



# Contributions of purpose-built attractions to tourism promotion in Nigeria: The role of Magicland Amusement park, Abuja

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## Abstract

In recent years Nigeria has recorded an overt increase in the establishment of purpose-built attractions as a result of the influence of technological advancement and globalisation. One such attractions which has had an unprecedented growth is the amusement park in Abuja. These parks are recreational centres designed to offer entertaining activities to visitors. The explosion of these parks in the country has created a new marketing niche in tourism – amusement park leisure. Adopting the functionalist theory this work set out to examine the role of amusement parks in tourism promotion in the country using Magicland Abuja. To achieve this goal, the work employed a quantitative method of research using the instrumentality of questionnaires which were administered on the study population comprising a sample of park visitors. However, out of the 200 questionnaires administered 182 copies were suitably completed. The data elicited were analyzed through the use of simple percentages. From the findings, the study revealed the indispensable place of Magicland in promoting touristic activities and this has subsequently led to the proliferation of amusement parks in the Abuja metropolis.

**Keywords:** Amusement park, Abuja, leisure tourism, leisure activities, functionalist theory

## Introduction

In recent years, Nigeria has recorded an increase in the establishment of purpose-built attractions as result of the influence of technological advancement. One such attractions is the amusement park – recreational centre which was designed to provide entertaining activities to visitors. The entertaining activities offered by an amusement park according to the Gowreesunkar and Sotiriadis (2014) are one of the component elements of a tourism destination which appeal to tourists/visitors of all ages (children, teens and adult). Considering its appeal, it has become a favourite means of mass entertainment in Nigeria since its inception



in the 1980s. The explosion of the amusement parks in the country has expanded the tourism industry and created a new marketing niche in tourism – leisure.

Leisure in its simplest form is all about humans indulging in an experience which should be pleasurable, satisfying, and happy (Walsh-Heron, 1991). This form of tourism offers tourist entertaining activities for relaxation, rest and enjoyment which are the experiential products of amusement park. For its entertaining activities Graff (1986) maintains that the amusement park is quite durable considering the rides it offers, its picnic areas and the occasional events and performances of various kinds. With the availability of amusing facilities, an amusement park remains an international favourite as rides are taking advantage of technological innovations to offer visitors thrilling experiences. In view of these innovations, Moutinho (1988) asserted that the visitors demand for amusement parks has been increasing rapidly in recent years, and as a result amusement parks have had their impact on leisure tourism in the UK. The increase in demand for leisure activities to a large extent brought about the explosion of amusement parks in many nations of the globe.

The proliferation of amusement parks is of great benefit to tourism promotion. In Nigeria, these parks, both government and privately owned, are dotted all over the states especially in Abuja and are offering a wide variety of entertainment. However, the investment in amusement parks does not only provide entertainment opportunities but also enhances the tourism image of the country and consequently, increases tourist expenditure. As Page (2009) rightly observed, the development of these attractions are a means to exploit the opportunity of rising visitor spending ability. Therefore, having seen the benefits that accrue to the economy of many Western nations from amusement parks (World Disney park) many Nigerians are investing in the industry. This is to provide equivalent entertaining centres that would promote domestic tourism by establishing unique attractions for family leisure and vacation. Buttressing this view, Oyewole (2017) asserted that the whole idea behind the creation of Hi-Impact Planet, a private owned amusement park and resort in 2015 was to make available to Nigerians what many often rush to see and experience in Europe and America. As a result of this, in the last few years the amusement park has gradually evolved in Nigeria as one of the major purpose-built attractions for leisure tourism. This study set out to examine the contributions of amusement park in the promotion of leisure tourism in Nigeria using the Magicland amusement park as a case study.

### **Objectives of the study**

The primary objective of this study was to examine the role of Magicland amusement park in promoting tourism in the Nigeria, specifically Abuja Metropolis. To achieve the above aim, the work is set to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the factors that influence individual preference of Magicland amusement park Abuja?
- ii. How does Magicland promote tourism in Abuja?
- iii. What are the impacts of the Park on Abuja Metropolis?
- iv. What are the challenges besetting the park patronage?

### **Study Area**

Magicland amusement park is an ultra modern leisure facility located in Abuja, the federal capital territory of Nigeria. It is one of the foremost private owned amusement parks in the



country, commissioned on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, 2007. The park is furnished with unique recreational facilities and services as a result has been described by many as Abuja's biggest and most popular amusement park (Isah, 2015). The fame of park is further heightened by its wide variety of entertaining facilities some of which are: happy worm capsule, bumper car, pirate ship, aeroplane, kongo crazy bouncing castle, roller coaster, fire fighter, ferris wheel, carousel, the flying bicycle, ride boats, water splash, rodeo bull game, air hockey, diddan paradise, arewa suya spot, shisha hut, fulani ranch, wonder shop, Nina candy shop, fountain shop, Bamba shop, fountain square, fun city Arcade and numerous indoor games. Apart from the entertaining facilities the park is also equipped with utility facilities like the convenience facilities, such as a clinic centre for emergencies in case of minor injuries from accidents, and an administrative sector. As a centre that caters for the leisure needs of visitor's provision for food is made available in its restaurants as it is now common to find excellent restaurants in parks offering sit-down meals of high quality (Graff, 1986). For Magicland various kinds of cuisines are provided ranging from intercontinental to African cuisines and also pastries for fast food lovers.

The park was named Wonderland Amusement Park from its inception in 2007 until 2012 when one of the co-owners of the park was allegedly involved with a terrorist group in the country (Isah, 2015; Ibeh, 2013). The allegation led to the closure of the Park in 2013 to allow for investigation of the case (Ibeh, 2013). Nevertheless, it was reopened by court injunction in 2015 to carry on with its public service. Upon the park re-commencement for business according to Isah (2015) the Lebanese owners decided to liquidate the park and the new owners renamed it Magicland Amusement Park from 2015 to date.

### **Literature review: Amusement Park and Tourism**

The park could be primarily described as a human space designated for leisure activities. Such spaces were not strange even to ancient men. According to Gentil (1991) it is an open space which set aside for human leisure. From this perspective of a space for human leisure, Saikia (2015) described the park as a place for recreation, social gathering and passive enjoyment. Since leisure is an integral part of human social life, the park is an essential space in human life developed to promote the quality of life. Therefore, parks depending on its nature of leisure activities, manifests as pleasure gardens, botanical gardens, sports grounds, zoos, Game Reserve, National Parks, Theme Parks and Amusement Parks which is the focus of this work.

Generally, amusement parks are currently generating demand and increasing tourism supply in many countries across the globe. According to report of the Citizen Team (2016) the global market for Amusement and Theme Parks is forecast to reach US\$44.3 billion in 2020 driven by the recovery in leisure spending, a rise in international tourism and the continued growth of the middle class in emerging markets. From this report, it is clear that Amusement and Theme parks are most visited open spaces for leisure and recreational purposes with several indoor and outdoor attractions. As Sun and Uysal (1994) affirmed, outdoor amusement parks and attractions have been amongst the most popular segments of the entire entertainment and recreation industry. Also Pikkemaat and Schuckert (2007) concurred that amusement parks have become favourite modes of mass entertainment all over the world.

Amusement park grew out of the ancient concept of leisure grounds for entertainment. So from inception, it is an amalgamation of different amusing entertainment activities. To this, Milma (2010) stated that its origins lie in ancient and medieval religious festivals and trade fairs where merchants, entertainers and food vendors gathered to take advantage of the large temporary crowds. Also, Sun and Uysal (1994) affirmed that amusement parks are an outgrowth of carnivals and fairs which began in England in the late 1800s and came to the United States



shortly thereafter. They feature lights, moving objects, rides, and games of competition (Sun and Uysal, 1994). Considering its features, Camp (1997) described it as an outdoor attraction which combines rides, attractions and shows.

From a broader view, Pearce (1988) summarises it as an extreme example of capital intensive, highly developed, user-oriented, man-modified, recreational environment more elaborately, as an artificially created commercial facility where visitors spend leisure time in thrilling rides and exciting environment. It has become a popular attraction for its numerous entertaining activities which gives visitor opportunity to relax under the atmosphere of thrilling rides. This appeal of amusement parks transcends age, gender and class boundaries mixing fantastical architecture, technology and multi-sensory thrills in an uplifting, liberating and exciting collective experience (Kane cited in Wood, 2017).

Thus, human desire for new leisure experience through amusement parks have made it to emerge as a major component of leisure, recreational and tourist activities around the world. Therefore, amusement parks are a profitable business, and their success rests partly on the thrilling rides and amusing entertainment which offer unique visitation experience (Formica & Olsen, 1998). They are established with the aim of attracting satisfying visitors/tourists need for entertainment and relaxation. Therefore, it allows one to escape through fantasy. Through its rides, exhibits, restaurants, and lodging accommodations, it gives the visitor a total new experience (Sun & Uysal, 1994). Thus, with all its attractions, it is clear that amusement parks do not just attract tourists; they also allow some to extend their length of stay (Algethami, 2015). With the increased length of visitor's stay ensures maximum exploitation of its touristic activities in the destination. Thus, it is no gainsaying that visits to amusement parks have become a popular leisure activity making waves in tourism industry today.

Hence, by practically looking at an amusement parks activities, it would be observed that it accounts for a great percentage of both international and local tourism in many nations across the globe especially in USA and Dubai. The World Disneyland Park in USA is rated as the number one park across the globe. The park has contributed highly beneficially to US tourism industry. According to Zhang and Shang (2016) attendance at the world's 25 leading theme parks, which are primarily located in the US, Japan, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Korea, Hong Kong and Mainland China, totaled approximately 223.5 million visitors in 2014, according to the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA).

China's amusement park industry is a booming sector of the Chinese economy, exceeding 40 billion RMB in domestic market size in 2016, in 2017, over half a billion Chinese people visited an amusement park site. China's amusement park spending is marked to pass \$6 billion by 2019, making it the fastest growing market in the area (Daxue, 2018). Dubai has recorded a notable boom in the theme park sector. With its IMG Worlds of Adventure Theme Park currently the largest indoor theme park in the world has further opened wide the flood gate of international and domestic tourism in the country. In addition, theme parks in the UAE and other parts of the world have attracted huge investment opportunities from international entities that have continued to grow economies (Citizen team, 2016). Likewise, in Turkey Wonderland Eurasia of Ankara is the largest theme park in Turkey, and according to its founders the biggest of its kind in Europe. Built on 1.3 million square meters, the park boasts 26 large rides and 2,117 smaller rides housed in 13 huge tents and a large outdoor area. It is speculated that about 5 million visitors are expected to visit Wonderland Eurasia annually. On the economic side, the park will provide employment for 1,400 people and will contribute to Ankara's tourism which has been largely limited to local tourists so far. A hotel was also built near the park to address accommodation needs of visitors (Daily Sabah, 2019).



From the foregoing, amusement parks clearly contribute to regional development since they attract tourists not only to the park but also to the region purchasing and consuming different tourism services. Investment in amusement park can stimulate the demand for domestic tourism and provides development (Formica & Olsen, 1998). To further buttress the impact of amusement, it provides means for enhancing quality of life as NAN (2016) reported that the Wonderland and amusement park Awka is furnished with facilities to enhance relaxation and boost healthy living. In the light of the above, amusement parks are important products for leisure tourism whose contribution to tourism promotion has long been neglected in the country. However, the establishment and success of Magicland Amusement Park Abuja has led to the proliferation of such parks in country. Such a boom in the industry has called to mind their relevance to tourism.

### **Theoretical framework**

This work explores the contribution of amusement parks to tourism promotion in Abuja. Amusement parks are one of the many entertainment industries which attract visitors/tourists to a destination. Its role in stimulating tourism demand has been neglected overtime in the country. This work is determined to establish its vital role in promoting tourism using functionalist perspective. Functionalism is concerned with the function of a component within a system. Okeibunor and Anugwom (2005) are of the same view that functionalism “is the contribution that an institution or item or any partial activity makes to the maintenance of the whole” (2005:31). They further stated that the fundamental theoretical premise of functionalism is based on Durkheim’s hypothesis of social solidarity. Functionalism sees society as a system of interrelated and interdependent parts, which function for the maintenance of the whole (Igbo & Okpoko, 2006). This implies that the society is conceived as systems of mutually interdependent parts, as a result no single institution can be understood in isolation of the entire whole.

Applying this functionalist view to amusement parks, the tourism industry is a whole system with entertainment as an interrelated part working towards maintaining touristic activities. In this way wise, amusement parks are the industry through which tourists are amused with different entertaining activities in order to sustain tourist activities. Thus, an amusement park is an entertaining sector of the tourism industry that offers leisure and recreational experience to visitors/tourists. Considering its services it is a medium through which various tourism activities are supplied, thus it is a means of promoting tourism through the demand it creates for leisure activity.

### **Development of amusement parks in Nigeria**

The development of amusement park in Nigeria emanated from the concept of traditional open space. In Africa, every community designates certain open space for different activities ranging from religious rites, ritual enactment, and cultural display to entertainment activities. Although traditional open spaces are used for other purpose as stated yet it is mostly used for different leisure activities during the day. This is because many of the religious activities, are staged in the night not for the participation of all. In other words, traditional open spaces of African communities are basically designed for entertainment activities.

Hence, designating certain space for entertainment is because traditional African communities value and enjoy leisure activities. Thus, it is not strange that many of the western leisure activities have prototypes in ancient African communities. Many of these activities are staged in an open space designated for such. The excitement and experience derived from swinging from



a tree branches by ancient African children could be comparable to that obtained from amusement park rides. Also, traditional wrestling, dancing, singing and playing of different traditional games staged in open space showed that in traditional African society leisure permeates all aspects of life. For this reason, open space is a common phenomenon found in many communities. Without these spaces many of the African cultural festivals would have become extinct.

However, with the advancement in science and technology many of the African traditional open spaces where converted to other purposes. The disappearance of open space created irreparable void in African leisure life. In view of which many western scholars claim that leisure is strange to the Africans. In order to meet the leisure and recreational needs, urban parks were created. One of the parks closely fulfilling the leisure needs is the amusement park with its diverse entertaining facilities. Realising the role of an amusement park in leisure tourism the Nigerian government established many of it in different parts of the country in the late 1980s (Lagos state amusement park, Polo park in Enugu state, etc). Unfortunately, these amusement parks established by the government were not very innovative, consequently, many of their facilities became obsolete. This lapse in management brought in private investors into the amusement park business in Nigeria with the foremost establishment of Magicland in Abuja in 2007.

## Methodology

The Magicland amusement park Abuja was purposively chosen because it is acclaimed to be the first and most equipped park in the study area. The research methodology adopted was a survey design. Using this research methodology the authors employed the instrumentality of a questionnaire to elicit data from the study population sample which comprised visitors of the park. The data elicited was analysed using simple percentages.

## Data presentation and Analysis

The researchers administered 200 questionnaires to Magicland amusement park visitors (respondents) as noted in the research methodology. However, out of the 200 questionnaires distributed 182 copies were retrieved. The data elicited from the questionnaire were presented using tables and simple percentage was adopted as the appropriate statistical tool for the analysis of the work.

Table one to four presented the demographic information of the respondents

Table 1. Age of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 29 years	63	35%
30 – 39 years	54	30%
40 – 49 years	37	20%
50 years and above	28	15%
Sum	182	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

From table 1 above, respondents within the age group (18 - 29 years) were 35% of the samples. Respondents within the age group (30 - 39 years) constitute 30% of the sample, 20% fell within the age range (40 – 49 years), while those within the age of (50 years and above were 15%.



Table 2. Sex of respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	71	39%
Female	111	61%
Sum	182	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 2 above shows that 39% of the respondents consists of male while 61% were female. This implies that the greater percentage of the respondents were females (singles, married and widows).

Table 3. Marital Status

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	60	33 %
Married	91	50%
Widow	22	12%
Widower	9	5%
Sum	182	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

From table 3 above, males and females that represent the single category of the respondents were a total of 33%, the married respondents were 50% of the sample. Widows amongst the respondents constituted 12% while widowers were only 5% of the sample.

Table 4. Respondents state of resident (Abuja and others)

Destination	Frequency	Percentage
Abuja	110	60%
Other states (Nigeria)	47	26%
Foreigners	25	14%
Sum	182	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 4 above, shows the destination of respondent's residence. From the table above Nigerian respondents residing in Abuja constitute 60% while Nigerian respondents visiting Abuja made up 26% of the sample. Foreign respondents otherwise non-Nigerians from other African countries and other nation constitute 14% of the sample.

Table 5. Research question one

	Factors that stimulate visitors preference of Magicland Amusement park	SD	A	D	SD	Sum %
a	Entertaining facilities (rides and games)	161 (88%)	21 (12%)	-	-	182 (100)
b	Restaurants and food	49 (27%)	67 (37%)	37 (20%)	29 (16%)	182 (100)
c	Ambiance and landscape	87 (48%)	79 (43%)	11 (6%)	5 (3%)	182 (100)
d	Cost	53 (29%)	56 (31%)	43 (24%)	30 (16%)	182 (100)
e	Security	25 (14%)	19 (10%)	65 (36%)	73 (40%)	182 (100)
f	Additional events (performances)	41 (22.5%)	123 (67.5%)	11 (6%)	7 (4%)	182 (100)
g	Accessibility	32 (18%)	53 (29%)	60 (33%)	37 (20%)	182 (100)

Source: Field survey, 2018



From question 1a above, 88% of the total population of study strongly agreed that the entertaining facilities of the Magicland amusement park is one of the major factors that influences their choice while 12% also agreed that entertaining facilities are strong motivators. Since, respondents neither disagreed nor strongly disagreed on the effect of entertaining facilities on individual preference of the park, it implies that it is one of the major factors that influence visitors/tourists choice of the park.

From question 1b above 27% and 37% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the question while 20% and 16% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with the question. One may invariable conclude that restaurant and food is also a necessary factor when considering a visit to Magicland park but not paramount.

From question 1c above 48% strongly agreed while 43% of the respondents agreed respectively with the question, while 6% and 3% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with the question. In the light of the above, the ambiance and landscape of Magicland amusement park are one of the influential tourism appeals of the park.

From question 1d above, 29% and 31% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the question, while 24% disagree and 16% strongly disagree with the question. This implies that the cost of enjoying the park facilities must correspond with the individual budget of discretionary income. In other words, cost determines individual choice of leisure activity.

From question 1e above 14% and 10% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the question, while 36% and 40% disagree and strongly disagree respectively with the question. This affirms that security of the park is not disputable although but security of a destination or an attraction is paramount but in this case the park is adequately secured.

From question 1f, 22.5% and 67.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the question, while 6% disagreed and 4% strongly disagree with the question. On this wise, one would infer that many patronise the park because of the additional events or performances stage within the park which sometimes includes picnic, birthday parties, children programmes etc.

From question 1g above, 18% and 29% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the question, while 33% disagree and 20% strongly disagree with the question. The fact that accessibility is not a strong issue when choosing the park implies that Abuja metropolis is adequately furnished with infrastructural facilities befitting its status as the country's capital as a result locating the park is not beset with difficulty.

Table 6. Research question two

s/n	Questions	SD	A	D	SD	Sum
a	Magicland amusement park is a recreational centre for leisure tourism	107 (59%)	75 (41%)	-	-	182 (100)
b	The entertainment facilities at the park are designed to accommodate people of all ages	79 (43%)	93 (51%)	7 (4%)	3 (2%)	182 (100)
c	The Park offers opportunity for recreation and relaxation	76 (42%)	89 (49%)	12 (6%)	5 (3%)	182 (100)
d	The Park promotes the tourism image of Abuja	81 (45%)	73 (40%)	24 (13%)	4 (2%)	182 (100)
e	The park promotes domestic tourism in the country	109 (60%)	66 (36%)	7 (4%)	-	182 (100)

Source: Field survey, 2018



Question 2a above, shows that, 107% and 41% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the question, none neither disagreed nor strongly disagreed respectively with the question. This analysis vividly declared Magicland amusement as a recreational centre for leisure tourism.

From question 2b above, 43% strongly agreed, 51% agreed, while only 4% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed with the research question. In view of this, it is clear that the entertaining facilities of Magicland amusement park are designed to accommodate children, teens and adult respectively.

Question 2c above, shows that, 42% strongly agreed with the research question, also 49% agreed, while 6% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed with the research question. This further reaffirms the fact that the park indeed offers its visitors opportunity for both recreation and relaxation from its numerous amusing facilities and topography.

From question 2d above, 45% strongly agreed, 40% agreed, while 13% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed with the research question. It is penitent to conclude that the park with its products, facilities and services promotes the tourism image of Abuja metropolis. In other words, diversifies tourism attractions of the city.

From question 2e above, 60% strongly agreed, 36% agreed, while only 4% disagreed and none strongly disagreed with the research question. This analysis confirms that the park in addition with other numerous purpose-built attractions in Abuja promotes domestic tourism. With these attractions, many Nigerians now spend their vacation in cities within the country with variety of tourism attraction.

Table 7. Research question three

s/n	Questions	SD	A	D	SD	Sum
a	Magicland amusement park has popularised Kukbawa community	112 (62%)	70 (38%)	-	-	182 (100)
b	The park created more job opportunities for Abuja metropolis	77 (42%)	85 (47%)	11 (6%)	9 (5%)	182 (100)
c	The Park has attracted more infrastructural facilities to the area	45 (25%)	121 (66%)	12 (7%)	4 (2%)	182 (100)
d	The park has helped to increase tax revenue of the state	81 (45%)	87 (48%)	6 (3%)	8 (4%)	182 (100)

Source: Field survey, 2018

Question 3a above, shows that, 62% and 38% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the question, none neither disagreed nor strongly disagreed respectively with the question. This analysis implies that indeed Magicland amusement park has popularised Kukbawa community of Abuja.

From question 3b above, 42% strongly agreed, 47% agreed, while only 6% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed with the research question. In truth, the amusement park industry is highly labour intensive. In other words, the park from its construction to provision of public service employs the services of human labour. In addition, many of the employees of the park are Nigerians. Thus, the park in the course of providing services to the public employs the labour force.



Question 3c above, shows that, 25% strongly agreed with the research question, 66% agreed, while 7% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed with the research question. This analysis also affirms that the park did not only popularised the community but has also attracted infrastructural facilities and various businesses to the city.

From question 3d above, 45% strongly agreed, 48% agreed, while 3% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed with the research question. It is important to state here that the city tax revenue has increased with business opportunities and investment brought in by the park.

Table 8. Research question four

s/n	Questions	SD	A	D	SD	Sum
a	The alleged association of one of the previous co-owner to terrorist group is still affecting the park patronage	-	20 (11%)	64 (53%)	98 (54%)	182 (100)
b	Establishment of competing Amusement Parks with thrilling rides in Abuja	73 (40%)	84 (46%)	9 (5%)	16 (9%)	182 (100)
c	Lack of varieties of leisure facilities hinders patronage	12 (7%)	11 (6%)	68 (37%)	91 (50%)	182 (100)
d	Inadequate and lack of updated information on the Park web site hinders patronage	55 (30%)	87 (48%)	23 (13%)	17 (9%)	182 (100)

Source: Field survey, 2018

Question 4a above, shows that, 20% of the respondents agreed with the question, while 53% and 54% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with the question. This emphatically implies that the alleged association of one of the previous co-owner of the park with a terrorist sect in the country no longer has strong effect on the visitors specifically after its liquidation to new management.

From question 4b above, 40% strongly agree, 46% agree, while 5% disagree and 9% strongly disagree with the research question. On this wise, one can deduce that the park is facing strong competition from other amusement parks within the city. Although the park was the first of its kind in the city but its success story has led to the proliferation of amusement parks in Abuja.

Question 4c above, shows that, 7% strongly agreed with the research question, 11% agreed, while 37% disagreed and 50% strongly disagreed with the research question. This proves that indeed Magicland amusement park possesses variety of attractions in various forms that continually gives its visitors new experience.

From question 4d above, 30% strongly agreed, 48% agreed, while 13% disagreed and 17% strongly disagreed with the research question. From the above analysis, it is clear that the park does not update information on its products and services on its web site. This poses a serious threat to the park's patronage because tourists before visitation surf the internet for information on exciting destinations and attractions. Thus, without up to date information on its website it might be regarded as an obsolete place.

### Discussion of findings

The data analysis established that Magicland amusement park Abuja is a high recreational area which stimulates leisure tourism through its creation of an imaginary world of ecstasy and excitement. The excitement comes from consuming some of its products, facilities and services. The consumption of these products is highly dependent on the individual choice. According to Moutinho (1988) the amusement park visitation decisions is dependent upon the individual particular pattern of preferences including the resources at disposal, the park activities and



available facilities. Following these criteria, individual preference of Magicland amusement park was determined using rides and games, restaurants and food, performances, cost, ambiance, security and accessibility.

From the analysis, the entertaining facilities which include rides and games were top priority for Magicland visitors. As Moutinho (1988) rightly identified from his study that fun rides are the most important attribute to those who choose to visit an amusement park. Further, he stated that fun rides proved to be the most important factor contributing to visitors' total enjoyment. Milman (2009) is of the opinion that the most powerful factor associated with the quality and variety of the guest experience at the park is entertainment and shows while Formica and Oslen (1998) is of the view that the offering of speciality foods is an opportunity to provide customers with a unique experience.

In response to ambiance, Haahti and Yavas (2004) stated that improvements in ambient atmosphere can influence individual levels of pleasure and leave visitors with indelible impressions. Buttressing this fact, Benkenstein, et al., (2003) stated that it is important to remember that in service environments, the ambient cues interact with the social cues to influence consumers' levels of pleasure and arousal. This implies that the landscape of Magicland influences individual preference from the analysis. Also cost is significant as Moutinho (1988) noted that income is obviously an important inhibiting factor in shaping the demand for amusement parks.

Since, amusement parks are located in urban centres with developed infrastructural facilities which make movement easy, this accounted for the reason accessibility was preferred by 56% of the respondents. Thus, from the respondent's preference, entertaining facilities which includes amusing rides and games is one of the major attractions that lure visitors to Magicland. To affirm the above claim, Graff (1986) agreed that amusement rides continue to be a popular part of the park. This implies that rides and games are popular attractions of amusement parks. Therefore, as many youngsters find rides interesting so also many adults find performances appealing. This evaluation summarised the respondent's responses which established entertaining facilities and performances as the most preferred activities of Magicland visitors. This simply proved that Magicland amusement park as a commercial leisure centre is open to persons of all ages.

Also, from the findings it was revealed that Magicland amusement park is a recreational centre which promotes leisure tourism in the city. This was proved from the fact that the establishment of the park diversified entertainment facilities in the city and subsequently promotes domestic tourism. In addition, its activities stimulate regional development by increasing the business opportunities as it attracts other tourism service industries to the area. To this, Claves (2007) asserted that the development of multi-purpose recreational attractions, contributes notably to quantitative and qualitative development by creating jobs and generating revenue in local and regional economies. To this, the findings of the study established that the park has positively affected the region. Affirming this fact, Moutinho (1988) asserted that Alton Towers amusement park provides 400 permanent jobs and about 600 additional seasonal, largely unskilled, jobs. He further stated that about 5000 people in the area, are involved in the provision of goods and services to this amusement park. This is equivalent to the impact of Magicland in job creation in the region. In addition to regional development, Magicland amusement park also enhances the tourism image of Abuja as a tourism destination. To this, Milman (2010) concurred that the development of theme parks also improves the image of the destination.



Furthermore, considering the challenging factors of the park it was discovered that the success rate of amusement parks created room for competition. This competition is becoming fierce with the high rate at which privately owned amusement parks are springing up in the city (Formica & Oslen, 1998; Cheng, et al, 2014). Buttressing the above claim, from direct observation, it was revealed that there about fifteen (15) amusement parks in Abuja competing fiercely for patronage. However, apart from competition arising from the industry home technology in the form of arcade games, movies, and other entertainment centres are also important competitors of amusement parks. In other words, everything that encourages people to be entertained while staying home represents a potential competitor for this industry. the internet, with its infinite possibilities of entertaining people may pose major threats to the amusement park industry as well.

### **The future of leisure tourism in Nigeria: the case of amusement park**

Leisure tourism will continue to strive with the modern advancement of technology and government support. As Milman (2010) rightly observed, many destinations around the world support the development of theme and amusement parks as government authorities perceive these entertainment complexes as providers of leisure and recreation facilities for their local communities and also provide opportunities to gain political advantage, locally, nationally, and in some cases internationally. In other words, apart from the technological upgrading of leisure and entertainment facilities of the amusement parks, the introduction of a government policy encouraging the tourism industry is needed for the sustainability of the park. In the face of fierce competition from Western Amusement parks and Theme parks, the Nigerian tourism sector is securing its leisure industry by wooing investors into the country. Ajimotokan (2018) reported that the Nigerian government having considered the immense benefits of tourism to the country's GDP, is now doing more to encourage investment in tourism related businesses. The Nigerian government is also working towards positioning the country amongst Africa's number one tourism destination.

Hence, in order to promote tourism activities in the country through amusement parks, the Nigerian government announced a reduction in tariffs and import duty on materials for hotel construction and furnishing, transportation for tour operators, equipment for restaurants, casino machine and amusement park equipment not manufactured in the country to shore up investment in the tourism sector (Ajimotokan, 2018). In addition, the present administration is also ready to grant incentives including pioneer status to all major tourism projects. This recent action of the Nigerian government towards tourism promotion is not strange to other nations where tourism is one of the mainstays of the economy. As Milman (2010) stated, many destinations provide incentives for developers. He further illustrated that in April 2008, the city of Fredericksburg, Virginia in the USA, approved tax incentives for the \$260 million Kalahari themed resort. The Fredericksburg City Council approved ordinances to distribute tax-based incentives for the Celebrate Virginia themed resort and water park development.

However, in addition to the reduction of import duties on recreational facilities, the Nigerian government has also introduced the visa-on-arrival policy as part of its efforts to boost tourism in the country (Ajimotokan, 2018; Adaoyichie 2018). The visa-on-arrival policy was formulated to encourage the growth of tourism businesses and investment in the country. With all these new innovations employed to promote tourism in the country, it is envisaged that the country in the nearest future will be a world class tourism destination. Therefore, to ensure the above assertion, investment in infrastructural facilities which is the very spine of tourism activities is ongoing in many parts of the country. Buttressing the availability of infrastructural facilities supporting and facilitating tourism activities Adaoyichie (2018) reported that in the last two years



the government has spent an unprecedented 9 billion US dollars to build roads, standard railways and power, raised power generation from 2,690 to 7,000MW, while road construction is on-going in every part of the country's thirty-six states. All these innovations point to the readiness of the Nigerian government in maximising and exploiting tourism as viable source of economic sustenance. Furthermore, the issue of security which has been one of the greatest challenges of Nigeria tourism in the last one decade is also under check. As Ezenagu (2018) asserted that the Nigeria government's military strategy of relocating its army headquarter from the Abuja to Borno, the hideout of the terrorist sects, has aided in decimating the sect thereby restoring tranquility in the affected regions which guarantees the safety and security of tourists. Therefore, since the government is committed in providing security to all Nigerians and foreigners, tourism activities will continue to flourish in the country. This implies that the amusement park industry will continue to boost tourism in the country.

## **Conclusion**

The tourism industry is an amalgamation of different service providers geared towards the satisfaction of tourist needs (Olatunji & Ezenagu, 2016; Ezenagu, 2013). One of the indispensable services which could be described as one of the reasons for tourism is entertainment offered by an amusement park. The amusement park is one of the tourism industries that provide leisure and recreational activities to tourists/visitors. Considering its entertaining facilities, it has become a key component in the urban pleasure arena (Wood, 2018).

In Nigeria, the Amusement park industry has become popular urban leisure destination and with a wide variety of amusing facilities ranging from different rides, games to carnivals designed for entertainment purposes. The above mentioned facilities and more in Magicland amusement have diversified tourism attractions in the city. Also its establishment enhanced the tourism destination image of the city, facilitated the provision of infrastructure, and also boosted the economy of the city. This success of the Magicland led to the proliferation of the amusement park industry in Abuja and Nigeria at large. Hence, the growth of such parks has also directly and indirectly induced leisure tourism. Since the entertainment facilities and activities cuts across all ages, Magicland Abuja and other parks promote specifically domestic tourism. This is because the leisure tourist (family tourism) now chooses many of the Nigerian unique amusement parks and resorts for their vacations. In other words, with the parks amusing activities providing unrivalled experiences, it has kept it constantly in business without seasonality impeding growth. However, given that Nigeria has a tropical climate, the business is only affected by the rainy reason. Hence, the Nigeria government's new policy to encourage tourism investments will go a long in increasing the number of amusement parks in the country. This implies that the amusement park industry is expected to grow more in the near future with the Nigeria government's new tourism friendly policy.

In conclusion, since the Magicland amusement park has set a high standard in leisure and entertaining facilities to provide an unrivalled experience, other amusement parks are working hard to surpass their standards. With this favourable competition, more amusement parks are springing up in the country this further promoting leisure tourism.

## **Recommendations**

The analysis and findings of the study vividly proved that Magicland amusement park promotes leisure tourism in Abuja metropolis through its products, facilities and services. Despite its amusing entertainment which appeals to visitors and tourists the park is beset with some



challenging factors if not mitigated would affect its patronage. One of the foremost factors from respondents' perception is the competition arising from other amusement parks within the city. With such high level of competition Cheng, et al (2014) stated retaining existing customers which is a crucial basis for obtaining continuous competitive advantage over other businesses, requires aggressive marketing strategies. An efficient platform for aggressive competition is through the media. Thus, employing the media, Magicland amusement park needs to constantly update information on its website which at present is obsolete. And lastly, it is imperative for the park to continuously upgrade and diversify its rides and games. This is because visitors desire unique and new experiences upon each visit.

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