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Assessing the Seasonal Patterns of Visitors Arrivals as an Index for Hotel Industry Growth in Calabar, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper focused to assess the seasonal patterns of visitors' arrivals in the hotel industry taking into consideration the wet and dry season in Calabar. Questionnaires and interview sessions were used to elicit data for the study. Three hundred questionnaires were administered for the study with three different category of respondents namely; the managers of hotels, visitors and residents. Interview sessions guided by participatory research methods was also adopted to verify and gather detailed information for the study. The results shows that there was a steady increase in the number of visitor's arrivals and patronage of the hotel industry and these increments had significant influence on the growth of hotel industry in the study area. In spite of the observed growth, there were observed challenges faced by the industry such as high taxation, inadequate electricity supply, inadequate and obsolete facilities and insecurity. Based on these findings, the study recommended that government and all stakeholders should put all measures in place to provide an enabling environment for investment through the provision of adequate security, reduced taxation and provision of favourable policies to encourage more investment in the hotel industry in the study area.

Keywords: *Seasonal pattern, visitors, tourism development, growth, tourist arrivals, tourism industry*

JEL Classifications: Z30; Z32; Z33

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1. Introduction

In recent times, visitor's arrivals in a tourism destination are consequent on the availability of existing tourism attractions and activities (Eja et al., 2011). These great tourism potentials which influences visitors arrivals in most tourist destinations have caused mankind to reshape his attitude in keeping with the mould of nature- landscape, the immersion concept geared towards the conservation of the natural environment which are all active components of the earth (Fred, 2007). World Tourism Organization (WTO) Vision 2020 forecasts that tourists movement within African countries will increase from 27 million in 2010 to 47 million arrivals by 2020 (WTO, 2010). The estimate shows an average annual growth rate of 5.5% in contrast to the World forecast rate of 4.1%. Most countries with great tourism potentials such as Taiwan, South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria have strive effectively in tourism development due to increasing visitors' arrivals which have specifically influenced the growth of the hotel industry and other tourism support services (Pizam and Ellis, 1999).

The rich potentiality of the physical and human resources in Nigeria necessitated towards the establishment of tourism boards in all the states within the country so as to harness and develop the existing tourism potentials of Nigeria. This great effort from government has encouraged and increased the rate of visitors arrivals especially in cities with unique and amazing tourism potentials such as Lagos, Anambra, Abuja, Enugu and Cross River State (Aniah and Eja, 2005; Ajake and Amalu, 2012; Amalu and Ajake, 2015). In Cross River State and Calabar in particular, the rate of visitors' arrivals is quite alarming due to the numerous tourism potentials such as the Calabar Christmas festivals, the Calabar carnival and unique cultural events and festivals across the State (Ajake and Amalu, 2012). Consequently, this has made great impact on the socio-economic activities within Calabar metropolis (the State capital) (Amalu et al., 2012; Amalu et al., 2016; Enang, 2015).

The introduction of the Calabar Christmas festival and the Calabar carnival which is usually an annual event and accompanied with socio-cultural and economic activities has significantly influenced the rapid growth of the hotel industry in Calabar metropolis (Eja et al., 2012). The increase in visitors' arrivals has not only led to the growth of the hotel industry but has also encouraged an advancement in other socio-economic activities which has given rise to other basic tourism support services which cater for the needs of numerous visitors to Calabar (Amalu and Ajake, 2012c; Amalu et al, 2016).

In Calabar, the climate is of the semi-equatorial type with heavy rains. The rainfall regime is divided into two (dry and wet season) and could be said not to have significant effect on visitors' arrivals due to the numerous tourism potentials and other tourism related activities across the State (Eja and Violet, 2015). Although most of the visitors are usually attracted by the cultural antecedent of the Calabar people coupled with the relatively conducive weather condition and the type and nature of recreational facilities and resorts available in Calabar (Aniah, 2005). However, in spite of the relatively favorable weather condition and the availability of numerous tourism potentials and activities, there is an observed fluctuation in visitors' arrival pattern which is an index for hotel growth in Calabar. This has consequently given rise to researchers considering the issue of seasonality in tourism activities in Calabar. These observed seasonal fluctuations in visitors' arrivals in Calabar seem to significantly affect the growth level of the hotel industry which is the basis of this research, with the major aim to examine the seasonal patterns of visitors' arrivals as an index for hotel growth in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Role of Hotel in Tourism Development

Yu and Pin (1994), in their analyses of the role of hotel in tourism development opined that the spread of travel by stage coach in the 18th century stimulated the development of hotels as

the industrial revolution. They further stressed that modern hotels were largely established as a result of the railroads. Isang (2001) emphasized that in 1889 some hotels in London set a new standard, with the presence of electricity and a host of other special services. He went further to state that the growing of suburban centers and the increase of travel by automobile made most transient hotels to become popular. Accordingly, he affirmed that in 1990s, the “extended stay hotel” was developed to accommodate guests who needed to rest for at least five nights and also for business travelers who preferred more apartment-like accommodation for longer staying visitors. His findings also agreed with that of Hall (1994) which affirmed that most hotels and guest houses offer a bed and breakfast services, with the provision of discounts for singles. He also said that even though hotels provided venue for high class activities, guest houses made perfect venues for the leisure visitors.

Smith (2007) in his study found out that hotel business played the most significant role in Thai Tourism Industry. He opines that the statistics from the Small Medium Enterprise (SME) promotion office showed that the hotel sector contributed 18.5 per cent or 3491.91 billion Baht out of the total amount of 1,890.87 billion Baht earned in the service sector. He went further to show that the biggest contribution was from Small Medium Enterprise equivalent to 325.29 billion Baht or 93.0 per cent and the large enterprise shared only 7.0 per cent or 24.62 billion Baht.

Evans and Chon (1989) in his analyses of the role of hotel industry states that hotels play a major role in assessing the activities and behaviour of tourists’ towards their spending attitude. This assertion was further stressed by Ekinici et al. (2003) in analyzing the role of hotel in tourism development, which according to him, hotels has contributed substantially to resort development and location especially in countries with great tourism potentials. According to him hotels provided the most common type of accommodation used by leisure and business tourists’ particularly those traveling internationally and also hotels being a sector of hospitality industry provides accommodation and catering services for tourists. Brotherton and Mooney (1992) state that multinational hotel companies also increasingly dominate the international hotel market and play a key role in the development and continuity of the international tourism industry.

2.2 Seasonality in Tourism Arrivals

Seasonality is a major challenging issue in the tourism industry. Scholars have tried to define and analyze the impact of seasonality in tourism (Amalu and Ajake, 2012b). Hall (1994) explained seasonality as an uneven distribution of use over time (peaking) and as one of the most pervasive problems with outdoor recreation and tourism causing inefficient resource use, loss of profit potential, strain on social and ecological carrying capacity and administrative scheduling difficulties. This is to say that, facilities and services could be under-utilized or overused and in some situations destinations and operators can be faced with continual inefficiency as they are made to grapple with the peaks and troughs of demand. Seasonality is a major challenge of planning for tourism demand as it makes room for uncertainties and unpredictable situation and is accompanied with a lot of negative impacts (social, economic and environmental) which could make people perceive tourism negatively. Manning and Power (1984) identified a number of similar dimensions of seasonality and presented variety of prescriptions for alleviating the negative impact of seasonality in tourism. According to Manning and Power (1984), seasonality has two dimensions; natural (physical) and institutional (social and cultural), involving both the origin and destination regions. Natural seasonality relates to temporal variation in natural phenomena (for example; rainfall, sunlight, temperature, snowfall) of which the implications for certain forms of tourism demand are easily understood. For instance, water oriented tourism activities require a warm temperature

while snow skiing requires low temperature and an abundance of snow (Manning and Power, 1984).

Institutional seasonality is more complex as it is based on human behaviour and consumer decision making (eg. deciding on the timing of holidays and where and how to spend one's leisure time) (Ajake and Amalu, 2012; Butler and Mao, 1997). With regards to the spatial issue, the generating area (ie. place of visitor's origin and market demand), various changes in natural phenomena influence visitor's travel decision. For instance, most people choose to travel in warm, wet or dry season, hence the popularity of summer vacations, religious, cultural and social factors also dictate when people travel, with one or more of these dimensions often determining the timing of holidays. Temporal variations in natural phenomena also affect destinations (or receiving areas). The receiving area is the locations of the suppliers of tourism industry. Climate for example, can determine the type of tourist attractions within a destination (Lee et al., 2008). On the other hand, the cultural, religious, ethnic and social activities in a destination influence the type and number of visitors that visit a destination (Amalu et al, 2016; Enang, 2015; Jang, 2004).

3. Methodology

This research is within the confine of Calabar in Cross River State, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty seven registered hotels with Cross River State tourism board were employed for this study. The hotels were categorized into four classes which include; "no star, one star, two star, and three Star". The categorization was based on the WTO, 2004 standards which emphasize the quality of services and amenities provided in each of the hotel. Purposive sampling technique was employed to determine the samples and study population for this study and was based on the objective of the study. Primary and secondary sources of data collection was employed for the study. The primary source involved the use of questionnaires and interview sessions guided by participatory research appraisal method while the secondary source involved the use of text-books, journal materials and other documented information in the hotel registry.

Three different questionnaires were prepared, vetted and administered for the study, one for the managers to elicit information on visitors arrivals, commencement date of hotel operations and challenges faced by entrepreneurs, the second for visitors found in the hotels during the field investigation to elicit information on their observed challenges and assessment of the hotel industry's services and facilities while the third was for residents within the study area to elicit information on challenges with visitors-residents interaction and the hotel industry implication to residents in the area. A total of three hundred questionnaires were administered for this study, one hundred and twenty seven to the managers of hotels, fifty to visitors or tourists and one hundred and twenty three to the residents.

The results of the study was presented in the following tables, charts and graphs while descriptive statistics such as percentages, ranking and rating were used to analyze and illustrate the results of the study.

4. Results

4.1. Hotel Growth and Visitors Arrivals

The rate of hotel growth and visitors arrivals was examined and presented on table 1. Information on table 1 shows that the highest number of patronage from visitors to the hotels was experienced in 2015 with 18,227 visitors representing 21% of the entire visitor's patronage of the hotels in the study location between 2006 and 2015. The least number of patronage was observed in 2007 with 3,672 visitors representing 4% of the total patronage within the duration under investigation. It was also observed that there have been a steady increase in the rate of arrivals or patronage of visitors in the hotels giving rise to the winding

interest of investors who rushed to established new hotels within the study location. Information on table 1 and figure 1 revealed that there were steady increase in the establishment of new hotels in the area with the highest number of new hotels observed to be opened in 2015 with 76 new hotels while the least number of opened new hotel was observed in 2008 with 20 new hotels. Further investigation during the interview session revealed that the increment in the number of hotels in the area were due to the observed boom or increasing patronage in the hotel industry which encouraged and prompted investors to invest more resources in the hotel industry.

Table 1: Hotel growth and visitors' arrivals (2006-2015).

Year	No of visitors	Percentage	No. of new hotels	Annual difference
2006	4202	5	31	-11
2007	3672	4	22	-9
2008	4971	6	20	-2
2009	5074	6	22	2
2010	6112	7	48	26
2011	7123	8	58	10
2012	9346	11	66	8
2013	11310	13	69	3
2014	15984	19	72	3
2015	18227	21	76	4
Total	86021	100	484	34

Source: Field survey (2016).



Figure 1: Influence of visitors patronage on hotel growth.

4.2. Seasonal Patterns of Visitors Arrivals in the Hotel Industry

The seasonal pattern of visitors' patronage of the hotel industry in Calabar was examined to understand the implication of visitor's patronage and arrivals on hotel growth. Information on table 2 and 3 shows that more visitors patronized the hotels within the months in the dry season (January, February, March, April, November, December) with a total of 14,084 visitors representing 77% of the total recorded visits and patronage while within the wet season, it was observed that 4,143 visitors patronized the hotels during the wet season months (May, June, July, August, September, October) representing 23% of the total recorded arrivals in 2015 as further emphasized on figure 2. This clearly shows that there is a seasonality in the pattern of visitors patronage and arrivals in hotels in Calabar. Furthermore, it was also revealed from the interview session that there were other factors responsible for tourists visits and arrivals in the area. Information on figure 3 shows that most of the visitors to the area visited the area because of the Calabar carnival festival with 65% of the entire visitors. This was closely followed by those who visited to enjoy the Christmas festival with 12% of visitors, followed by those who visited for sight-seeing and holidaying with 10% of visitors, then those who visited to attend cultural/traditional events with 8% of visitors, those who visited to attend religious events with 3% of visitors and the least were those who visited to attend academic conferences and seminars with 2% of the entire recorded visitors. This clearly revealed that events has significant influence on the number of tourists or visitors patronage or arrivals in the study area.

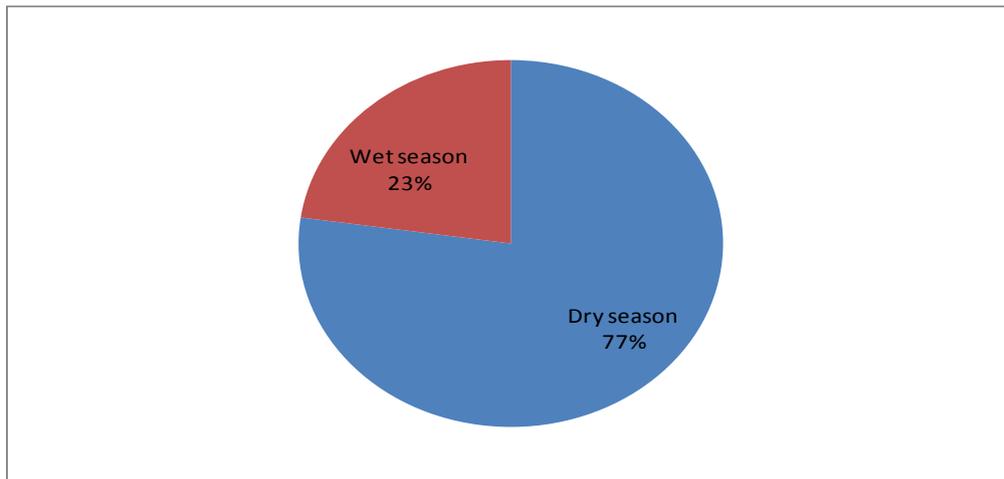
Table 2: Visitors arrivals during dry season in the study area (2015).

Hotel Category	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	Nov	Dec	Total
No star	512	1057	583	1298	1614	1490	6554
One star	332	304	203	293	783	1321	3236
Two star	306	249	112	169	551	1011	2398
Three star	231	201	89	132	312	931	1896
Total	1381	1811	987	1892	3260	4753	14084
Percentage	8	10	5	10	18	26	77

Source: Field survey (2016).

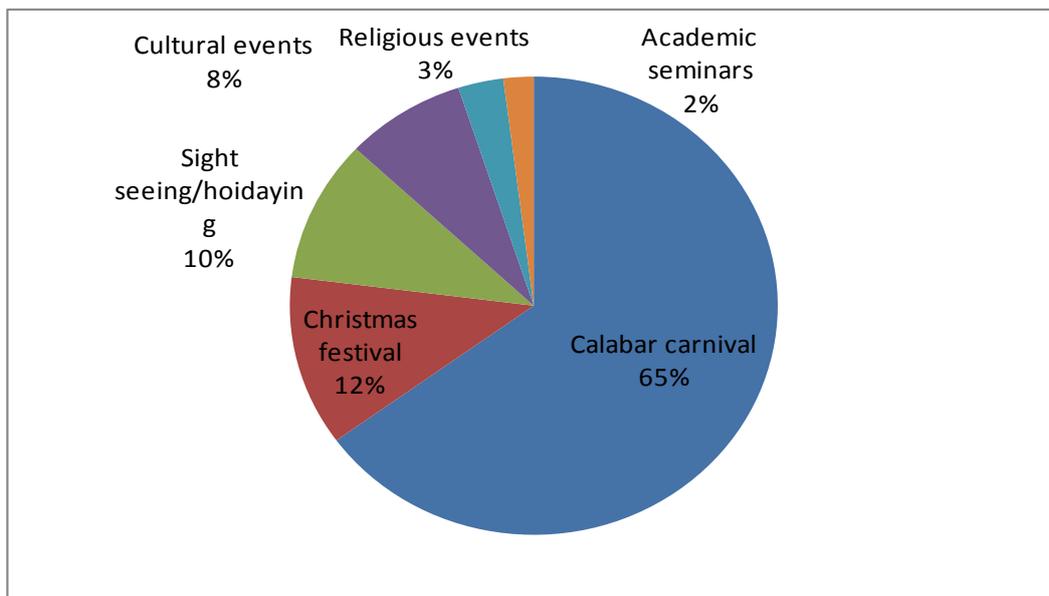
Table 3: Visitors arrivals during wet season in the study area (2015).

Hotel Category	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Total
No star	176	327	290	266	322	220	1601
One star	162	179	298	189	196	183	1207
Two star	98	61	188	174	202	107	830
Three star	82	44	116	60	111	92	505
Total	518	611	892	689	831	602	4143
Percentage	3	3	5	4	5	3	23



Source: Field survey (2016).

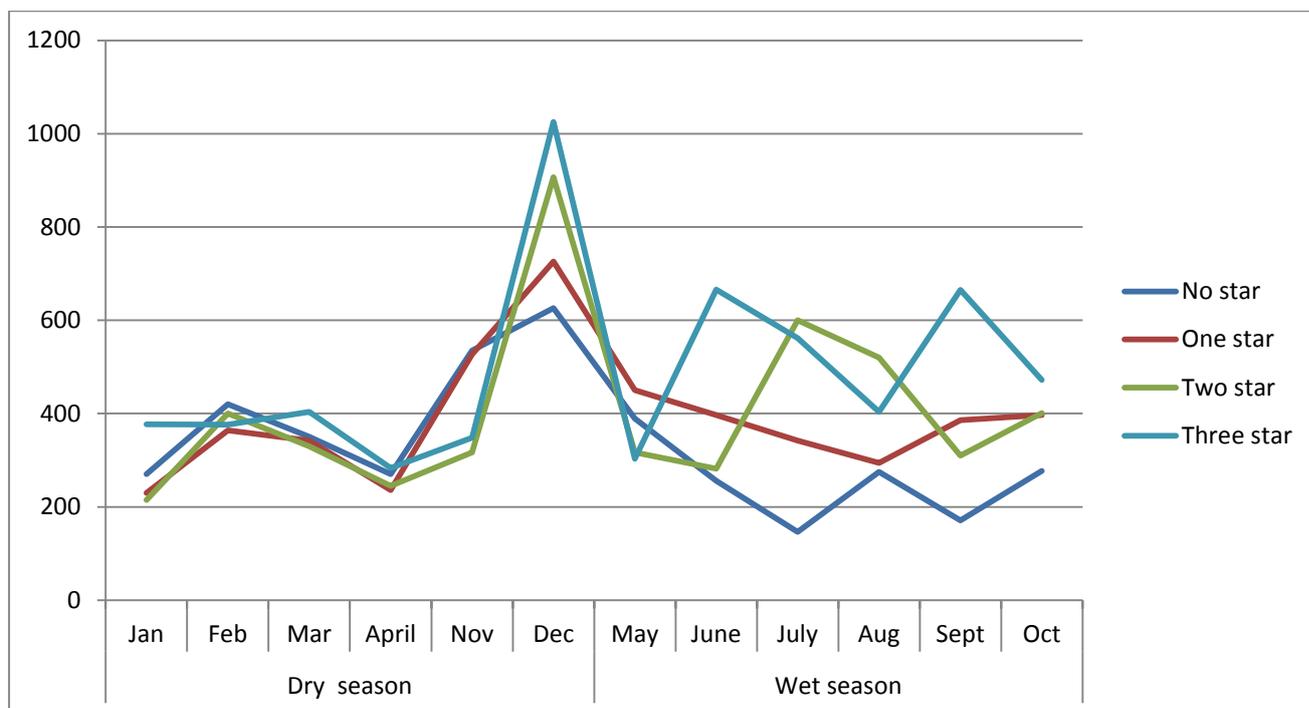
Figure 2: Visitor’s patronage differentials between the seasons (2015).



Source: Field survey (2016).

Figure 3: Factors responsible for tourists/visitors arrivals in the study area (2015).

Furthermore, the seasonal pattern of visitors’ arrivals in the hotel industry was depicted using line graph as presented in figure 4 which indicate that November and December recorded the highest number of visitors arrival in the industry.



Source: Field survey (2016).

Figure 4: Seasonal patterns of visitors' arrivals in the hotel industry (2015).

4.3. Major Challenges of Visitors' in the Hotel Industry in Calabar

The challenges of visitors in the hotel industry in Calabar were examined to help the study understand the range of the challenges. Information on table 4 shows that from the fifty tourists adopted for this study, the most perceived challenges within the study area is insecurity with 48 out of the 50 tourists under investigation being in the affirmative representing 96% of the entire tourist population for the study. This was closely followed by inadequate facilities and poor staff attitude with 45 out of the 50 tourists in affirmative representing 90% of the tourists. The least challenge was bad road, political instability and congestion with 5 and 10 tourists out of 50 in affirmative representing 10% and 20% respectively. In general, it was observed that 51% of the tourists were of the opinion that they were imminent challenges in the hotel industry in the area. The major challenges were therefore observed to be insecurity, inadequate security, poor attitude of staffs and obsolete facilities.

Table 4: Major challenges of visitors' in the hotel industry in Calabar.

Problems	No. of Tourists	Percentage
Inadequate facilities	45	90
Insecurity	48	96
Obsolete facilities	40	80
Political instability	10	20
Congestion and lack of space	10	20
Poor attitude of staff	45	90
Bad roads	5	10
Total	203	51

Source: Field survey (2016).

4.4 Challenges of the Entrepreneurs of the Hotel Industry in Calabar

The challenges of the entrepreneurs of the hotel industry was examined to help the study understand the perception of the entrepreneurs and hotel managers on the growth level of the hotel industry. Information on table presented on table 5 revealed that the highest challenges on entrepreneurs was that of inadequate electricity supply and seasonality in patronage with 125 and 127 responses representing 19% each of the entire responses. This was followed by high taxation, lack of tourism activities/events and unfavourable government policies recording 120, 100 and 90 responses representing 18%, 15% and 14% respectively. However, the least challenges were that of high cost of equipments and lack of trained manpower with 45 and 58 responses representing 7% and 9% of the entire responses respectively. This clearly indicates that irrespective of the high growth level owing to high tourists patronage and arrivals, there were major challenges preventing the tourism outfits from having smooth day to day business.

Table 5: Challenges of the entrepreneurs of the hotel industry in Calabar.

Challenges	Response	Percentage
High taxation	120	18
High cost of equipment	45	7
Seasonality in patronage	125	19
Inadequate electricity supply	127	19
Lack of trained manpower	58	9
Lack of tourism activities	100	15
Government policies	90	14
Total	665	100

Source: Field survey (2016).

The study also examined the perception of the residents of the study area on the activities of the tourism industry. Information on figure 5 revealed that most of the residents were of the opinion that the tourism industry had a positive strife towards development in the study area with 72% of the residents agreeing that the industry had a positive impact on employment which had also improved both family and individual income of the residents and also providing esthetic and basic facilities in the area. However, some others perceived the industry of having a negative impact on the residents with 10% of the respondents believing that the industry aided increase in promiscuity among the residents, 5% of the respondents were also of the opinion that the industry caused a rapid increase in crime rate making the area insecure for business and inhabitants while 3% of the respondents were of the opinion that the industry made the youths of the area to get more involved in gambling activities. Further investigation during the interview session revealed that the interaction between residents and the visitors especially the foreigners had serious impact on the social lifestyle of the residents with most of them being observed to imitate the lifestyle of the visitors. They also highlighted that this interaction have really influenced the traditional values of the residents negatively in the aspect of their dress code, increasing night life, choice of food, dance step and their changing socio-economic activities.

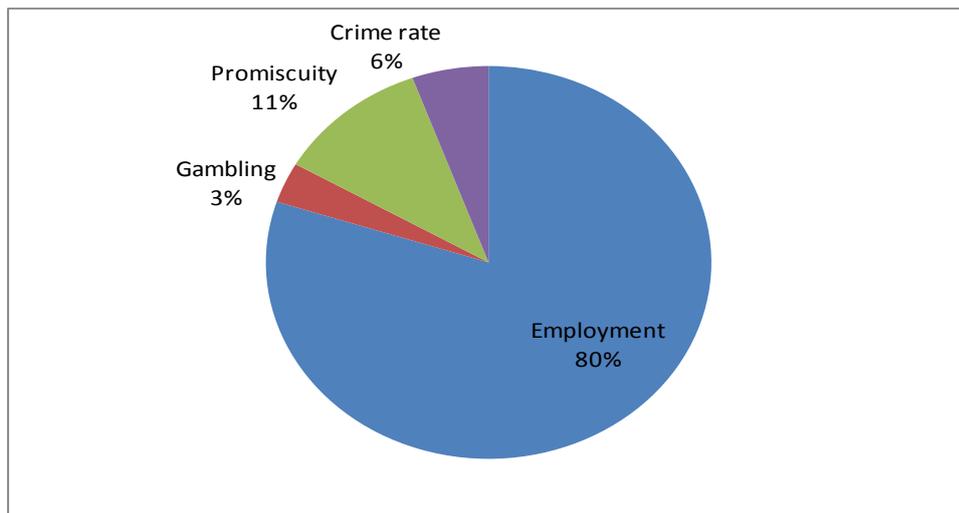


Figure 5: Residents' perception of the tourism industry in the study area.

5. Conclusion, Implications, and Limitations

The growing demand for recreation has significantly influence the rate of visitors' arrivals in most destinations with great tourism potentials. The availability of natural tourist sites and cultural and traditional events in Cross River state have made Calabar one of the most visited tourism destination in Nigeria. The findings of the study have revealed that there is a steady increase in the number of tourists and visitors to Calabar and these have led to a corresponding impact on the growth of the hotel industry which have experienced growing interest from investors resulting in steady increase in the number of new hotels in the study area.

In terms of patronage, the study shows that the increasing number of visitors to the area to enjoy and experience the unique tourism potentials of the state have led to a corresponding increase in patronage of the hotel iindustry. Irrespective of the observed increase in patronage of the hotels, it was realized that the patronage had a seasonal pattern which favoured more activities and paatronage during the dry season (January, February, March, April, November and December) than during wet season (May, June, July, August, September, October). This is in tune with the findings by Amalu et al. (2017), Aniah (2005), Butler and Mao (1997), and Eja et al. (2011) who observed that most tourism destinations observed seasonality in the pattern of tourists arrivals and patronage. It was also observed that during eventful periods such as in November, December, March and April, more visitors and tourists visited and patronized the hotels.

Nevertheless, the study also revealed that some factors such as insecurity, inadequate and obsolete facilities, poor attitude of staffs, high taxation, lack of tourism events and unfavourable government policies had deminishing influence on the growth of the hotel industry in the study area. Based on the findings, the study hereby recommend that government and all stakeholders should provide enabling environment through the provision of favourable policies, adequate security and reduction of tax to itsbearest minimum to encourage investors to develop more interest and trust on the industry. It is also recommended that cultural and recreational events be organized all through the year to eliminate seasonality in patronage and arrivals in the area. Irrespective of the results obtained from the study, there were some very challenging limitation to the study such as the difficulty in quantifying tourism based data and the difficulty experienced in sorting tourism data.

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