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Destination Attributes and Domestic Tourists' Choice of Obudu Mountain Resort Calabar

Abstract

This paper specifically deals with factors that influence domestic tourists' choice of Obudu mountain resort Calabar. The study used structured questionnaire and sampled 323 domestic tourists. Pearson Moment Correlation analysis was used. The result shows that all the eight destination attributes have positive and significant relationship with domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort, Calabar. Result of F- statistic validates the DES-DTCO model. Premise of these findings, it is recommended that managers of Obudu Mountain Resorts should focus on sustenance of touristic and aesthetic values of attractions at the center. Government and the private sector should invest on road network, including its maintenance. Management of the center should partner with major service providers such as MTN, Globacom to ensure stable and discounted Wi-Fi. Banking services and ease of e-transaction at the center should be encouraged. Nigerian government should give incentives to tourism business operators and as well ensuring ease of doing business. Hence promote affordability of tourists' products and services in Nigerian tourists' centers.

Keywords: *destination attributes, Obudu mountain resort, attraction, affordability, amenities.*

JEL Classifications: L83, M31, M39.

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1. Introduction

Domestic tourism involves the movement of tourist from their place of domicile to destination within the same geographical location or national boundary (Bello & Bello, 2017; Chadwick, 1994; Inskip, 1991). While countries often tend to focus on international tourism due to the revenue earned through exports, domestic tourism remains the leading form of tourism, representing an important tool for economic development of countries (Haxton, 2015; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018). World Travel & Tourism Council (2018a) reports that domestic tourism generated 60.2% of the tourism contribution to the global GDP in 2017, thus making a significantly larger contribution than international travel, with foreign visitor spending estimated at 39.8%. Likewise, domestic tourism represented 73% of the total global tourism spendings put at US\$3,971 billion in 2017 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018). Domestic tourism makes a substantial contribution to the industry's overall financial resilience, sustainability and functionality in many countries (Tourism 2025 Growing Value Together, 2014). In fact many tourism businesses would not survive if it were not for the year round patronage of domestic visitors.

China's domestic tourism absolute spending size reached US\$841 billion in 2017, followed by the USA with US\$803 billion (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018a). Jointly, these two countries accounted for over 40% of world's total domestic Travel and Tourism spending (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018a). Germany ranked third in domestic tourism spending in 2017 with US\$340 billion, nearly double the amount of India and Japan, which came fourth and fifth with US\$186 and US\$183 billion respectively (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018a). In terms of tax revenue, and job creation, domestic travel in Virginia directly generated \$3.4 billion in tax revenue for federal, state and local governments in 2017 hence, accounted for 3.3 percent increase from 2016 (U.S. Travel Association, 2018). According to the report, on average, each dollar spent by domestic travelers in Virginia produced 13.7 cents in tax receipts for federal, state and local governments in 2017. In addition, domestic travel expenditures directly supported 232,200 jobs within Virginia in 2017, comprising 7.2 percent of total private industry employment in Virginia (U.S. Travel Association, 2018). According to the report, every \$106,580 spent by domestic travelers in Virginia in 2017 supported one job. The implication of these information shows that domestic tourism is a veritable tool for employment creation, high economic growth and the overall development of the tourism industry globally.

Despite the various challenges in Nigeria, many Nigerians choose to travel within the country to spend their holidays at exciting tourist destinations (Bukola, 2018; Emma, 2017). It was reported that 97% of tourists spending's in Nigeria in 2016 were generated from domestic tourism valued at NGN 2.7 bn (Jumia Travel, 2017), hence a 4.9% increase over 3.2% recorded in 2015. Two main components of domestic travel, leisure and business travel both grew at 2.7 and 2.8 per cents, contributing N1.98 billion and N1.92 billion respectively to Nigeria domestic earnings in 2017 (Bukola, 2018). In terms of contribution to the GDP, domestic tourism in Nigeria contributed N3.63 billion to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017 (Bukola, 2018; Vanguard Newspaper, July 12th, 2018). Proshare (2017) reports that domestic travel spending generated 93.2% of direct Travel and Tourism GDP in 2016 compared to 6.8% for visitor exports (i.e. foreign visitor spending or international tourism receipts). Furthermore, through domestic tourism, about 600,000 Nigerians were employed in the year 2016 (Jumia Travel, 2017). The implication of these reports shows a growing Nigerian domestic tourism. It is pertinent to state that domestic tourism in Nigeria is driven by religion, carnivals, environmental features and festivals. In 2013 Osun Osogbo festival recorded 21,713 domestic tourists including, 123 international tourists while N58,230, 170 formed the expenditure. Abuja Carnival in 2013 recorded 19,015 domestic tourists, which include 113 international tourists while N147, 385,250 formed the expenditure. Religious

tourism recorded over a million domestic tourists and a substantial number of international tourists in 2013. However, one of the notable destinations visited by domestic tourists in Nigeria in 2017 is Obudu Mountain Resort (Jumia, 2017).

Researchers in different countries have studied domestic tourists destination choice behaviour with different outcomes (Huybers, 2003; Moscardo, 2004) – Australia; (Hudson & Ritchie, 2002) – Canada; (Xue et al., 2008; Yang et al., 2007) – China; (Bian, 2003; Sun, 2005; Sun & Lu, 2006) – Korea; (Bogari et al., 2003) – Saudi Arabia; (Nicolau & Más, 2005) and Spain (Buultjens et al., 2005) among others. These studies emphasised the need to understand the preferences of domestic tourists and highlight the distinction in the tourists' preferences towards varied destinations. Thus, advanced our understanding of the critical roles of the destination attributes in maintaining a competitive edge in a highly competitive market place (Crouch & Ritchie, 2005; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Enright & Newton, 2004; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). However, results of empirical studies that determined destination choice behaviour of domestic tourists are inconsistent. We also argued that study that examined destination attributes that attracts domestic tourists to Obudu Mountain resort had not being reported. Research efforts to came up with an integrated model that could explains destination attributes that determines domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort Calabar is not in sight. Previous models developed in this respect were conducted in developed countries. This study would be useful for Nigeria tourism managers in evolving strategies for improved domestic tourism culture among Nigerians. In this light, this study assumes significance as it adds to the knowledge of factors, which influence domestic tourists' destination choices in Nigeria. The results can be input to the modeling of destination choices in domestic leisure travel context. This paper specifically deals with the identification of factors that influences domestic tourists' choice of Obudu mountain resort Calabar, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 The Concept of Destination Attribute

Destination attributes is seen as compendium of facilities and services designed to meet the needs of the tourists (Buhalis, 2000). Devesa et al. (2010) and Mazlina et al. (2015) stressed that individual tourists' make different evaluations of these attributes as it shape their travel decision. According to Braun and Soskin (2003), destination attributes act as a focal point for visitor activities and spending. The implication of this definitions is that destination attributes are used as the basis for destination marketing and a focal point for visitor activities and spending. In addition, destination attributes is defined as those economic and environmental variables that compliments tourist resources in a site for emergence of tourist products (Kotler et al., 2006). This explains the basic infrastructures and amenities capable of complimenting available tourist potentials and resources for development of tourist product (Bello & Bello, 2017) hence, the basis for classifying a destination as being developed or otherwise. Analysis of recent inbound tourism trends in the global tourism market shows that international travel are in favour of countries that have concentrations of tourist products and not countries with tourism resources or potentials (Bello & Bello, 2017; UNWTO, 2016). This information compliments the argument in Roday et al. (2009) that tourism destinations such as America, Europe, and Asia are classified as rich and developed destinations due to advanced nature of their destination attributes. Destination attributes is therefore defined as the mixture of the different elements that define the extent of development of a destination.

In addition, destination attributes is also defined as those human or natural features that play important role in the appeal of destination(s) (Benckendorff & Pearce, 2003). Destination attributes are therefore destination bond amenities with touristic and aesthetic values capable of drawing tourist to visit a destination (Mill & Morrison, 1992). The authors further opined that people feel compelled to visit the destination due to the drawing power of destination

attributes. Therefore, destination attributes has the capacity to contributing to the total experience of tourists from the point they leaves their places of residences till they returns hence; an experiential oriented definition. In other hand, destination attributes is seen as designated permanent amenities, which is controlled and managed for the enjoyment, amusement, entertainment and education of the visiting public. This definition focuses on the permanency of the facilities and the managerial intervention. The index in these definitions shows that destination attributes is both of experiential and organisational oriented.

2.2 Theoretical Underpinning: The Push-Pull Theory

This study adopted the push-pull theory. The theory was developed by E. G. Ravenstein, a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society in the mid-eighteenth century (Bello, 2015; Baloglu & Uysal, 1996). According to Baloglu and Uysal (1996), Ravenstein used the push-pull theory to explain migration patterns of people both within and between nations, hence, proposed the law of migration. The theory holds that travellers embarked on a trip because they are pushed by their internal forces (i.e intrinsic factors) and the external forces of their origin country (i.e extrinsic factors) (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Jacqueline, 2010). The theory emphasised that travellers are pulled to migrate to a particular destination as a result of attractiveness of the destination as being perceived by them (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Bashar & Ahamad, 2010). Numerous empirical studies had applied the push-pull theory in tourism motivation studies (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Bashar & Ahamad, 2010; Chen, 2007; Foo et al., 2010; Jacqueline, 2010; Jason et al., 2011). The theory in the context of tourism holds that tourists are motivated to travel outside their original place of abode, because, they are pushed by their internal forces (i.e intrinsic factors) and the external forces (i.e extrinsic factors) of their origin country (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996), thus, indicating that push factors are tourists' personal oriented and origin country based. The theory also explained the pull side of tourist migration, and holds that tourists are pulled to migrate to a particular destination as a result of the tourists' perception of the touristic image or attributes of the destination (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996).

Various empirical studies have applied the push and pull theory especially in domestic tourism motivation studies (Madhavan & Rastogi, 2011; Moscardo, 2004; Nicolau & Más, 2005). They argued that domestic tourists are pushed by different needs to travel and pulled by different attributes of the destination (Bian, 2003; Hudson & Ritchie, 2002; Huybers, 2003). Previous studies opined that pull factors are more important while exporing destination bound attributes (Devesa et al., 2010; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Pikkemaat, 2004). Succeeding studies have included destination attributes such as attraction (Buhalis, 2000; Holloway et al. 2009; Javid & Roma, 2016; Moutinho, 2005; Nolan & Keller, 2006), amenities (Chi & Qu, 2009; Holloway et al., 2009; Javid & Roma, 2016; Moutinho, 2005; Nicolau & Mas, 2005), activities (Buhalis, 2000; Chi & Qu, 2009; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993), accessibility (Buhalis, 2000; Holloway et al., 2009; Moutinho, 2005; Nicolau & Mas, 2004), available package (Buhalis, 2000; Holloway et al. 2009), affordability (Javid & Roma, 2016; Moutinho, 2005; Nicolau & Mas, 2004) attitude of the host community (Kim et al., 2012), and accommodation (Buhalis, 2000; Kim et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2012a; Mill & Morrison, 1992) as pertinent pull factors that influences domestic tourists' choice of a destination(s).

As it relate to the current study, the theory posits that individual domestic tourists in Nigeria will choose to visit Obudu Mountain Resort, Calabar as a result of different attributes of the destination such as attraction, amenities, activities, accessibility, available package, affordability, attitude of the host community, and accommodation. In view of the applicability of the push-pull theory to the present study, the researchers adopted these eight destination attributes as the predicting factors that influences domestic tourists to choose Obudu Mountain Resorts as a preferred destination.

2.3 Attractions and Domestic Tourists' Choice of Destination

Attractions is one of the major components of tourism that constitutes the core of tourist product (Mill & Morrison, 1992; Page, 1999; Wall & Mathieson, 2006) hence, a destination bond attribute with touristic and aesthetic values capable of drawing tourists to visit a destination. Attractions represent natural, hand-made, artificial buildings, and special events (Buhalis, 2000). Bello & Bello (2017) argued that tourists feel compelled to visit the destination due to the drawing power of tourist attractions hence, an important attribute for destination choice. Cakici & Harman (2007) conducted a study to determine the extent destination attributes influences the choice of a destination. The outcome of the study shows that ancillary services and awareness attributes are the foremost destination attributes that significantly influence destination choice by the tourists, whereas attribute such as attraction have least influence. Upadhyaya (2012) highlighted in his study that touristic attractions have significant impact on destination choice by the tourists. Specifically, Qu et al. (2011) and Pike (2009) have measured cognitive, affective and unique images of the destination using different destination attributes. They recommended that attraction attributes significantly contribute to tourists' choice of destination. Beerli & Martin (2004), Ekinici & Hosany (2006), Gnoth et al. (2009), and Jani et al. (2009) suggested that tourists' choice of a destination is explained by the attractiveness of the destination. The implication of this review is the consistencies in literature regarding the influence of attraction on destination choice. However, the fact that attraction attribute have not being tested in respect to Obudu Mountain Resort made us to assume the following hypotheses:

***Hypothesis 1:** Attractions have positive and significant influence on domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort.*

2.4 Amenities and Domestic Tourists' Choice of Destination

Amenities explains the infrastructures and superstructures that support tourism development and sustenance (Bello & Bello, 2017; Jennifer & Thea, 2013). It conotes those facilities that facilitates easy flow of tourists from their origins to destinations. Amenties attributes of the destination includes: road and highway network, structures (bridges, tunnels, culverts, retaining walls), electrical system (street lighting and traffic lights), mass transit system (commuter rail systems, subways, and bus transportation), railways, including structures terminal facilities (rail yards, train stations), seaports and lighthouses, airports including air navigational systems, bicycle paths and pedestrian walkway (Bello & Bello, 2012). Tourists also require amenities at their accommodation and on the way to destinations (Catalan, 2003). This can include shops, restaurants, cafes, public transport, tourist information and public toilets. Sparks and Pan (2009) evaluated values of prospective Chinese outbound travelers regarding destination attributes. The authors reported that quality amenities at the destination is one of the five destination attributes that was rated as most important. The implication of this is that tourists amenities make the stay of tourists worthwhile. Amenities are what give the destination that extra bite. As such from the previous discussion, we assume the following hypotheses:

***Hypothesis 2:** Amenities have positive and significant influence on domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort.*

2.5 Activities and Domestic Tourists' Choice of Destination

Tourists are motivated for a trip to a destination due to unique activities that characterised such destination (Bello & Bello, 2017). Activities in this context is defined as those actions that tourist engage themselves in to have fun and get exciting moments (Crouch, 2007). Chi

and Qu (2009), and Echtner & Ritchie (1993) reported that no tourist will want to go to boring destination hence, tourists visit only lively destinations where they will be actively or passively engaged in touristic activities. The index in these information shows that activities attribute may therefore be categorised as tourist products that tourists tend to buy at the destination. Battour et al. (2011) and Chiu & Ananzeh (2012) inferred in their study that activities such as religion motivate tourists to visit a particular destination. Aksoy and Kiyici (2011), and Enright and Newton (2005) opined that common activities such as special events, shopping, food, and sport among others significantly influence the competitive positioning of a tourist destination. Chiu and Ananzeh (2012) remarked that MICE (meetings, incentive travels, conferences, and exhibitions) tourism activities also play significant role in the choice of a destination. Truong and King (2009) identified activities as one of the most significant destination attributes that influence tourist perception. Furthermore, activities such as political, and social activities have positive relationship with destination image and facilities domestic travel hence, an antecedent of domestic tourism participation (Truong & King, 2009). The implication of these reviews shows consistencies in literature regarding the influence of activities on destination choice. However, the fact that this attribute had not being tested in the context of Obudu Mountain Resort in Calabar made us to assume the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: Activities have positive and significant influence on domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort.

2.6 Accessibility and Domestic Tourists' Choice of Destination

Having been motivated and attracted to embark on a trip to a particular destination, there must be a means of getting there (BGL, 2014; Okoli, 2001) hence, the question of accessibility through any of the means of transportation - air, land or sea transportation (Hsu et al., 2009; Jennifer & Thea, 2013). Therefore, one of the key elements in tourists' decision making process is the availability of access. Upadhyaya (2012) recommended in his study that accessibility facilities are the imperative attribute of the destination. Assaker (2014), Chi and Qu (2009), and Truong and King (2009) identified accessibility as one of the most significant destination attributes that influences tourist perception and choice of a destination. Studies conducted in Malaysia showed that the accessibility of destination helps to reduce the stress when chosen a destination as tourist want a destination that is easy to locate (Hsu et al., 2009). Zhang and Lam (1999) conducted a study of mainland Chinese travelers' motivation to visit Hong Kong, based on the 'push-pull' framework. Results showed that accessibility of Hong Kong is one of the top three significant pull attributes, which attract mainland Chinese to Hong Kong. The implication of these reviews shows consistencies in literature regarding the influence of access on destination choice. In view of this we assume the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: Accessibility have positive and significant influence on domestic tourists' Choice of Obudu Mountain Resort.

2.7 Available Packages and Domestic Tourists' Choice of Destination

The package of tourists' product and services in a destination is a key element in tourists' choice of destination (Bello & Bello, 2017). Tourists want to enjoy the best of service offerings that will enhance their destination experience (Bello et al., 2014). These packages may include discounts on some usage of destinations amenities, free Wi-Fi connections etc. (BGL, 2014). Others include discounts on accommodation, amenities enjoyed, and surprise birthday packages among others are packages that destinations should put in place to attract

visitors. Harikrishna and Rajat (2011) examined the social and psychological factors influencing destination preferences of domestic tourists in India. The outcome of the study shows tourists' decisions were generally influenced by available packages such as food, sightseeing facilities, availability of local language interpreters, and entertainment facilities among others. However, in view of the fact that this attribute have not being validated in the context of Obudu Mountain Resort in Calabar call for the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5: Available Packages have positive and significant influence on domestic Tourists' Choice of Obudu Mountain Resort.

2.8 Affordability and Domestic Tourists' Choice of Destination

Tourists are attracted to a destination because they can afford the trip (UNWTO, 2016). Affordability is the ability of the visitor to meet the cost of purchasing tourist products and services at the destination including the usage of its amenities (Bello & Bello, 2017). Tour operators should prepare package tours by keeping affordability in mind. The transportation cost, accommodation charges, entrance fees at attraction centres should be affordable (Bello et al. 2014). BGL (2014) reported that in Nigeria, the average cost of hotel accommodation is out of reach of an average holiday maker. The prices range between US\$550 - US\$81, 226 per night (Niyi, 2010). Domestic fares within Nigeria range between US\$200-US\$350 (Adeola, 2012). Affordability ranked the highest of all attributes when respondent were asked in the works of Lau (2004) cited in Bello et al. (2015) as his findings showed that tourists considers more affordable destination ahead of pricy ones. Javid and Roma (2016) conducted a study to determine factors influencing local tourists' decision-making on choosing Azerbaijan. The finding shows that affordability as one of the most important attributes for local tourists in choosing tourism destinations in Azerbaijan. Harikrishna and Rajat (2011) examined the social and psychological factors influencing destination preferences of domestic tourists in India. The outcome of the study shows tourists' decisions were generally influenced by affordability. The implication of these reviews we assume the following hypotheses

Hypothesis 6: Affodability have positive and significant influence on domestic tourists' Choice of Obudu Mountain Resort.

2.9 Attitude of Host Community and and Domestic Tourists' Choice of Destination

The importance of local community for tourists' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses had lately received increasing attention (Kim et al., 2012). Studies in the domain of tourism had established the link between attitude of the host community and destination choice (Bankole, 2002; Igbojekwe et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2012). It is reported that tourists are likely to be deterred from travelling to any tourist destination whose locals are hostile to visitors (Bello et al., 2014). Hostility in this context implies: insecurity through crime and terrorism (Bankole, 2002), violence against tourists, and extent of reliability of police service protection for tourists (Open-door Report, 2013). Other items to describe hostility against tourists include: poor disposition and openness of local population to tourists (Jennifer & Thea, 2013), racism, and denial of tourists access to facilities and assistance required for their stay (Petruzellis & Romanazzi, 2010), localization of medium of instruction in public place (OECD, 2007) and discrimination in all ramifications against tourists (Kotler et al., 2006; UNWTO, 2014). The above items, whether consciously or unconsciously influences the choice of tourist destination among tourists.

Previous studies argued that tourists may not select or recommend a particular destination to other prospective tourists if the attitude of her locals is hostile towards them (Igbojekwe et

al., 2013; Kleckley, 2008). This notwithstanding attractive policy strategies and instruments put in place by the host government and other stakeholders (Bello et al., 2015; Bello et al., 2014a). Bello et al. (2015) proposed a model that explains the relationship between policy strategies, instruments, and attitude of locals on sustainable tourism industry in Malaysia. The outcome of the study shows that notwithstanding the robustness of tourism policy strategies, and the friendliness of tourism instruments of Malaysian government, the attitude and disposition of Malaysians toward tourists can be very strategic in determining the loyalty and recommendation of Malaysia as destination of choice. Harikrishna and Rajat (2011) examined the social and psychological factors influencing destination preferences of domestic tourists in India. The outcome of the study shows tourists' decisions were generally influenced by attitude of the host community in the aspects relating to safety, localization of medium of instruction in public place and comfort. The fact that this attribute (i.e. Attitude of the Host Community) has not been tested in respect to Obudu Mountain Resort by local tourists in Nigeria made us to hypothesise as follow.

***Hypothesis 7:** Attitude of Host Community have positive and significant influence on domestic Tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort.*

2.10 Accommodation and Domestic Tourists' Choice of Destination

Accommodation facilities are defined as those superstructures that enhance the provision of food, drinks, rooms, and other auxiliary services to the tourists (Okoli, 2001). Accommodation is an attribute of a destination that is very vital in the decision making process and is a major influencer. Accommodation should be clean, and aesthetically appealing to be able to attract tourists (Lin & Hsu, 2013). Sharma et al. (2011) posits that accommodation plays a major role when tourist want to make their decision on a choice of destination. Wang and Qu (2006) identified destination attributes that (dis)satisfy tourists during their holidays at sun and sea destinations and found that the main important destination feature is accommodation and customer care. Aksoy and Kiyici (2011) and Hakak (2013) argued in their studies that accommodation significantly influence domestic tourists' choice of a destination. Upadhyaya (2012) recommended in his study that accommodation facilities are an imperative attribute for domestic tourists' choice of a destination. Specifically, Pike (2009) and Qu et al. (2011) recommended that attraction and accommodation attributes significantly contributed to tourists' choice of destination. As such from the previous discussion, we assume the following hypotheses:

***Hypothesis 8:** Accommodation have positive and significant influence on domestic tourists' Choice of Obudu Mountain Resort.*

2.11 Conceptual Framework

In this study, destination attributes and domestic tourists choice of Obudu Mountain Resort (DES-DTCO) model that explains attributes that influences domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort Calabar, Cross River State is proposed. The hypothetical model shows eight destination attributes as independent variables that predicts domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort. The consideration of these destination attributes, whether conscious or unconscious on the part of the prospective domestic tourists in Nigeria determines their final choice of Obudu Mountain Resort as shown in Figure 1.1.

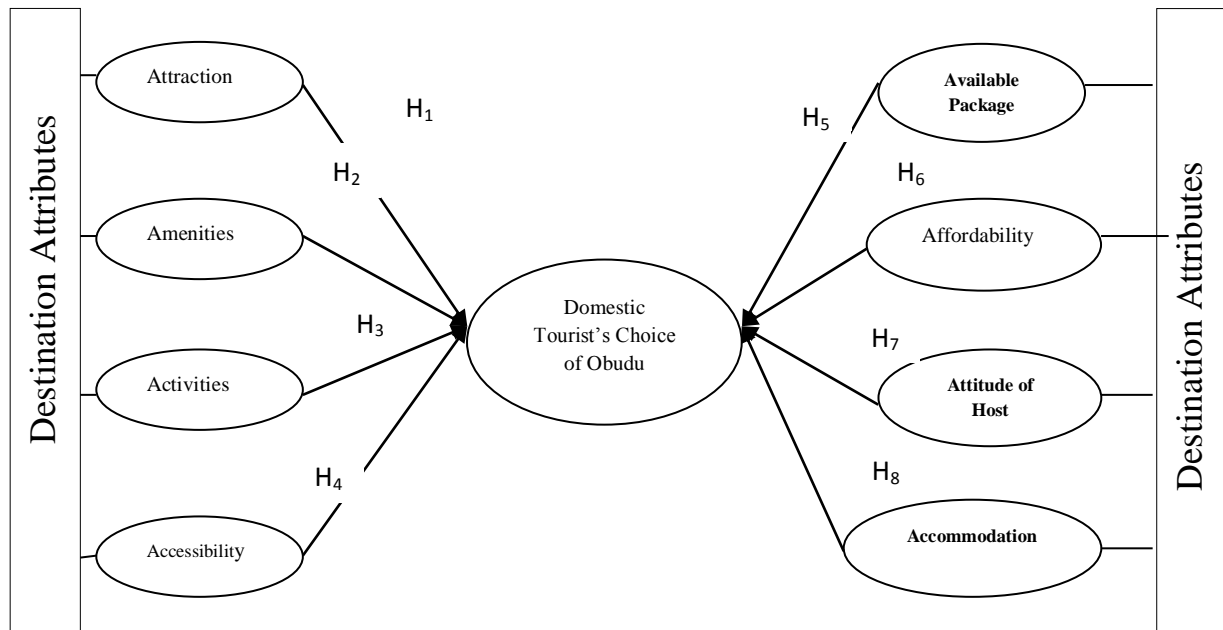


Figure 1: Showing Destination Attributes and Domestic Tourists Choice of Obudu Mountain Resort (DES-DTCO) Model.

3. Methodology

This study used structured questionnaire to gather data relevant to determine the relationship between destination attributes and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort, Calabar. The 30 items related to destination attributes were derived from the study of Scott & Thipgen (2003) and these items were grouped according to the Buhalis (2000) 6A's framework (i.e. attractions, accessibility, amenities, available packages, activities and affordability). Accommodation was measured using five items adopted and modified from Kim (2014) destination attributes of MTEs. A seven items scale of sustainable edu-tourism industry in Malaysia from Bello et al. (2015) was adopted, modified and used to measure attitude of the host community attribute. In addition, a six items of tourist choice decision scale from Buhalis (2000) was adapted. Each of the 48 items in the instrument was measured on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. The research population for this study comprised of domestic tourists that patronise Obudu Mountain Resort, Calabar hence, an infinite population. To determine the exact sample size for the present study, the suggestion in Freneund and William (2009) for determining sample size from infinite population was upheld. The authors proposed the formula to determining the sample size (*n*) as follows:

$$n = \frac{(Z_{\alpha/2})^2 PQ}{e^2}$$

Where

P = Probability for positive response.

Q = Probability for negative response.

e = Tolerable error (0.05).

$Z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$ from the critical table Z of 0.05 under infinity ∞ .

$\alpha = 0.05$, the significant level

n = Sample size

Applying this formula to the present study, the sample size (n) of 323 was obtained as follows.

$$n = \frac{(Z_{\alpha/2})^2 PQ}{e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.7)(0.3)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{(3.8416)(0.7)(0.3)}{(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{0.806746}{0.0025}$$

$$n = 322.69 \approx 323.$$

The researchers personally visited Obudu Mountain Resort Calabar and, thus, administered the structured questionnaires until the sample size of 323 were met. Pearson Moment Correlation analysis that allows for the exploration of the relationship among a set of variables (Pallant, 2010) were adopted for the analysis of data collected. Before proceeding with the analysis of objectives in the present study, the researchers test for the reliability and validity of the instrument used for the study using statistical package for social science (SPSS) software version 23. However, the researchers carefully screen the data in terms of missing values, influential outliers, normality, and multicollinearity using statistical package for social science (SPSS) software version 23 before proceeding with the analysis of objectives in the present study.

4. Results

The gender distribution of the respondents indicates that 60% of the respondents are females and 40% are males. This implied that majority of the participants in this study are females. In terms of marital status, 24.7% of the respondents are single, 43.1% are married, and 32.2% are divorced. This implied that majority of the participants in this study are married, followed by the singles. The religion distribution of respondents used in the present study includes: Christianity (51.3%), Islam (20.9%) and others (27.8%). This shows that majority of participants in this study are Christians followed by others with only very few Muslims participants. The age distribution of respondents was divided into four groups, and the largest age group were those between the age range of 36 to 41 years which comprised of 44.7% of the sampled population. The analysis further shows that about 22.8% of the respondents were within the age range of 30 to 35, while those within the age range of 24 to 29 were about 22.5% and 10% were between 18 to 23 years of age. This shows that majority of participants used for the study have their age range of 36 to 41 years, followed by those with age bracket 30 to 35. Those within the age 18 to 23 are the least percentage of the total sampled population.

Analysis of participants' distribution by education qualification shows that about 42.2%, 32.8%, 21.3 and 3.8% of the respondents had other qualifications, PGD/Masters Degrees, HND/ Bachelors and ND respectively. This implies that majority of participants used in the

study are holders of other qualifications (42.2%), followed by those with PGD and Masters certificate (32.8%). The analysis of respondents' monthly income distribution shows that about 43.1% of the respondents earned ₦150,000 above, 35.9% earned between ₦101,000-₦150,000, 16.9% had monthly income between ₦51,000-₦100,000 and only 4.1% earned between ₦51,000-₦100,000. This implies that majority of the respondents earned ₦150,000 and above (43.1%) with only 4.1% of the respondents earning between ₦51,000-₦100,000.

The outcome of the reliability analysis shows that each of the eight destination attributes has a Cronbach's alpha readings as follows; Attraction, ($\alpha=.71$), Amenities, ($\alpha=.77$), Activities, ($\alpha=.74$), Accessibility, ($\alpha=.70$), Available package, ($\alpha=.80$), Affordability, ($\alpha=.85$), Attitude of the host community, ($\alpha=.82$), and Accommodation, ($\alpha=.71$). These results justify that all the items of the eight destination attributes, and Domestic Tourists' Choice construct has Cronbach's alpha value $>.70$, in respect to Obudu Mountain Resort Calabar. This shows the internally consistency of the items in the instrument (see Hair et al. , 2006).

Furthermore, the relationship between destination attributes and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort were analysed and results were presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlations of Destination Attributes and Domestic Tourists' Choice of Obudu Mountain Resort.

Variables	R	P	Level
Domestic Tourists' Choice (DTC)	--	--	--
Attraction (AT)	0.963	0.000	High
Amenities (AM)	0.925	0.000	High
Activities (AC)	0.872	0.000	High
Accessibility (AS)	0.932	0.000	High
Available Package (AP)	0.899	0.000	High
Affordability (AF)	0.891	0.000	High
Attitude of Host Community (AH)	0.890	0.000	High
Accommodation (AO)	0.946	0.000	High

Note: Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed).

Table 1 depicted that all the eight destination attributes were found to have positive and significant relationship with domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort, Calabar. Hence, Attraction (AT) ($r = 0.963$; $p = 0.000$); Amenities (AM) ($r = 0.925$; $p = 0.000$); Activities (AC) ($r = 0.872$; $p = 0.000$), Accessibility (AS) ($r = 0.932$; $p = 0.000$), Available Package (AP) ($r = 0.899$; $p = 0.000$), Affordability (AF) ($r = 0.891$; $p = 0.000$), Attitude of Host Community (AH) ($r = 0.890$; $p = 0.000$), and Accommodation (AO) ($r = 0.946$; $p = 0.000$). In terms of the strength of the relationship, the result shows that; Attraction (AT) ($r = 0.963$); Amenities (AM) ($r = 0.925$); Activities (AC) ($r = 0.872$), Accessibility (AS) ($r = 0.932$), Available Package (AP) ($r = 0.899$), Affordability (AF) ($r = 0.891$), Attitude of Host Community (AH) ($r = 0.890$), and Accommodation (AO) ($r = 0.946$) were found to be highly correlated with domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort, Calabar based on the statistical basis (see Hair et al., 2006).

Table 2: Model Summary.

Model	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
					F Change	df1	df2	
1	.667 ^a	.458	.96785	.638	.586	8	1	.703

From Table 2, it was depicted that the value of R-square is .458. This indicates that the goodness of fit of the DES-DTCO model is statistically significant. The adjusted R-square value of .346 is also statistically significant which indicate that after taking into accounts; the number of regressors, the DES-DTCO model explains about 35% of the variation in domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort Calabar, Cross Rivers State. Thus, the remaining 65% is due to other factors and residuals. Also, the multiple R (R=.667) revealed a significant high relationship between independent variables (i.e. Destination Attributes) and the dependent variable (i.e. Domestic Tourists' Choice of Desination) in respect to Obudu mountain resort Calabar.

6. Conclusion, Implications, and Limitations

The study sought to establish the relationship between destination attributes and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort, Calabar. The major findings for each objective are as follows.

Regarding the relationship between attraction and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort, the study found that attraction has positive and significant relationship domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort. This finding correspond with Pike (2009), Qu et al. (2011), and Upadhyaya (2012) reports. The authors affirmed that touristic attractions have significant impact on destination choice by the tourists. Beerli and Martin (2004), Ekinici and Hosany (2006), Gnoth et al., (2009), and Jani et al., (2009) suggested that tourists' choice of a destination is explained by the attractiveness of the destination.

In respect to the relationship between amenities and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort, the finding shows that amenities positively influences domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort. This finding is in agreement with Sparks and Pan (2009) hence, argued that quality amenities has strong correlation with tourists' choice of destinations by prospective Chinese outbound travelers. Catalan (2003) also affirmed that amenities at the destination is one of the destination attributes that was rated as most important.

On the relationship existing between activities and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort, the study found a positive significant relationship. This finding agrees with Aksoy and Kiyici (2011), Battour et al. (2011), and Chiu and Ananzeh (2012) who reported that activities such as religion, special events, shopping, food, sport and recreation activities, music and fun activities, significantly influence the competitive positioning of a tourist destination. Chiu and Ananzeh (2012) remarked that MICE (meetings, incentive travels, conferences, and exhibitions) tourism activities also play significant role in the coice of a destination. Truong and King (2009) identified activities as one of the most significant destination attributes that influence tourist perception.

In respect to the relationship existing between accessibility and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort, the study found a positive and significant relationship between accessibility and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort. This finding agrees with Upadhyaya (2012) who recommended in his study that accessibility facilities are the imperative attribute of the destination. Truong and King (2009) identified accessibility as one

of the most significant destination attributes that influences tourist perception and choice of a destination. Assaker (2014) concluded that accessibility (e.g. prices and availability of information) is one of the factors that has a greater influence on the the choice of a destination.

On the relationship existing between available packages and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort, the study found a positive and significant relationship between available packages and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort. This finding agrees with Harikrishna and Rajat (2011) who reported that tourists' decisions were generally influenced by available packages such as food, sightseeing facilities, availability of local language interpreters, and entertainment facilities among others. These packages may include discounts on some usage of destinations amenities, free Wi-Fi connections etc. (BGL, 2014).

On the objective which determined the relationship between affordability and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort. Finding shows a positive and significant relationship between affordability and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort. This finding is in accordance to Javid and Roma (2016) who concluded that affordability is one of the most important attributes for local tourists in choosing tourism destinations in Azerbaijan. Harikrishna and Rajat (2011) examined the social and psychological factors influencing destination preferences of domestic tourists in India. The outcome of the study shows that tourists' decisions were generally influenced by economic factor, that is affordability. Affordability ranked the highest of all attributes when respondent were asked in the works of Lau (2004) Cited in Bello et al. (2015) as his findings showed that tourists considers more affordable destination ahead of pricy ones not even minding the sophistication of other destinations.

On the relationship existing between attitude of the host community and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort, the study found a positive and significant relationship between attitude of the host community and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort. This finding agrees with Harikrishna and Rajat (2011) who argued that tourists' decisions were generally influenced by attitude of the host community in the aspects relating to safety, localization of medium of instruction in public place and comfort. Bello et al. (2015) proposed a model that explains the relationship between policy strategies, instruments, and attitude of locals on sustainable tourism industry in Malaysia. The outcome of the study shows that notwithstanding the robustness of tourism policy strategies, and the friendliness of tourism instruments of Malaysian government, the attitude and disposition of Malaysians toward tourists can be very strategic in determining the loyalty and recommendation of Malaysia as destination of choice.

On the objective which determined the relationship between accommodation and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort. Finding shows a positive and significant relationship between accommodation and domestic tourists' choice of Obudu Mountain Resort. This finding is in accordance to Lin and Hsu (2013), assertion which was strongly supported by the study of Sharma et al. (2011), hence posited that accommodation plays a major role when tourist want to make their decision on a choice of destination. Aksoy and Kiyici (2011) and Hakak (2013) argued in their studies that accommodation significantly influence domestic tourists' choice of a destination. Upadhyaya (2012) recommended in his study that accommodation facilities are an imperative attribute for domestic tourists' choice of a destination. Specifically, Pike (2009) and Qu et al. (2011) recommended that accommodation attribute significantly contributed to tourists' choice of destination.

One of the conclusions that could be drawn from this study is that domestic tourists' visit Obudu Mountain Resorts due to the touristic and aesthetic values of its attractions. In addition, amenities such as road and highway network, electrical system (street lighting and traffic lights), airports including air navigational systems, cable car, bicycle paths and

pedestrian walkway among others are what give Obudu Mountain Resorts that extra bite. Furthermore, domestic tourists are motivated for trips to Obudu Mountain Resorts due to activities such as cable car riding, recreation, bird and animal watching, and mountain climbing among others. Obudu Mountain Resorts gets the interest of domestic tourists due to its accessibility. The quality of transportation infrastructure available provides the ease of accessing the destination. Available packages that draw domestic tourists to Obudu Mountain Resort include discounts on accommodation, amenities enjoyed, and surprise birthday packages among others are packages. Best of service offerings such as discounts on some usage of destinations amenities, free Wi-Fi connections give Obudu the unique image among the tourists. Tourists are attracted to Obudu, because of affordability. The transportation cost, accommodation charges, entrance fees at the resort are affordable. The natural warm hospitality of Cross River people makes the resort a destination of choice among domestic tourists. The clean and aesthetically appealing accommodation at the center contributed to the uniqueness of Obudu Mountain Resorts.

Recommendations based on the findings include; Managers of Obudu Mountain Resorts should give more attention on the sustenance of the touristic and aesthetic values of attractions at the center. Also, government and the private sector should aggressively invest more on amenities such as road and highway network, electrical system (street lighting and traffic lights), airports including air navigational systems, cable car, bicycle paths and pedestrian walkway among others to give the center the international attribute expected of the center. In addition, management of the center should ensure responsive maintenance of cable car riding, recreation facilities and those tourists engages themselves with on visit to the center. Furthermore, federal government of Nigeria should urgently partner with the government of Cross River State to formulate feasible action plan to improve on transportation infrastructure in the state. Federal government involvement in the rehabilitation of Calabar international airport will add value to the image of the center. Partnership of the management of the center with major service providers such as MTN, Globacom among others to ensure stable and discounted Wi-Fi connections will be an added advantage. Banking services and ease of e-transaction at the center will add more flavor to the image of the center. Finally, the government of Nigeria should give incentives to operators of tourism business in the country and as well ensuring the ease of doing business is sustained. This will promote affordability of tourists' products and services in Nigerian tourists' centers. Aside, sustenance of clean and aesthetically appealing accommodation and other auxiliary services at the center will contribute to the uniqueness of Obudu Mountain Resorts.

Despite the astute results, the study still has some limitations. One of the limitations of this study is that only domestic tourists in Obudu Mountain Resort Calabar was focused, thus, did not consider domestic tourists in other destination sites in other States across Nigeria. If this is done it may provide a more in-depth insight and more meaningful results.

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