



ATTRACTION PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT CAPABILITY AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF TOURIST BEACHES IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

This study evaluated the effect of attraction product development capability on the marketing performance of tourist beaches, based on the perspectives of beach tourists/visitors in Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of domestic and foreign tourists at 4 beaches) in Akwa Ibom State during the 2019 Christmas and New year holiday from which a sample of 323 visitors was drawn using Freud and Williams formula for sample size determination from an infinite population. Primary data were collected from a well-structured questionnaire and administered on the visitors/tourists at four beaches in Akwa Ibom State, and secondary data from academic journal papers, textbooks, and internet resources. Statistical tools for data analyses include; descriptive analysis, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and, Multiple Regression Analysis. The findings of the descriptive analysis revealed tourist product deficiencies and poor marketing performance of the beaches. Multiple regression analysis showed that the tourist product capability of the beach destinations' stakeholders was a significant explanatory variables of the marketing performance of the beaches. The study concludes that tourist product development capability had significant positive effects on marketing performance in terms of tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. Based on the results of the study, it was recommended that Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Tourism and Culture; and other tourism industry stakeholders in the state should establish a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) through public-private partnership arrangement to develop and market the destinations by providing beach facilities and associated services in order to create a memorable and satisfying experience for tourists.

Keywords: Marketing capabilities, Product development, tourist satisfaction and revisit intention

1. INTRODUCTION

The rising status of marketing as a pervasive managerial and human activity is its applicability and deployment in the development and promotion of destination to draw tourists, investors and talents (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2010). Effective destination marketing has led to increase in demand for travel experience which is the major trend in the tourism industry. This increase is believed to be occasioned by the realization that quality of life and standard of living in the 21st century is not defined solely by the consumption of exotic durable and consumer products, but also by international travel experience and exposure. The great awakening that man's capacity to think, plan and act is enhanced by a conscious withdrawal into relaxation and recreation. It is also driven by the recognition that our mental power is determined by our willingness to renew our physical and spiritual strength (Dike, 2015). This is what Schneider (2004) refers to as "a travel that enriches the soul and broadens the mind". Accordingly, increase in tourist travel has intensified competition among destinations. Charhul and Devi (2015) assert that the ability of a tourist destination to create a memorable tourism experience from its unique culture, natural, landscape, and heritage is seen as a veritable source of competitive advantage in the global tourism market.

The ability of tourist destinations to develop and promote appropriate experiential travel products and services to target audience is crucial to the destination marketing performance though tourist arrivals, tourists receipts, satisfaction and revision intention (Boit & Doh, 2014). World Travel and Tourism Council Report (2019)

revealed that 1.4 billion tourists travelled in 2018; the number was forecast to increase to 1.6 billion in 2020 (United Nations World Tourism Organization Report, 2018). The global tourism performance scorecard shows that the tourism industry contributed US\$ 8.3 trillion to global GDP in 2018, forecast to increase to 9 trillion dollars in 2019. The tourism industry created 313 million jobs worldwide and outpaced other sectors in the wider economy in 109 countries out of 185 countries investigated (UNWTO, 2018), thus making the tourism industry one of the largest and fastest-growing businesses in the world.

Tourism performance scorecard (2018) shows variations in destination competitiveness across the globe in terms of tourist arrivals and earnings. Research suggests that 70% international tourists visited top ten destinations in 2018, none of which is in Africa (France, USA, Spain, China) leading the pack. Other destinations including Nigeria scrambled for the remaining 30%. Of the 62 million international arrivals in Africa in 2018, Nigeria only managed to attract 2.3 million tourists and generated USD 2.4594 million as earnings (UNWTO, 2018). This is considered abysmal in view of the nation's huge natural and cultural tourism resources. The afore-stated performance metrics is an indication that some destinations and sectors are more competitive in their tourist product offerings than others. Tourist attractions products have been identified as one of the factors influencing tourist travel and destination performance which varies according to the level of the innovativeness, competitiveness and passion of destination operators regarding tourism as source of revenue earnings.

For over four decades, firm's competitiveness and heterogeneity in performance has been an object of extensive investigations. For example, organizational leadership, industry characteristics, resources and capability have been shown to account for variation in organizational performance (Penrose, 1959; Andrews, 1971; Porter, 1980; Tees, Pisano & Schuen, 1987; Day, 1993; Barney, 1993). Within the capability sphere, marketing capability has been isolated as a source of competitive advantage for a firm (Morgan, 2018, Perez-Cabanero, 2015). Morgan (2012) conceptualizes marketing capabilities in terms of a firm's ability to use available resources to perform marketing tasks that achieve desired marketing outcomes. For Brumi and Verona (2007), marketing capability is the integrative process of using intangible and tangible resources to satisfy the demands of customers, to differentiate products and services, and to create brand competitive advantage. Applying marketing capabilities to the tourism destination context, Haugland et al. (2011) view destination marketing capabilities as the destination actors' collective ability to integrate, reconfigure, gain, and release distributed resources and competencies to create products and services that deliver value in memorable experiences to tourists and visitors. They are expressed in the quality of product and service offerings as well as in organizational and destination's processes.

From the above standpoint, tourist attraction product development capability has been identified as a significant dimension of destination marketing capabilities. In the context of beach tourism, we view tourist attraction product development capability as the ability of a tourist beach management to generate exciting, satisfying and pleasurable experience for tourists through value addition in the forms of good beaches in water quality, sand quality, facilities, beach environment cleanliness, ambience and sustainability for the achievement of set objectives. Consequently, we argue that a beach destination's drawing power and competitiveness is a function of the ability of its management and other destination actors to add value to the primary products (ocean or water and sand resources) (Dodds & Holmes, 2019).

Despite its short history, various dimensions of marketing capabilities such as product development capabilities have been investigated in other industries and various regions of the world. Findings consistently show a positive correlation between product development capability and marketing performance. However, knowledge is lacking in the literature regarding the role of tourist attraction product development capability and marketing performance in the tourism destination context in Nigeria thus creating a gap that needs to be bridged. As the copious reports of international tourism organizations have shown, Nigeria's share of African and global tourism market is unfortunately and comparatively low in spite her enormous tourism potentials. The unenviable tourism performance scorecard of Nigeria is a reflection of the composite dismal performance of the tourism industry in many states in Nigeria, including Akwa Ibom State. Jumia Travel Report (2018) and Economic Sectors Report (2019) show that the state is a destination of low tourism patronage with recreational tourism sector in the state contributing less than 2% to the GDP. In addition, the Tourism Competitiveness Report (2018) revealed that no tourist site in the State was listed among 5 top destinations in Nigeria despite her claim of having some of the naturally beautiful beaches, captivating and enthralling culture, golf resort, international sport complex, world class Tropicana entertainment centre and a people of legendary hospitality orientation. This tends to suggest that something is wrong with Akwa Ibom State's tourism marketing approach in particular and Nigeria in general. Consequently, this has necessitated the need for tourism destination marketing capabilities and destination performance audit, beginning with visitors' satisfaction with the tourist attraction products development capability of the beach destinations in the state. Therefore a study evaluating the tourist attraction product development capability and its effect on destination performance in terms of visitors' satisfaction, can make practical and theoretical contributions to tourism marketing in the country's economic diversification drive in the post-COVID-19 era. It is against this backdrop that this study was undertaken to evaluate the effect of tourist attraction product development capability and destination performance of tourist beaches in Akwa Ibom State

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

A range of different theories is applied to ground conceptualizations of marketing capabilities and destination marketing performance. This work draws on the resource-based theory, capability-based theory and disconfirmation of expectations theory to understand the mechanics of marketing capabilities in a destination performance context.

Resource-based Theory

The resource- capability based theory (RBT) states that firms can achieve competitive advantage and higher performance than competitors based on their resource and capabilities endowment. Competitive advantage in this context refers to the strategic benefits gained by a firm over its rivals that enable the firm to compete more effectively in the marketplace, which then leads to superior profitability. Competitive advantage can also be viewed as a firm's ability to contribute more customer value than its competitors (Wu, 2012). This focus is based on the integration and coordination of firm activities towards satisfying customers to maximize long-term profitability (O'Cass & Voola, 2011). Božič and Cvelbar (2016) claim that the Resource- Capability -Based Theory has its roots in Economics and Strategic Management literature and dates back to the work of Penrose in 1959 and Andrews in 1971, respectively. However, it was Wernerfelt in 1984 who coined and formally established the resource-based view (RBV) underlining that firms must focus on developing resources rather than products. For more than three decades, it has become the main theoretical framework for understanding the competitive advantage of firms. He considered a firm as a bundle of resources and capabilities. A resource is composed of tangible and intangible components. For example, industrial equipment is tangible component, whereas technology know-how and human resources are intangible components. Morgan (2012) classified marketing resources into seven different types: knowledge-based resources, physical resources, reputational resources, informational resources, relational resources, organisational resources and legal resources.

The Resource-Based Theory also posits that resources must fulfill specific criteria for them to serve as sources of competitive advantage. Resources and capabilities should not only be valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN), but also to enable value to be created (Barney, 2007). A very useful feature of the RBT is that it helps explain why some firms perform better than others by explicitly looking at the internal resources and capabilities as sources of sustainable competitive advantage (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). It explains that the way a firm uses its available resources and existing capabilities to the best level possible generates new knowledge that cannot be easily imitated, thus, creating immobility of competitive capability-producing resources, and bringing inimitability to its resource-capability framework (Song et al., 2007).

The resource-based view is very relevant to this study in particular and tourism in general because tourist destinations are endowed with resources which can be developed into tourist experiential products. In the context of tourism, nature-based resources play very important roles as tourist attractions. Rocks, mountains, beaches, waterfalls, wildlife, fauna and flora, climate and the weather are tourism resources that can be harnessed into tourism products to create value to visitors and generate revenue for the operators in many countries. The appropriateness of the nature-based theory to this study is readily evident because natural factor endowment provides the raw materials for the development of eco-tourism products such as the beaches. In the same vein, cultural resources such as cultural sites, ancient monuments, artifacts, authentic food, sacred sites and other cultural heritages are indispensable in destination marketing.

Similarly, material resources (facilities, equipment, finance, etc.) and human resource (skilled and knowledgeable workers or employees) are the ones that drive organizational processes to produce market offerings, without whom no organization can function effectively. Thus, their importance in destination marketing system cannot be over-emphasized. Indeed, tourist organizations can integrate and co-ordinate their organizational resources to appropriate the tourism resources in the destination for competitive advantage.

The Capability-based Theory

The capability-based theory claims that the competitive advantage of a firm derives from its capabilities. Capabilities are complex bundles of skills and collective learning exercised through organizational processes. In other words, capabilities are the abilities of a firm to use resources to achieve the desired marketing outcome (Mogan, 2012).

The capability-based theory states that a firm can achieve competitive advantage through distinctive capabilities possessed by the firm and that the firm must continuously re-invest to maintain and expand existing capabilities to inhibit imitability. Capability creates no competitive advantage if it is easily achieved (imitated) by one's competitors. Thus, the potential sources of competitive advantage of a firm are those capabilities that are difficult to be developed by the firm's competitors (Buble et al., 2003). The statement above reflects the fact that capability is mostly intangible, and involves effective utilization of knowledge and skills to take part in value enhancement processes, which, however, is expressed through the quality of available products, services and processes (Makadok, 2011).

The appropriateness of the capability-based theory to the present study is that it does recognize not only the importance of resources but also capabilities as that which constitute a destination's capacity and ability to deploy resources as potential sources of its competitive advantage. What this implies is that resources per se cannot contribute to the attainment of a positional advantage unless the resources are transformed into the capability for enhancing value offerings (Božič & Cvelbar, 2016; Perez- Cabanero & Gonzalez-Cruz, 2015; Merrilees et al., 2011). In

the context of the tourism industry, the natural, material and human resources have to be integrated and deployed effectively and efficiently to develop valuable marketing outcomes. Thus, making it impossible without capabilities since the resources on their own cannot create value.

According to the popular capability dictum, 'competitiveness is not in what we have (resources), but in what we do with what we have' (Dike, 2015). In this regard, capability becomes the resources deployment system. Destination capabilities make it possible for strategies to succeed. The quality of tourism destination products and services are, therefore, a reflection of destination actors' capabilities or deficiencies.

The Disconfirmation of Expectations Theory

Drawing on the shortcomings of the early theories of consumer satisfaction, Oliver (1980) proposed the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) as the most promising theoretical framework for the assessment of customer satisfaction. The model implies that consumers purchase goods and services with pre-purchase expectations about the anticipated performance. The expectation level then becomes a standard for judging the product. That is, once the product or service is used, outcomes are compared against expectations. If the outcome matches the expectation, confirmation occurs. Disconfirmation occurs where there is a difference between expectations and outcomes. A customer is either satisfied or dissatisfied as a result of positive or negative difference between expectations and perceptions. Thus, when service performance is better than what the customer had initially expected, there is a positive disconfirmation between expectations and performance resulting from satisfaction (Bin-Nordin, 2008). Therefore, it could be argued that in the destination context, tourist satisfaction or dissatisfaction requires experience with the destination attributes, influenced by the perceived quality and the value of the tourism services at the destination (Puh, 2014). It is the primary determinant of tourist behavior in the industry.

The relevance of this theory to the present study is its appropriateness for the review of the dependent variable measures of tourism marketing performance of the study (tourist satisfaction and revisit intention). The disconfirmation of expectation theory helps destination marketing managers in serving their target markets and in making informed decisions. This theory is very useful to this study because previous research on customer satisfaction had also adopted it, as shown in Marinao (2017), Zehner (2016); Dmitrovic, Cvelbar, Kolar, Brencic, Ograjens'ek, and Z'abkar (2006). What this suggests is that the results of continuous customer satisfaction monitoring can serve as an input for trend analysis and strategic discussions regarding the development of a tourist destination. The ultimate goals of monitoring satisfaction include identifying strategic objectives at the destination level, preparing tactical and operational plans and ultimately increasing the competitiveness of a given destination.

2.2 Tourist Attraction Products Development Capability

The marketing concept requires organizations and destinations to satisfy the needs of customers and tourists. The companies' and destination's competitiveness and survival depend on their ability to create loyal customers because their products match the needs of customers (Okefor, 2007). Soufivard (2012) contends that tourism destination operators with a high level of capabilities are those that can effectively and efficiently develop tourist products and services that meet or surpass tourist expectations. To get such capabilities, Soufivard asserts, would require skilled and expert employees and consultants in developing enjoyable infrastructure, facilities and high-quality service delivery. However, the quality of tourist product/service offerings at a destination represents the quality of the marketing capabilities of the destination actors which some scholars refer to as destination attributes (Chahal & Devi, 2015; Puh, 2014; Zhou, 2005; Buhalis, 2000).

Tourism literature suggests that tourist product development requires peculiar capabilities. Okpoko et al. (2011) and Okoli (2001) refer to this uniqueness as 'tourisfication' capability which they define as the ability involved in the process of identifying, and processing a tourist resource into tourist products or attractions (Okoli, 2001) or harnessing primary 'product' to yield a touristic value that creates memorable tourist experience (Zehner, 2014). Chukwu (2011) opines that people travel to destinations that appeal to them or where their interest is greatest depending on resources and other factors such as attractions, infrastructure, and accessibility. The quality of attraction products, therefore, represents the quality of a destination's product development capability (Esu, 2015). In the context of beach tourism, Dodd and Holmes (2019) assert that attraction product development capability is the ability of beach managers to harness the primary product (quality of beach water and sand) beyond its natural beauty and shoreline to yield touristic value. Activities towards improving the quality of beaches include beach cleanliness, environmental education and information, water quality, environmental management, and safety and services). Swanzil (2017) opined that tourist product development capability in the beach domain is the ability of the beach management to design innovative beach facilities which include: resorts, restaurants/bars, refreshment kiosks, changing rooms, seafront toilets /outdoor showers, deck chairs and Parasol (sun umbrella), water sports, shark preventing net, lifeguard services, emergency first-aid services and sea rafters in addition to the natural sand and water quality to draw tourists.

Several other types of attraction product development capabilities have been expressed in other forms of tourism and acknowledged in the destination marketing literature, for example, cultural tourism ((United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Report, 2019; Esu, 2015, Okpoko (2009); Eco-tourism (Ayodele, 2017; Suambi, 2015; Umoeren, 2014; Aremu, 2001), religious/mass tourism (The World Tourism Organization Report, 2015; Gyang, 2013). (Viyayanand, 2012; cited in Bello & Bello, 2017); medical /health tourism ((Patients Beyond Borders Report, 2018; Zennel, 2016; Ugochukwu & Ekene, 2015; Kuzma, 2005;). Urban tourism (Christopher, 2016, Zansen, Jonnason & Osman, 2014; adventure tourism ((Bello & Bello, 2017; Chukwu, 2011; Okpoko, 2009).; educational

(Project Atlas, 2017; UNESCO, 2017, (Kingston, 2012; Olori, 2019) and business tourism (Dike, 2015, Bhatia, 2010). However, in the context of this study, tourist attraction product development capability was limited to beach tourism.

2.3 Beach Tourism

Dodds and Holmes (2019) define beach tourism as travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes specifically on beaches. Thus, implying that tourists who visit beaches would like to see and feel the sea breeze and saltwater and participate in activities as well as enjoy the experience created by the beach facilities and environment (Lam-González, Carmelo and Javier (2019). Beach tourism is one of the most popular types of tourism on a global scale and is a critical economic driver for destinations (Alves et al., 2014; Houston, 2013; Loomis & Santiago (2013). Lucrezi and Saayman (2015) consider beach tourism to be one of the fastest-growing areas of tourism in the world today, which is epitomized by the "3Ss"-sun, sand and sea to create a safe, stable and attractive coastal environment with clean waters and healthy coastal habitats. Amyot and Grant (2014) opine that beaches are prime recreational grounds that attract people to the water and therefore business to the surrounding area. A beach therefore is the prototypical scene of recreation and leisure, and one of the most popular types of tourism, for example, Ibeno beach and others in Ibaka, Utaewa and Nwaniba in Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria draw visitors from far and because of their unique features.

Beaches are natural coastal features; therefore, beach tourism is considered as an important sub-set of maritime or nautical tourism. Lam-González, Carmelo and Javier (2019) define maritime tourism as the group of tourist activities undertaken in marine and coastal environments, where leisure and recreation at sea are the leading travel motivations of the tourists. However, a nautical tourist may carry out other tourism activities such as enjoying nature, the beach, the cultural offer of the destination, etc., as well as having different travel motivations. Accordingly, the authors define a nautical tourist as a traveler whose main motivation is recreational sailing or sports recreation at sea. The main activities of maritime tourism take place on beaches, coasts and in marinas and even in rivers and lakes, and involve some physical sport, without the need for professional training.

Page and Connell (2006) view beach tourism as a component of coastal tourism that embraces a full range of leisure and recreational activities that take place in the coastal zone and offshore coastal waters across the globe. The authors assert that beach tourism is an integral part of coastal tourism development which include facilities such as resorts, restaurants, food industry, vacation homes, dive shops, recreational boating harbors, fishing facilities, swimming and cruises.

Historically, the coastal areas have always been an attraction for humanity for thousands of years. Hall and Page (2005, cited in Connell & Page, 2006) support the historical view that the relationship between coastal areas and tourism is as old as tourism itself. Research suggests that early tourists favoured seaside locations and made journeys to fashionable resorts to bathe in sea waters to take advantage of their alleged and perceived curative powers (Chukwu, 2011). However, in the modern mass tourism context, the beach is a recent phenomenon. Still, it has become an important coastal site for human recreations and tourism in the contemporary times, building on established heritage. The authors captured their observation of beach tourism in these words:

The coastal environment is a magnet for tourists, although its role in leisure activities has changed in time and space; as coastal destinations have developed, waned, been reimaged and redeveloped in the twentieth century. The coastal environment is a complex system which is utilized by the recreationist for day trips, while juxtaposed to those visits are those made by the domestic and international tourists (Hall & Page, 2005, cited in Connell and Page, 2006).

Implicit in the above statement is the fact that coastal tourism in general and beach tourism, in particular, has a high-drawing power, which explains why it is becoming a highly competitive tourist destination with attendant positive socio-economic impacts on the investors and the host communities.

2.4 .Marketing Performance

Dunere (2013) views marketing performance as "the extent to which a firm performs as it relates to its marketing objectives, goals and competition". The author identifies the quantitative and qualitative facets of marketing performance. In the former, the author describes marketing performance in terms of sales revenue and market share while the latter is viewed in terms of customer satisfaction, retention and corporate image.

Morgan (2012) opines that marketing performance is a sub-set of business performance. The author affirms that marketing performance is the extent to which a business performs on the market and financial metrics. Morgan's market performance indicators include sales, satisfaction, retention, share while financial criteria are cash flow, costs, margin, and returns on investments, market value, and stock risks. Implicit in those definitions is the fact that marketing performance involves financial and non-financial elements. In the same vein, Darroch and McNaughton (2005) conceptualize marketing performance as a firm's position in an industry with relation to competition and industry average. They stressed that a firm might use comparative measures to assess its performance, for example, a manager may say: "compared with the industry average, our company is more profitable". These scholars also added that a manager might also use internally reflective measures; for example, "we are more profitable than we were five years ago". They argued that the measures are objectively and subjectively classified. Thus, suggesting that performance measures can capture both financial (in terms of profit, sales growth, market share) and non-financial measures (such as customer satisfaction, retention, market share, sales growth, corporate image, new product success, industrial harmony, teamwork, etc.).

Applying the concept of marketing performance to a tourism destination, Kozak (2013) views it as a destination's effectiveness in terms of the number of tourist arrivals and receipts at given point in time relative to the competition. It also includes the degree of tourists' satisfaction and retention. Implicit in this definition is the idea that destination marketing performance involves both objective and subjective elements. The implication is that tourist satisfaction can be useful for evaluating a destination's performance and determine the number of repeat visits to a destination and tourist receipts (spending).

Tourists' Satisfaction

Boit and Doh (2014) perceive tourist satisfaction as a business term, a measure of how products and services supplied by tourism service providers match or surpass tourists' expectation. In the tourism context, the tourists, visitors, guests or passengers are the customers. Also, it is considered a key performance indicator within the tourism business and a source of competitive advantage (Kozack, 2012). Tourist satisfaction is, therefore, a tourism business philosophy which pertains the creation of value for customers, anticipating and managing their expectations and demonstrating the ability to satisfy their needs. It is also the degree of overall pleasure or contentment felt by a customer, resulting from the ability of the service to fulfill the customer's desires, expectations and needs in relation to the service (Anderson & Fornell, 2004). However, Hui, Wan and Ho (2007) opine that "what matters is not how satisfied destinations keep their customers, but how many satisfied customers they keep". This perspective tends to suggest that satisfaction is not evaluated from the standpoint of organizations-how they feel about customers' retention, but the number of satisfied and loyal customers. In the context of a beach destination, tourist satisfaction refers to the fulfillment of the tourist expectations and beach experience in terms of pleasure, ambience, likeness and feelings generated by the beach products/services.

Generally, Darsono and Junaedi (2006) posit that satisfaction is an outcome resulting from a consumption experience, while others conceptualize it as an evaluation of the consumption process. When a consumer claims to be satisfied with the product or service, he means he likes the way it has performed in use. Satisfaction attitudes are retrospective evaluations of the product based on experience. Hunt (2000), argued that consumer satisfaction with a product refers to the favorableness of the individual's subjective evaluation of the various outcomes and experience associated with buying or using it. It serves as a feedback mechanism which enables destination to reevaluate their offers to tourists whether or not it has met the market segment's expectations. For these reasons, Xia, Jie, Chaolin and Feng (2009) opine that satisfaction is an important research area for both practitioners and academics. Yet, there is limited knowledge regarding the tourist satisfaction index on the tourism scorecard of Nigeria, hence the need to investigate this facet of destination marketing performance.

2.4 Empirical Review and Hypothesis Development

Attraction Products Development Capability and Marketing Performance

Pieces of evidence abound in the destination and traditional marketing literature that suggest that the ability of tourism destinations and organizations to develop products/service or modify old ones is associated with various positive organizational and destination outcomes (Salah (2015; Nalcaci, 2014).

In the tourism and hospitality industry in general and beach tourism in particular, the role of attraction product development capabilities in supporting destination marketing performance has been acknowledged and well documented. Many researchers and scholars have tried to link tourist attraction product development capabilities to destination performance in terms of tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty, revisit intention, tourist flow and tourist spending.

Dodd and Holmes (2019) conducted an important study on factors influencing beach tourist satisfaction and repeat visit involving 1,451 tourists at local and urban beach destinations across Ontario, Canada. Using hierarchical multivariate regression-a model for predicting overall beachgoer satisfaction, the study revealed that attraction product development capability in the context beach tourism, as expressed in the quality beach environment and beach facilities correlated positively with tourist satisfaction and future repeat visit. Thus, the ability of beach managers to harness the primary product (beach) beyond its natural beauty and shoreline is what yields a touristic value for beachgoers, for example, beach cleanliness, environmental education and information, water quality, environmental management, and safety and services.

Evaluating destination marketing capabilities and performance in the beach tourism subsector, Lam-González, Carmelo and Javier (2019) assessed the effect of previous islands' choice and experience in tourist satisfaction in a competitive maritime tourism context. The objective of the study was to test the hypothesis that tourist satisfaction with nautical destinations depends on the experience generated by the quality of attraction products of previous competing destinations. Using data from the survey conducted on tourists visiting Cape Verde results provided further empirical evidence that tourist satisfaction with Cape Verde correlated positively with the diversity and quality of the nautical product offers and authenticity of the cultural experience offered by the destination. This implies that beach value is created by combining beach quality, facilities and cultural authenticity of the destination with the primary product (ocean) to optimize tourist satisfaction. Swanzil (2017) conducted a study to test the proposition that beach tourism development affects tourist experience in terms of satisfaction and revisit intention at Caribbean beach destinations. Findings provided empirical support showing that beach tourist product development capability; in terms of the ability to design innovative beach facilities such as resorts, restaurants/bars, refreshment kiosks, changing rooms, seafront toilets /outdoor showers, deck chairs and Parasol (sun umbrella), water sports, shark preventing net,

lifeguard services, emergency first-aid services and sea rafters to the natural sand and water quality had a strong positive drawing power on tourists. thus, creating a memorable and satisfying experience and revisit intentions.

Oyebode (2017) conducted a study on marketing strategy and tourism patronage in Southwest Nigeria. The data were obtained through the questionnaire from the managers of tourist destinations in Southwest Nigeria. The study revealed that attraction product development capability of the destination in terms of availability, quality, tourist site ambience, the process of service delivery affected tourism patronage, which was consequent upon tourist satisfaction.

Bearden and Yawken (2016) investigated the influence of tourism product marketing on competitive advantage in the Brazilian destination context. Drawing from a survey of 428 international tourists across popular tourist beaches in Rio de Janeiro, the results indicated that beach product development in terms of facilities, ambience, cleanliness, sand and water quality as well as hospitality offerings correlated positively with increased tourist satisfaction level, tourist arrivals and repeat visit intentions.

Research conducted by Ragawan, Subramanian and Sharif (2014) on tourist perceptions of destination travel attributes from the lenses of international tourists to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The analysis of data obtained from a sample of 140 international tourists visiting Kuala Lumpur Malaysia revealed that attraction products were important travel determinants which affected tourist satisfaction positively. Considerably, a tourist destination unable to develop attraction products to generate pleasurable and memorable experiences for tourists cannot compete in today's competitive tourism market that is characterized by the emergence of many new tourist destinations in many countries. Overall customer satisfaction with tourism products induces repeat visit, recommendations and revisit intention, all of which positively correlate with tourist arrival and tourist receipt (financial performance).

To determine travel motivation and visitors' satisfaction of eight (8) beaches in the Caribbean littoral of Columbia, an important research conducted by Bottero (2012) found that beach tourism product development using the measures of water and sand quality as well as the relaxing atmosphere were major drivers of satisfaction for the beachgoers. Beach facilities such as restaurants, refreshment kiosks, changing rooms, deck chairs and sun lounges, parasols, and water rafts were identified as important components of beach attraction products. Ariza, Ballester, Rigall-I-Torrent, Saló., Roca., Villares, Jiménez and Sardá. (2012) carried out a study on the relationship between quality, users' perception and economic valuation in North West Mediterranean beaches. The findings revealed that good environmental quality and natural beach conditions were important drivers of tourist satisfaction. Researching on product development capability and performance from a tourism standpoint, Kozak (2012) empirically demonstrated from his study that poor beach development or degradation of beach quality at 'sea, sun and sand' holiday destinations could lead to a negative impact on customer satisfaction, the number of tourist arrivals, length of bed nights and the number of repeat visits. As a consequence, a low level of tourism income is generated compared to destinations that have exhibited greater tourism products development capability.

Micallef, Williams and Fernandez (2011) conducted a study on bathing area quality and landscape evaluation on the Mediterranean coast of Andalucia, Spain. The objective of the study was to compare tourist satisfaction with expectations. The result indicated that the majority of beach visitors' experiences with the attraction product component did not exceed their expectations. The results of this study confirmed that facility and beach quality had the most significant explanatory power when attempting to understand the overall satisfaction of beach tourists.

Roca and Villares (2008) investigated the influence of perception of beach product quality on tourists satisfaction at beaches in Costa Brava and Spain. The result showed that beach amenities, activities and facilities were significant determinants of tourists' satisfaction. The studies of other researchers on tourist product development and marketing performance involving tourists have also revealed a positive effect of good quality of beach amenities on tourist satisfaction. Using the indicators of quality of beach water and beach sand quality and facilities to measure beach tourism development and repeat visit for satisfaction, the study by Ibrahim and Gill (2005) among 400 beach tourists in Barbados established a strong interactive effect of the quality of beach product development on marketing performance.

The above review suggests that product development capability is very crucial to firms and tourist destination performance regardless of the variation in the elements of product development in the tourism and firm context. In tourism, the review has confirmed that the attraction product at a destination that is capable of generating positive memorable experience can also engender tourist satisfaction, which is a precursor to improved organizational performance in revenue and profit. The relationship between attractions product capability and destination marketing performance could have arisen from the fact that the product is the cornerstone for predicting all the other marketing activities. A firm or destination deficient in product development capability cannot go far in the competitive business environment even if it possesses other competencies. Besides, a firm or tourist destination fulfills its socio-economic responsibilities through its products/service offerings. When tourist attractions (natural and human-made beauties) such as beaches, waterfalls, mountains amusement parks and cultural festivals are adequately harnessed and packaged and promoted, it can increase touristic value and enhance destination marketing performance. Thus, it is essential to further test the proposition that a significant interactive effect might exist between tourist attraction product development and marketing performance in the beach tourism subsector in Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria. Consequently, our hypothesis is stated thus:

H1: Attraction product development capability of the beach destinations does not affect their marketing performance significantly.

3 Methodology

The descriptive survey design was appropriate to the study because it helped the researcher to find answers to the research questions of the study and to test the hypotheses. The population of this study included domestic and international visitors available at Ibeno beach, Nwaniba beach, Ibaka beach and Utaewa beaches during the Christmas (2019) and New year (January 1st Jan, 2020) holiday season in Akwa-Ibom State. Diesamm (2012) has noted that in the context of the tourism and hospitality industry, the population of research involving customers is always large, unpredictable, mobile and transient. It is often not fixed; for example, the likelihood of a researcher meeting the same beach visitor or air passenger again at the same place in the future is slim. Specifically, the researcher adopted the purposive sampling method to select the sample based on his judgment and on-the-spot accessibility, availability and willingness of the beach visitors to participate in the study during the researcher's visits to the beaches. The sample size used in this study was determined by the application of Freund & Williams (1992) formula. Thus, three hundred and twenty-three (323) beach visitors constituted the sample size of the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to draw the sample elements based on the number of visitors available at the beaches and willing to participate in the study. Our sample size is consistent with the extant suggestion of Roscoe (1975 cited in Aliman et al., 2016) that a sample of more than 30 and less than 500 is sufficient for most research in the Social Sciences of which Tourism is a subset. Quota sampling was also adopted in the selection of the sample subjects because of variation in the level of beach development and the destination's drawing power. This sampling method is evident in the number of visitors drawn from each of the four beaches surveyed in the study. As Udall & Eneyo (2011:216) rightly stated, "there is no best sampling method; the nature of the study should dictate the method to be used". The implication is that both probability and non-probability sampling methods are acceptable in tourism/hospitality research.

Primary data were obtained from the respondents through the questionnaire, while secondary data were generated from relevant academic journals and textbooks in tourism marketing. The questionnaire was the primary data collection instrument for this study. A questionnaire is a set of specific questions that are constructed and used by the researcher in obtaining information from the respondents (Makinde 2015). The questionnaire is one of the most used methods of survey research (Ezejelue, Ogwo & Nkamnebe, 2008). The researcher and ten (10) research assistants administered copies of questionnaires on tourists/visitors visiting the four beaches for fun during the 2019 Christmas and 2020 New year holiday season in Akwa Ibom State. Visitors/tourists were briefed on the purpose of the study and the questionnaires retrieved when filled. The dependent and independent variables were measured on the 5-point Likert Scale, and the response scales for each statement in the survey questionnaire are 5-Strongly Agree, 4 -Agree Fairly Strongly, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire items of the variables were modified from previous studies based on their relevance and appropriateness to the present study. Items on attraction products development capability and tourist satisfaction were modified from Marimao (2017) while items on revisit intention were modified from Aliman et al. (2016).

In this study, the various types of validity adopted were: face validity, convergent validity and discriminant validity. , face validity for the research instrument used was ascertained through expert opinions and contributions. Also, it was assessed by tourism experts such as tourist managers, tour operators and marketing scholars based on their experience in the industry and academia respectively. Reliability was determined using (i) Cronbach Alpha coefficient (0.7 and above) and (iii) factor analysis, composite reliability and average variance extract as well as correlation matrix for testing how the combination of measures constituted valid and reliable factors.

The descriptive data were analyzed using frequency distributions, percentages, mean scores and other descriptive statistical measures, all in tables with the aid of the SPSS & Microsoft Excel. Multiple regression analysis was used for the hypotheses. This analytical tool is often used to examine the existence of the linear relationship between a dependent variable and a set of (more than two) independent variables (Onodugo, Ugwuonah & Ebinne, 2010). For this study, the multiple linear regression analysis was adopted to determine the predictive power of the independent variable (attraction products development capability) in explaining marketing performance (dependent variable) in terms of tourists'/visitors' satisfaction and revisit intention.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Section 1 of Table 4.2 above shows the information on the category of visitors. The table revealed that (37) respondents (12%) were foreign while (271) respondents (88%) were domestic, thus, implying that domestic respondents were of the majority. Section 2 of Table 4.2 above shows the information on the type of visitors. The table revealed that (36) respondents (12%) were companies staff, (10) respondents (3%) were Government officials, while (262) respondents (85%) were independent visitors, thus, showing that independent visitors were of the majority. Section 3 of Table 4.2 above shows the information on the length of stay. The table revealed that (203) respondents (66%) stay for 1 day while (105) respondents (34%) stay for 2 – 5 days. This result points out that majority of the respondents stayed for 1 day. Section 4 of Table 4.2 above shows the information on age brackets of the respondents. 101 respondents (33%), were within 18-30 years, 83 respondents (27%) were within 31–40 years, 70 respondents (23%) were within 41–50 years while 54 respondents (17%) were greater than 51 years. This information shows that majority of the respondents were within the ages of 18 – 30 years. Section 5 of Table 4.2 shows the marital status of respondents. 169 respondents (56%) were single, 101 respondents (33%) were married,

20 respondents (6%) were divorced, while 18 respondents (5%) are separated. This information implies that majority of the respondents were single. Section 6 of Table 4.4 shows the gender of respondents. 172 respondents (56%) were male, while 136 respondents (44%) were female. This information implies that majority of the respondents were male.

Section 7 of Table 4.2 shows the educational background of respondents. FSLC (31) (10%), WASC/GCE (62) (20%), OND (48) (15%), B.Sc/HND (103) (33%), M.Sc/MBA (54) (17%), Ph.D (6) (2%), Others (10) (3%). From the information it shows that respondents with B.SC/HND are of the majority. Section 8 of Table 4.2 shows the state of origin of visitors. 227 respondents (74%) were from Akwa-Ibom, 51 respondents (17%) were from Cross River state, 8 respondents (6%) were from Rivers, 7 respondents (2%) were from South East, while 5 respondents (1%) were from Delta. From this information, it shows that respondents from Akwa-Ibom are of the majority. Section 9 of Table 4.2 shows the Nationality of respondents. 294 respondents (96%) were Nigerians, 10 respondents (3%) were from ECOWAS countries, while 4 respondents (1%) were Others. From the above information, it shows that respondents from Nigeria are of majority. Section 10 of Table 4.2 shows the purpose of the visit. 198 respondents (64%) came for Appreciation of nature/ leisure, 21 respondents (7%) came for Educational excursion, while 89 respondents (29%) came for Group meeting. Thus, showing that respondents who came for Appreciation of nature/Leisure are of majority. Section 11 of Table 4.2 shows the frequency of visit. 139 respondents (45%) were first-time visitors, while 169 respondents (55%) were repeat-visitors. From this information, it shows that majority of the respondents were repeat visitors. Section 12 of Table 4.2 shows the travel party. 62 respondents (20%) travelled alone, 91 respondents (30%) travelled with family/partner, and 108 respondents (35%) travelled with friends / relatives, while 47 respondents (15%) travelled with organized groups. From this information, it shows that majority of the respondents traveled with friends/relatives. Section 13 of Table 4.2 shows the Monthly Income of Visitors. 55 respondents (18%) earn less than ₦100,000, 163 respondents (53%) earn ₦101,000 – ₦200,000, while 90 respondents (29%) earn above ₦200,000. Thus, majority of respondents earn ₦101,000 to ₦200,000 monthly.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on items of Attraction products development capability
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Developed coastline and sea sand	308	3.5000	1.40381
Beach Cleanliness and Sustainability	308	3.4416	1.43246
Fascinating ambience	308	3.2175	1.48656
Water sporting opportunities	308	3.5877	1.50421
Well developed site with facilities	308	2.2045	1.28397
Valid N (listwise)	308		

Information on table 1 above indicates the statistical result of attraction products development capability of the beaches studied in Akwa Ibom through the application of descriptive statistics with statistical package for social science (SPSS). Majority of the mean scores on the items were greater than 3 with the mean score only one item (well-developed site with facilities) being less than 3.0. Thus, indicating that respondents generally agreed on the items, hence all items were accepted except one. The mean scores for the items suggest that the respondents acknowledged the availability of natural tourism resources at the attraction sites and did not agree that the attraction sites had well-developed facilities. The standard deviations were relatively low, indicating that the responses were not far from each other. The grand mean of 3.9 > 3.0 is the required mean of a five-point Likert scale. This implies that respondents generally agreed on items of attraction products development capability except for the provision of facilities at the beaches.

Table 2: Summary of Descriptive Statistics on Marketing Performance

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TS	308	1.55	5.00	2.7649	.83025
RI	308	1.67	5.00	3.5487	.68499

Table 2 shows the marketing performance of the beaches in terms of overall tourists’ satisfaction and revisit intention. As the table indicates, the mean score on tourist satisfaction (2.7649) is less than 3; an indication that respondents generally agreed that the beaches delivered low satisfaction while the mean score of revisit intention (3.5487) was more than 3.0, suggesting revisit intention by the respondents.

The grand mean of 3.9 > 3.0 is the required mean of a five-point Likert scale. The above information, therefore suggests poor marketing performance in terms of overall tourists’ satisfaction with the destination offers.

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS:

Effect of attraction products development capability on marketing performance

Ho₁: Attraction product development capability of the beaches does not have a positive and significant effect on their marketing performance.

HA₁: Attraction product development capability of the beaches has a positive and significant effect on their marketing performance.

Table 3: Model Summary in Predicting Marketing Performance

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.896 ^a	.802	.798	.44104

a. Predictors: (Constant), APDC

Table 4. ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	99.304	7	14.186	31.902	.000 ^b
	Residual	132.962	299	.445		
	Total	232.265	306			

a. Dependent variable: Performance

b. b.Predictor: (Constant), APDC

Table 3 shows that R is .896, which means that the independent variable is 89.6% correlated with the dependent variable. R square is .802; this implies that the independent variable will explain 80.2% of the dependent variable while the adjusted R square is .798. Simply put, the model summary is an indication that 80.2% of the variance in marketing performance can be explained by the changes in independent variable (Attraction product development capability).The R square statistic in the model is a measure used to measure the extent to which the total variation in the dependent variable is explained by the regression (Onudugo, Ugwuonah & Ebinne, 2010).

Table 4 shows that f-value is 31.902, which is greater than the mean square value (14.186), and the p-value is .000. As a general rule, this model is considered as a ‘good fit’ as it can explain above 60% (threshold) of variance in the dependent variable: marketing performance (Moosa & Hassan, 2015).What this means is that the regression model has made a significant fit with the data.

Table 5: Regression Analysis for Hypotheses Findings for the Model

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.437	.517		2.782	.006
	APDC	.237	.077	.164	3.070	.002

a. Dependent variable: Performance

b. b. Predictor: (Constant), APDC,

The test result in table 5 shows that the attraction product development capability (APDC) beta value (β) is 0.164; this means that attraction product development capability explains 16.4 % of marketing performance. The P-value.002 < 0.05), implies that attraction product development capability positively and significantly affected the marketing performance of the beach destinations in Akwa-Ibom State. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected as the alternative was accepted

FINDINGS

The result of the descriptive analysis indicated thus:

- i. The facilities required to complete the process of developing attraction product capability at the various beaches in AkwaIbom state where non-existent,
- ii. Attraction products development capability had a positive and significant effect on the marketing performance of beach tourism in AkwaIbom State. Thus, implying that the low overall satisfaction experienced by tourists at the beaches largely depended on the attraction products development deficiency as expressed by the absence of beach facilities.

5. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of the study. It indicates how this study and previous studies are related or differ in certain perspectives.

Effect of Attraction Product Development Capability on Marketing Performance

The findings of this study show that attraction product development capability has a significant effect on marketing performance of beach destinations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, attraction product development capability positively and significantly affected the marketing performance of destinations in terms of tourist satisfaction and revisit intention ($\beta = .164$; $p=002<.005$).

The above result is consistent with previous studies which established that attraction product development capability influenced the marketing performance (tourist satisfaction and revisit intention) at beach destinations in the Caribbeans, Mediteranean and Pacific regions; (Dodd & Holmes, 2019; Bam-Gonzales et al. 2019; Roca & Vallaries, 2018; Swanzil, 2017; Bearden & Yawken 2016; Ibrahim & Gill; Ragawani et al. 2014; Bottero 2012; Ariza et al. 2012; Micallef et al., 2011).

Also, the finding is supported by Oyebode (2017; Ajake 2015; and Esu 2015) whose studies of cultural and adventure tourist sites in Western Nigeria and Cross Rivers revealed a strong influence of the quality of tourist attraction products on destination performance in terms of tourism patronage. The finding is also in congruence with several other studies which showed product development capability to affect marketing performance in several market contexts outside tourism in many geographical regions of the world.

At firm's level, studies like Hoque's (2017) export study in the Bangladesh manufacturing sector; Pascal and Shin (2015) on SMEs in U.S.A; Perez-Cabenero et al. (2015) in the Spanish service firms; Cadogan et al. (2014) in the UK and New Zealand service industries and Potocan (2011) in the Slovenian manufacturing industries; corroborated the finding that product development capability affects marketing performance.

Despite the commonality of the importance of product development capability to organizational performance across tourism and non-tourism market contexts in those studies, there was a difference between beach destinations and firms level measures of performance. In the former, destination marketing performance was measured in terms of tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention, in the latter it which was measured using the criteria: revenue and profit. The finding suggests that the development of attraction products in any destination is very critical to tourism development and destination competitiveness; this is consequent on the fact that attractions are the main reason why people travel to destinations. As argued by Geoldner, Ritchie and McIntosh (2000), the relevance of attractions makes it the single, most significant component of the tourism system. The above statement is because if the attraction does not draw tourists/visitors to a destination, there will be no need for other tourism service suppliers like transportation, accommodation, food and beverages, travel trade, etc. Thus, implying that attractions product development capability in the context of beach tourism is a valuable addition to the primary product (ocean, sea, sand and climate) in terms of beach facilities to create memorable experiences for visitors. These may include resorts, restaurants/bars, refreshment kiosks, changing rooms, seafront toilets /outdoor showers, deck chairs and Parasol (sun umbrella); water sports, shark preventing net, lifeguard services, emergency first-aid services and sea rafters. Where these are lacking at a beach destination, then marketing performance in terms of tourist satisfaction and revisit intention will be negatively affected and such a destination is considered as being incompetent non-competitive in tourist attraction product development.

Although the beaches in Akwa State are characterized by beautiful natural coastline, deep blue ocean and white sand which provide pleasurable sightseeing opportunities, the absence of beach facilities, therefore is a manifestation of the attraction product development deficiency of the beach managers. In that case, the low level of tourist satisfaction is closely related to the poor quality of the beach product, which was validated by the hypothesis test result

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall, this study has evaluated the effect of product development capability as a sub-strand of destination marketing capabilities on the marketing performance of tourist beaches in Akwa Ibom State from the tourists' perspective. The results of the empirical analysis has revealed that attraction product development capability is an important factor in predicting the marketing performance of beach destinations; in terms of tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit the destination in the future. Accordingly, the study concludes that the abysmal marketing performance of the beaches in terms of the overall low tourist satisfaction experienced by the beach visitors is a function of the poor quality of the destination attributes which reflect the destination marketing deficiencies of the

beach managers. Therefore, this study has provided an answer to the research question: "how do destination marketing capabilities affect the marketing performance of beach tourism in Akwa Ibom in Nigeria?". The findings of this study are very important to both academic researchers and tourism practitioners, with regards to behavioural intention of tourists towards destinations. Managerially, this implies that if the beach management wants to enhance tourist satisfaction, it is more beneficial to add value to the primary product (the ocean), through the provision of beach facilities to influence higher tourists' perception of value (more benefits) in their destination marketing mix, instead of trying to alter the expectations of the target market.

The World Travel and Tourism Council (2020) Global Protocols for the 'new normal' in the tourism industry reveals that in the post-COVID-19 era, tourists might prefer quieter places and opt for nature-based tourism such as the beaches. The above statement implies that capable beach destinations might be the epic recreational centres in the new order. Thus it behooves the Akwa-Ibom State Government to pay attention to beach tourism transformation in her economic development drive. It implies the following:

- i. The public sector in Akwa-Ibom State is expected to establish Akwa Ibom State Destination Marketing Organization (AIDMO) in consultation with tourism stakeholders in the State to develop and market tourist destinations to domestic and international tourists.
- ii. The primary beach products (ocean and beach sand) should be harnessed to deliver value addition through the provision of adequate high-quality facilities such as resorts, hotels, restaurants, event centres, parasols, changing rooms, seafront native seafood kitchens, bathing rooms, sun-bathing amenities to appeal to international visitors.
- iii. Overall, to ensure health and safety of tourists in a pandemic situation, beach management should comply with the COVID-19 protocols on cleanliness and hygiene in public places.
- iv. The beach management should plant coconut and golden palm trees to enhance their physical ambience in the product development process of the destinations.

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