and [2]Olatunji T.

[1]Department of Leisure and Tourism, Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

[2]Department of Hospitality Management Technology, Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

Abstract

The major focus of the tourists' destinations managers in Southwest Nigeria is to attract patronage from tourists and deliver to them what they need. It is, therefore, expedient for destination managers to understand the influence of demographic characteristics on the visit decisions of the tourists. Influence of the tourist demographic factors on visit decisions were investigated in three destinations in Southwest Nigeria: Ikogosi Warm Spring, Ikogosi, Idanre Hill, Idanre, and Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove, Osogbo. A total of 356 questionnaires were administered in the three destinations and the logic regression model was used to examine the probability of visit and identify the most significant variable that could influence individual visit to the destinations. Education was found to be significant in all the destinations. Age, gender, marital status were significant in influencing tourists visit in Idanre Hills. Occupation was found to be significant in Ikogosi Warm Spring, while religion was found to be a significant factor in Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove. Fun seekers, recreation and interaction with others were also found to influence tourists to the three destinations. It was recommended, among other things, that facilities for fun, recreation and relaxation should be provided at the three destinations for tourists to make visit and re-visit.

Keywords: Demographic- Characteristics, Influence, Tourist Visit, Destination

Introduction

Tourism plays an important role in creating more jobs (World Tourism Organization, 2017) and increasing the economic benefits on the rural communities. Tourism also offers the advantage of destinations such as mountains, heritage sites and other relating attractions, beautiful scenery, fresh air and pleasant climate, which serve as free resources of economic value for economic development (Raji, Raim, Ishak and Arshad, 2017). The tourism industry is considered as one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world (Ninwemener and Perdue, 2005; Cooper and Hall, 2008). For tourism industry to maintain or improve its current status, it is dependent on tourists' travel decisions which are reflected in travel behaviour (Slabbert, 2012). The essence of tourists' decision in choosing a destination is of much significance in determining the best place to go that links them to the crucial aspects that may influence the decision-making (Lozonor, 2018).

Literature Review

Walton (2023) defined tourism as the act and process of spending time away from home in pursuit of recreation, relaxation and pleasure, while making use of the commercial provision of services. Tourism has also been described as one of the most important social and economic fields of our time, which is subjected to objective laws of social development, a most dynamic sector of services and the fastest growing economic sector of industrialized countries over the past several years (Chiosova, 2015). Tourism is, therefore, a multi-faceted phenomenon of social life.

Choosing a travel destination is a complex process for tourists (NI, Tsad and Wang, 2017). The decision of choosing a given destination to visit has been closely linked with socio-demographic characteristics. Moscardo, Morrison, Peace, Lang and Oleony (1996), Um and Cromptin (1990) are among the earliest researchers that examined the role of demographic factors on tourists' destination choice with findings showing a link between demographic factors and visitors participation in tourism activities. Ibrahim and Cordes (1993) opined that increasing free time and disposable income have provided the opportunity to take part in tourism activities.

Foot (2004) reported that such factors as age and family structure play a significant role in influencing tourists' travel motivation. Mkwizu (2018), Mariki, Hassan, Maganga, Modes, and Salehe (2011), Mkwizu, (2018) showed that gender and age are significant in influencing tourists' decision to participate in tourism activities. Foot (2004) argued that age and family structure have an impact on the decision of an individual to select a destination. Collins and Tinsdell (2002) gave age and gender as the

influencing demographic factors in selecting a destination.

Demographic factors are described as descriptive segmentation technique whereby socio-demographic factors are directly involved (Mazilu and Mitroi, 2010). Ma, Chow, Cheng, Lee, and Liu (2018) and Mkwizu (2018) gave demographic factors as age, gender, family life cycle reduction, income and nationality. Weaver and Oppermann (2000) reported that the variables are accurate in predicting travel behaviour pattern of an individual. Age is reported to have positive influence on individual's desire for relaxation and nature exploration (Ma *et al.,* 2018). Each gender assigns importance to individual characteristics differently, but, females are highly to process all information comprehensively (Rozak, 2002). Gender is reported to be one of the major factors influencing travel demand (Collin and Tisdell, 2002). According to Ryan, Henley and Sonter (1998), men travel more than women.

Marital status is one of the factors that affect vacation decisions (Kattiyt-Pompong and Miller, 2008). Lee and Bhargava (2004) reported that married couples spend less time enjoying leisure than singles. This is due to the fact that married couples have social and family obligations that limit their time to undertake holiday vacation or participate in sports activities (Downward and Resciate, 2010). Singles prefer shorter, but, frequent trips (Biearnet and Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2012). However, Vernon (2010) opined that married women have more time to engage in leisure than single mothers. Mohson and Ryan (2015) reported that though age, gender, educational attainment, household income and ethnicity are strong factors, income and perception of place are more critical in influencing tourists' choice of destinations.

Djeri, Armenski, Jovanovic, and Dragin (2014) found that high income earners start collecting information about a destination prior to travel, while low income earners do not consider it important to gather information about the destination prior to travel. They are not keen on exploring new destinations. Spacek and Antuoskoria (2013) found out that differences in educational level between University and primary school education can influence the rate of tourists' visit to a location, because visitors with primary school education made more visits than visitors with a University education. Whereas in Limaeket, Chesmati, Rashidi and Yanimi (2014), visitors with a Bachelor's degree recorded the highest number of visits than those with primary school education. However, Sinyenga (2005) noted that educational level has no significant relationship with visit.

Spacek and Antuoskoria (2013) reported that respondents' age can influence tourists' visits to destination, indicating that respondents between the ages of 25-45 years indicated a higher interest in tourism activities, compared to respondents between the ages of 55-64 years.

Research Methods

Three tourists' destinations were selected in South-West, Nigeria, for the study. The selected tourists' destinations were Ikogosi Warm Spring, Ikogosi, Ekiti State, Idanre Hill and Resort, Idanre and Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove, Osogbo, Osun State. Survey method was adopted through the use of a questionnaire, copies of which were administered to the tourists in the three research locations. The population of the study, therefore, included all the tourists who visited the destinations during the period of the research. Sample size was determined using Smith (2013) formula.

Sample size n = $\frac{(\text{Z score})^2 \times \text{Std dev} \times (1 - \text{Std dev.})}{(\text{Confidence interval})^2}$

Where n = Sample size
Z = Confidence level (1.96) at 95%
Std = Standard deviation (0.5)
Confidence interval = Margin of error (0.05) at 5%

For this study, the sample size was 384. The respondents were selected by simple random sampling, based on their willingness and availability to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained two parts. The first part was on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, gender, educational qualifications, income, occupation and religion. The second part was to elicit information on the reasons for the preference of the tourists' destination and the intention for a re-visit.

The survey was carried out during public holidays when the probability of tourists visiting tourists' destinations was higher and more tourists were expected at the research locations.

Estimation model as used by Raziah (2003) and adopted by Leh and Ramli (2020) was adopted and used in this study. This involved using logic estimation model to examine the probability of visit among potential tourists to the three destinations. The constant variable was the probability of visit and the independent variables were age (AG), gender (GD), marital status (MS),

educational qualification (EQ), income (IC), occupation (OC) and religion (RE).

The estimation model is;

$Pr (V_0 = 1\% AG, GD, MS, ED, IC, OC, RE = ao + \delta_1 AG + \delta_2 GD + \delta_3 MS + \delta_4 ED + \delta_5 IC + \delta_6 OC + \delta_7 RE.$

Where

Pr = Probability
V_{ij} = Visit
AG = Tourists' age
IC = Tourists' income
GD = Tourist's gender
a_0= Constant
$\delta_I - v_i$ = Parameter for demographic Characteristics
Σ_{ij} = Error term
MS= Tourists' marital status
ED = Tourists' level of education
OC = Tourist's occupation
RE = Tourist's religion
i = Primary data
j = Location

Results

The age of the respondents, as shown in Table 1, revealed that the highest age bracket was between 18-25 years (29.8%). The age bracket of 17 – 46years accounted for 78.1%, which showed that there were more young persons than the older persons that had the intention to participate in tourism activities. The males were found to be 54.5%.More males participate in tourism activities than the females. The singles were 57%. Therefore, there were more singles than the married persons. Single persons participate more in tourism activities than the married persons. The respondents were educated with a high percentage (96.1%) of the respondents going through formal education while only 3.9% of the respondents did not have formal education. More educated persons, therefore, participate or have intention to participate in tourism activities. The respondents were predominantly income earners 100%. More of the respondents were average earners 90.7% who earn less than ₦ 200,000 monthly. Students accounted for 29.2%, while those undergoing apprenticeship were 12.1%; the unemployed were 11.2%. Therefore, only 45.8% of the respondents were fully employed. Christianity accounted for 52.8%, Islam 29.2% and Traditional beliefs 15.7%. Only 2.2% did not belong to any religion.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables		F	%	Mean	Std.
Age	< 17years	52	14.6	59.33	57.56
	18 – 25years	106	29.8		
	26 – 35years	73	20.5		
	36 – 46years	47	13.2		
	47 – 55years	44	12.4		
	> 55years	34	9.6		
Gender	Male	194	54.5	178	256
	Female	162	45.5		
Marital Status	Single	203	57.0	178	625
	Married	153	43.0		
Educational Qualification	No formal education	14	3.9	71.2	2013.36
	Primary school	37	10.4		
	Secondary school	106	29.8		
	First degree	137	38.5		
	Post graduate	62	17.4		
Income	₦ 30,000	70	19.7	59.33	168.56
	₦ 31,000 – 50,000	69	19.4		
	₦ 51,000 – 100,000	68	19.1		

	₦ 101,000 – 150,000	62	17.4		
	₦ 151,000 – 200,000	54	15.2		
	>₦ 200,0000	33	9.3		
Occupation	Student	104	29.2	71.2	560.56
	Apprentices	43	12.1		
	Civil servants	88	24.7		
	Self employed	75	21.1		
	Unemployed	46	12.9		
Religion	Christianity	188	52.8	89	441.9
	Muslim	104	29.2		
	Traditional	56	15.7		
	No religion	08	2.2		

The probability of visiting Idanre Hill and Resort is shown in Table 2. The most suitable significant values for the variables were Age, Marital Status and Educational Levels. This is because the age of the tourists showed a significant value of 90%. The level of significance for marital status was 85% while 75% was obtained for educational level. For other variables, the levels of significance were gender – 50%, income – 30%, occupation – 40% and religion – 35%. The result therefore showed that age, marital status and educational level of the tourists are significant in determining the visit of tourists to Idanre Hill and Resort.

Table 2: Level of Significance and Ranking of the Variables in Idanre Hills

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	1 – a	a (probability of t-test)	A	Notation Ranking
Prvij	AG	1-0.097=90%	100-90=10%	90%	1st
	GD	1-0.478=52%	100-52=48%	50%	4th
	MS	1-0.126=87%	100-87=13%	85%	2nd
	ED	1-0.243=76%	100-76=24%	75%	3rd
	IC	1-0.693=31%	100-31=69%	30%	7th
	OC	1-0.599=40%	100-40=60%	40%	5th
	RE	1-0.645=36%	100-36=64%	35%	6th

The probability of tourists making visits to Ikogosi Warm Spring is presented in Table 3. The significant demographic characteristic was educational level. Tourists' educational level showed a level of significance of 75%, while other variables showed a significant level of income (35%), occupation (35%), religion (35%), marital status (35%), gender (35%) and age (25%). These factors were, therefore, not significant in determining the probability of tourists visiting Ikogosi Warm Spring, except tourists' educational level.

Table 3: Level of Significance and the Ranking of the Variables in Ikogosi Warm Spring, Ikogosi

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	1 – a	a (probability of t-test)	a	Notation Ranking
Prvij	AG	1-0.746=25%	100-25=75%	25%	7th
	GD	1-0.599=40%	100-30=70%	40%	2nd

MS	1-0.672=33%	100-33=67%	35%	5th
ED	1-0.246=75%	100-75=25%	75%	1st
IC	1-0.743=26%	100-36=64%	35%	7th
OC	1-0.656=34%	100-34=66%	35%	3rd
RE	1-0.667=33%	100-33=67%	35%	4th

The probability of the tourists visiting Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove was shown in Table 4. Religion, Educational level and Gender of the tourists were found to be most significant variables. Levels of significance of religion was 90%, educational level was 90%, while gender was found to be 75%. The level of significance of the other variables were occupation (35%), income (35%), marital status (35%) and age (25%). Religion, educational level and gender of tourists were found to influence tourists' visits to Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove.

Table 4: Level of Significance and Ranking of the Variables in Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove, Osogbo

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	1 – a	a (probability of t-test)	a	Notation Ranking
Prvij	AG	1-0.762 = 24%	100-24=76%	25%	7th
	GD	1-0.264 =74%	100-74=26%	75%	3rd
	MS	1-0.669=33%	100-33=67%	35%	6th
	ED	1-0.094=29%	100-91-9%	90%	2nd
	IC	1-0.633=37%	100-37=63%	35%	4th
	OC	1-0.655=35%	100-35=65%	35%	5th
	RE	1-0.076=92%	100-92=8%	90%	1st

Purpose for which tourists to the selected tourists' destinations were shown in Table 5. For Ikogosi Warm Spring, tourists to the destination for the purpose to have fun (100%), to relax with friends (89%), for recreation (95%), because the destination is safe (83%), because of the landscape (97%). Only 42% of the tourists visit the destination for research purpose. For Idanre Hills and Resort, the major purposes were, to have fun (97%), recreation (96%), the landscape (75%), camping site (94%), historical and cultural purposes 96% and 97%, respectively. Other purposes include to relax with friends (80%), fun purpose was 80% in Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove. To explore the environment was 96%, 99% for safety, landscape was 91%, historical and cultural purposes were 88%. In general, it was observed that research purpose was just 48% at Ikogosi Warm Spring, while the purpose was high in Idanre Hill with 74% and 79% in Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove.

Table 5: Reasons for Choice of Destination

Reason for the destination choice	IkogosiWarm Spring N = 114		Idanre Hill and Resort N = 130		OsunOsogbo Sacred Groove N = 112	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
To have fun	114	100	126	97	98	88
To relax with friends	102	89	104	80	97	87
To relax with family members	84	74	111	85	69	62
For exercise	52	46	112	86	54	48
For research purpose	48	42	96	74	88	79
To explore the environment	69	61	104	80	108	96
For recreation	108	95	125	96	79	71
Presence of flora and funa	102	89	99	76	97	87
The landform	86	75	97	75	89	79
Comfort	76	67	75	58	99	88
Safety	95	83	108	83	111	99
Landscape	111	97	122	94	102	91
Good camping site	69	61	97	75	79	71
Historical purpose	102	89	125	96	99	88
Cultural purpose	102	89	126	97	78	88

Discussion

The findings in Table 1 showed that 78.1% of the tourists were within the age bracket of 18 years to 45 years. There were more youth than the older persons. Age is considered to be a crucial demographic factor, which is similar to the position of Ma *et al.,* (2018). At Idanre Hill and Resort, age was found to be the most significant factor in choosing the destination. This is attributable to the nature of the destination which involves climbing of hills. Expectedly, youth with vigour and energy would be more interested in the destination. This agreed with the position of Cakar and Seyitoglu (2016) that found youth to be more involved in tourism activities than the adults and the age and the probability of activity participation decreases with age.

Gender influences travel demands. The result showed that more men participate in tourism activities than women. This is in line with the position of Dragin, Jovicci, and Boskovic (2010), and Kavoura and Stavrianea (2015). However, the probabilities of women visiting were higher in Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove (75%) and Ikogosi Warm Spring (60%) than Idanre Hill (50%). Women prefer leisure and less energy exerting activities such as site seeing, shopping, dining and cultural activities than outdoor activities such as skiing, climbing of hill and other adventurous activities. This also agreed with the finding of Boonabaana (2017).

Marital status was found to be significant in influencing visit decision of tourists to Idanre Hill than Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove and Ikogosi Warm Spring. Generally, the singles were more than the married. The married spend less time on leisure than the singles. Singles accounted for 57% while married were 43%. The probabilities of influence of gender on tourist visit to Idanre Hill was 83% while 75% was recorded for Ikogosi Warm Spring and 35% for Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove. This indicates that both single and married prefer Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove to the other destinations.

Education is a significant factor in influencing the visit decision of tourists in all the three investigated tourists' destinations. Only 3.9% of the tourists did not have formal education, while 96.1% had, at least, primary education. The influence of educational background was significant in all the three destinations.

Significant values were obtained for the probability of tourists' visits, 76% for Idanre Hill, 75% for Ikogosi Warm Spring and 90% for Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove. The result was in agreement with the position of Spacek and AntousKoug (2013) who opined that socio-economic variables, such as education, are used in the travel cost method. Also, Leh *et al.,* (2020) agreed with the influence of education on the tourists' visits decisions. Income was found to be insignificant in influencing the tourists' visit-decisions in the three destinations. This is similar

to the findings of Leh *et al.,* (2020).The low cost charges at the destinations are affordable to the tourists to be able to make visits. Occupation was also found to be an insignificant factor in influencing the tourists' visit-decisions in the three destinations. 11.2% of the tourists were not gainfully employed and 29.2% were students, while 46.8% were fully employed. Influence of religion was significant in Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove, (92%). Most tourists visit the destination for spiritual purpose. The destination is always at its peak of patronage during Osun celebration, which has some spiritual undertone.

Conclusion

The influence of tourists' demographic characteristics on visit decision was examined in this study. The findings showed that age, gender, education, religion and marital status were the demographic factors that significantly influence tourists' visit-decisions. Factors such as income and family size did not have strong influence on visit-decisions. The study also showed that the demographic factors were influenced by the selected attributes of the destinations.

Education, age and gender were the most significant factors in Idanre Hill as a result of the attributes of the destination which involve climbing of hills. Gender, marital status and education were the major factors that influence tourists' visit-decision in Ikogosi Warm Spring and Resort, while the major demographic factors that influence tourists' visit-decision in Osun Osogbo Sacred Groove were education, gender and religion. The demographic characteristics influencing tourist visit decision for each of the tourists' destinations in Southwest Nigeria, as reported in this study, will assist tourist stakeholders and destination managers in their designs of promotional tools to market their destinations to prospective tourists.

Recommendations

The major purposes for visitation to the three tourists' destinations were found to be mainly for fun, relaxation with friends and family members. Others include historical and cultural purposes, recreation and because the destinations are safe. It is, therefore, recommended that relaxation spots should be provided at the Destinations. Different categories of games should also be made available with stands for sale of snacks and drinks for refreshment.

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