

Impact of Event Marketing on Tourists Inflow in the South-South Region of Nigeria

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Abstract: *The traditional media are giving way to event marketing as they are becoming less satisfying in passing message to the target audience. Borne of out of increased competitive pressure faced by business potentials, event marketing has been used as a pull strategy to reach current and potential customers. With its objectives of direct sales and image building, it incorporates elements from all promotional tools. The study, therefore, examined how event marketing could help to harness tourists inflow as a means of improving the dwindling Nigerian economy. To achieve this purpose. Data were collected from 327 respondents in the South-South region of Nigeria, using a set of questionnaire. Testing the hypotheses using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, the results showed that event marketing impacts positively on Nigeria's tourists inflow. The study concludes that event marketing could be another source of revenue for government. Recommendations were proffered for sustainable growth in the tourism sub-sector which will help in diversifying Nigeria's revenue base in the face of dwindling global oil price.*

Keywords: *Event Marketing, Tourism, Tourist Inflow.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Presently, there has been increasing demand for tourism products in many developing countries. Tourism destinations are speedily augmenting tourist attractions in various regions of the world. The jaw-dropping investments in hospitality, travel and tourism industry have become a quest for economic diversification for many countries (Alasoofi, 2009). The essence of event activities, whether public or private, commercial or charitable, celebratory or commemorative, is to gather people to participate in a memorable experience that would produce profitable result (Huseyin et al., 2011).

Nigeria, reputedly is endowed with cultures and heritage, landscapes and lives with potentials for tourist attractions for a sustainable economic development (Ayeni et.al, 2012). Cross River State became a trail blazer with Carnival Calabar, Obudu Cattle Ranch, Tinapa Business Resort, Aquavista, Agbokim waterfalls, Monolith sites and National park reserves. Also, the Rivers State Government joined the tourism event marketing with the advent of the CARNIRIV (Rivers Carnival) and the existing Port Harcourt Tourist Beach. Akwa Ibom has the Rafia village of Ikot-Ekpen. These profound events and attractions have received national and international publicity with large chunks of public funds infused into them. The governments of these states have claimed that the huge expenses on human and financial recourses on the events is for the purpose of diversifying the revenue base of their states. The implication of these huge investments on event marketing for tourist inflow in Nigeria, in general, and south south region, in particular, in the main thrust of this study.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Event marketing has been acknowledged as a means of enhancing mutual understanding and appreciation, and the provision of foundation upon which lasting socio economic situation are built around the world and within a country (Fascinating Nigeria, 2013). In view of above, huge financial, human and other resources are being invested in event product by the aforementioned state governments. In view of the following, this paper appraised the performance of event marketing in the areas of tourists attraction and boosting the economy of South-South region of Nigeria.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the impact of event marketing on tourist inflow?

2. How does tourism product impact on tourist inflow?
3. How does price of tourism product impact on tourist inflow?
4. How does place impact on tourist inflow?
5. How does promotion impact on tourist inflow?

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Based on the research questions, the following were the objectives of the study:

1. To evaluate the impact of event marketing on tourist inflow.
2. To analysis the impact of tourism product on tourist inflow.
3. To evaluate the impact of price of tourism product on tourist inflow.
4. To determine the impact of place on tourist inflow.
5. To determine the impact of promotion on tourist inflow.

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Travel for recreation or leisure has become popular worldwide. International tourism has today become a major source of income for many countries (Aulia and Rastogi, 2015). As Nigeria has started making plans for diversification of the country's revenue base, the findings and recommendations of this study will serve as a catalyst in bringing tourists to Nigeria, thereby boosting the foreign exchange earning capacity of the country.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

Events provide opportunities for consumers to interact with service providers to get first-hand experience of the product (Leonard, 2002). Though distinct from the marketing communication mix, event marketing incorporates all the promotional tools (Huseyin et al., 2011) and captures people in a relaxed atmosphere (Vassilios, 2008, Teagen et. al., 2013). It provides companies with alternatives to the cluttered mass media (Vassilios, 2008) and narrow-casts campaign to the defined target audience through its medium of direct sales and image building (Huseyin et.al., 2011 and Raymond et-al, 2008). Wohfeil and Whelan (2006), Alexandru (2013) and Ukessay (2013) see event marketing as a pull strategy that assists in changing beliefs and behaviours of consumers towards products and services.

A number of researchers have suggested various dimensions of event marketing. Yashwant, (2011) suggests emotions, involvement, intellectual and spatial as the four dimensions of event marketing. Huseyin et. al., (2011) suggest a six-dimension event marketing: ticketing, transportation, human resources, budgeting, public relations and risk management. This study adopted Alexandru's (2013) 4p- dimension of sports marketing-Product, Price, Place, and promotion, as a 'road map' to ascertain tourist involvement. Thus, the dimensions of event marketing used in this study are tourism product, price, place and promotion.

7. EVENT MARKETING AND TOURIST INFLOW

Recently, there has been growing awareness of the importance of event marketing within the tourism industry. Marketing of tourism comes with various marketing challenges as the product involved is intangible, inseparable, variable and perishable (Lynn, 2005). Relatively, customer (tourist) gives value for money to services offered him. Likewise, event marketing aims at enhancing the event profile, meeting the needs of the event audience and generating revenue. It harnesses business-to-business relationship in the tourism supply chain and business-to-consumer relationship in terms of demand leading to a redefinition of organizational interactions and customer attention (Nigeria 360, 2002). Community- based tourism provides income generation opportunities (Usher et.al, 2010, Ajake et.al, 2012), rapid industrialization (Anjah, Rishi and Priyata, 2012), and innovation and change in an economy (Stephen et.al. 2006).

In tourism, the tourist is seen as a consumer of place or culture, as well as a purchaser of tourism products. Lately, tourists have become more knowledgeable, demanding and thoughtful in making choices concerning tourism products (Stephen et.al, 2010). Tourists have various motives for

embarking on a trip; it could be sports, events and social forms of activities, religions, educational, medical, adventure and business. Moscow’s Hierarchy of needs could be used to demonstrate the satisfaction of need in this context (Stephen et.al, 2010).

8. PRODUCT AND TOURISTS INFLOW

Product in event marketing, is the event itself, as well as the overall marketing effort (Alexandru, 2013). Lynn (2005) and Raj et.al.,(2010) outlined the physical aspect of event product as the event venue, quality of food, and quality of entertainment. These determine, to a large extent the category of target audience that would be attracted.

9. PRICE AND TOURISTS INFLOW

Price in event marketing represents the sacrifices (time, energy, money, and efforts) to be made or spent by the tourists in order to get the benefits of the event product. The determination of the price of the tourism product will impact on profit margins, supply, demand and marketing strategy (Purelybranded, 2013).

10. PLACE AND TOURISTS INFLOW

Place includes the various activities the event marketer undertakes to make the event product accessible and available to target customers. The physical location of the event arena could be encouraging or discouraging to intending or existing customers.

11. PROMOTION AND TOURISTS INFLOW

Promotion includes all the activities the event marketer undertakes to communicate and promote the event product to the target market. It demands from the event marketer the ability to use appropriate promotional mix to ensure that the message of the event reaches and have the desired impact on the target market (Onuoha and Ogbuji, 2015).

Awareness of an upcoming event within a vicinity may not be timely disseminated. Globalization has aided in making business networks increasingly important and easy to communicate with the outside world (Lynn, 2005). Event marketers/vendors could pass information to event audience by means of various communication tools via online marketing/advert, cable TV commercials, and so on. The product (event), price of event participation, hospitality arrangements, geographical feature and location are of significant for tourists to take decision to attend an event or not.

On the basis of the above literature review, the following theoretical framework as shown in the figure below was developed.

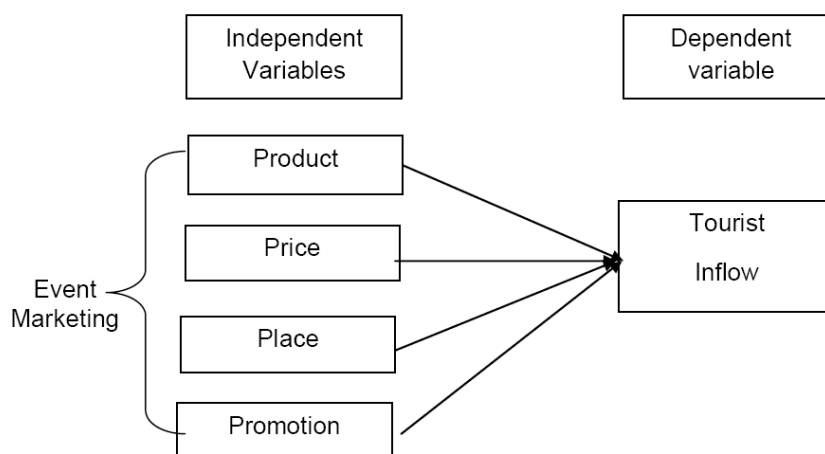


Fig1. Theoretical Framework for Event Marketing and Tourist Inflow.

Based on the theoretical framework above, the following hypotheses were developed for the study:

H0₁: Tourism product does not have significant impact on tourist inflow in South-South region of Nigeria.

H0₂: Price of tourism product does not have significant impact on tourist inflow in South-South region of Nigeria.

H0₃: Place of tourism event does not have significant impact on tourist inflow in South-South region of Nigeria.

H0₄: Promotion of tourism event product does not have significant impact on tourist inflow in South-South region of Nigeria.

12. MATERIALS AND METHODS

12.1. Area of Study

The study was carried out in the South-South region of Nigeria. It consists of six States- Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Delta and Edo. The choice of the region is based on the fact that, it is the only region in the country where most states therein organize yearly carnivals that attract tourists worldwide.

12.2. Instrument

Primary data were generated using a set of questionnaire and face-to-face interview of sampled respondents from the region.

12.3. Samples and Sampling Technique

In this study, our population of interest included everyone resident in the South-South region of Nigeria. Based on the estimated 2012 census figures, the population of the region was 25, 048, 139 (NPC, 2013).

Due to similarities in the elements of the population, a sample was drawn from the population. The Sample Size Determination Table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), as adopted from Igwe (2012) was used to determine the sample size. From the Table, the sample size that corresponded with the population of 25, 048, 139 (a number within the range of 1,000,000 and above) is 384. Thus, the sample size for this study is 384. However, all elements that constituted the sample size were people who were available at the various spots where copies of the questionnaire were distributed or the interview conducted. This method of non-probability sampling is referred to as convenience sampling by Ezejelue et al (2008).

To find the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable, Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient, in SPSS (version 20.0) was used.

13. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table1. *Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval*

Pattern	Number	Percent
Not retrieved	23	6
Retrieved but not used	34	8.8
Retrieve and used	327	85.2
Total	384	100

Source: *Survey Data 2015*

Table 1 above shows the distribution and return pattern of the questionnaire. Only the retrieved and correctly filled copies of the questionnaire (327) were used for analysis.

Table2. *Reliability Analysis of Variables*

Variable	Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Product	8	0.944
Price	8	0.838
Place	8	0.777
Promotion	5	0.719
Tourist Inflow	5	0.740

Source: *SPSS (version 20.0) Output*

Table 2 above shows the reliability of the five variables. There are 8 items of Product, 8 items of Price, 8 items of Place, 5 items of Promotion, and 5 items of Tourist Inflow. Their reliability values are, respectively, 0.944, 0.838, 0.777, 0.719, and 0.740. In this study, the variables are interrelated and showed inter-consistency because value above 0.6 is acceptable.

Impact of Event Marketing on Tourists Inflow in the South-South Region of Nigeria

Table3. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Product	327	3.92	1.2050
Price	327	3.95	1.1635
Place	327	4.00	1.1426
Promotion	327	4.02	1.1736
Tourist Inflow	327	4.06	1.1782

Source: SPSS (version 20.0) Output

Table 3 above shows the Mean and Standard Deviation of the variables of the study in the sample of 327 respondents. While the Mean of the variables: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, and Tourist Inflow are 3.92, 3.95, 4.00, 4.02 and 4.06 respectively, the Standard Deviations are 1.2050, 1.1635, 1.1426, 1.1736, and 1.1782. All the Mean of the variables are greater than 3, signifying that event marketing has significant impact on tourist inflow in South-South region of Nigeria.

Table4. Result of Tourism Product and Tourist Inflow

Correlations				
Type	variables 1	Statistics	Product	Tourist Inflow
Spearman's rho	Product	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.594**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	327	327
	Tourist Inflow	Correlation Coefficient	.594**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	327	327

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows that the coefficient (r) and p values for tourism product are 0.594 and 0.000, respectively, at 2-tailed test. Since the p value (0.000) is less than the alpha value (0.01), we accept the alternative hypothesis that tourism product has significant and positive impact on tourist inflow in South-South region of Nigeria.

Table5. Result of Tourism Price and Tourist Inflow

Correlations				
Type	variables 1	Statistics	Product	Tourist Inflow
Spearman's rho	Price	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.684**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	327	327
	Tourist Inflow	Correlation Coefficient	.684**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	327	327

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows that the coefficient (r) and p values for price of tourism product are 0.684 and 0.000, respectively, at 2-tailed test. Since the p value (0.000) is less than the alpha value (0.01), we accept the alternative hypothesis that price of tourism product has significant and positive impact on tourist inflow in South-South region of Nigeria.

Table6. Result of Tourism Place and Tourist Inflow

Correlations				
Type	variables 1	Statistics	Product	Tourist Inflow
Spearman's rho	Place	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.662**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	327	327
	Tourist Inflow	Correlation Coefficient	.662**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	327	327

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 shows that the coefficient (r) and p values for place of tourism are 0.684 and 0.000, respectively, at 2-tailed test. Since the p value (0.000) is less than the alpha value (0.01), we accept the alternative hypothesis that place of tourism event has significant and positive impact on tourist inflow in South-South region of Nigeria.

Table 7. Result of Tourism Promotion and Tourist Inflow

Correlations				
Type	variables 1	Statistics	Product	Tourist Inflow
Spearman's rho	Promotion	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.886**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	327	327
	Tourist Inflow	Correlation Coefficient	.886**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	327	327

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 shows that the coefficient (r) and p values for promotion of tourism are 0.684 and 0.000, respectively, at 2-tailed test. Since the p value (0.000) is less than the alpha value (0.01), we accept the alternative hypothesis that promotion of tourism event has significant and positive impact on tourist inflow in South-South region of Nigeria.

14. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings of this study highlight the impact of event marketing on tourist inflow. Our first hypothesis shows that tourism product has significant and positive impact on tourist inflow. The result is consistent with the views of Lynn (2005) and Raj et al. (2010) that the aspects of event, as a product, determine to a large extent the number of audience to be attracted. The second hypothesis reveals that price of the tourism product has significant and positive impact on tourist inflow. This result is supported by Purelybranded (2013) that there is significant relationship between price and demand for an event activity. The third hypothesis is proved as the result shows that place of tourism event has significant and positive impact on tourist inflow. This result is consistent with a study by Amalu et al. (2012) that event place influences and enhances the number of tourists for a particular event. The fourth hypothesis is also proved as the result reveals that promotion of tourism event has significant and positive impact on tourist inflow. This result is supported by Lynn (2005) that communication with the outside world about an event affects tourists participations positively.

15. CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of event marketing on tourist inflow in South-South region of Nigeria. This study considered four dimensions of event marketing-tourism product, price, place, and promotion. The dependent variable was tourist inflow and the independent variable was event marketing. Analysis was done through Spearman's correlation.

It is concluded from the analysis that event marketing has significant and positive impact on tourist inflow in South-South region of Nigeria. This means that there is steady increase in the number of tourists for the yearly carnivals in the States in the South-South region of Nigeria.

16. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following are recommended.

1. Marketers of event should see the events to be marketed as a total package. The whole aspect of the event product, including the event venue, and quality of entertainment should be well packaged.
2. Event marketers should ensure that tourism events are well published so that consumers (tourists) will be aware of such upcoming events. For this purpose, Nigeria needs to promote its tourism across the countries, and make its impact on the global tourism map.
3. One of the objectives of event marketing is to increase tourist inflow in particular vicinity. In view of this, event marketing adverts should be designed and written in a manner that persuade individuals to purchase the event offered for sale to enhance the income of people in that vicinity as well as generate income for government.

4. Hospitality toward guests is one of the things that tourists look forward to (Aulia and Rastogi, 2015). Thus, employees of hotels and residents of the host communities should ensure that tourists and guests are treated courteously, as this would increase the chance of repeat purchase from the tourists.
5. Government should create enabling environment for the development of tourism sector as a means of diversifying the revenue base of the country, especially in the face of dwindling revenue from oil, which has being the major revenue earner for the country for over four decades.

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