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Influence of Travel Agency on Travel Motivation and Destination Choice

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Abstract

The most important player in the tourist distribution chain is the travel agency. They play a vital role in the tourism industry. The focus of this study is to assess travel agency influence on travel motivation for tourism and destination choice with the objectives of assessing tourists' travel motivation factors, travel agencies' influence, investigating travel agencies as motivating factors for tourism and destination choice, and the satisfaction of their services. Data for this study was collected through administration of structured questionnaires. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Chi-square). The research findings reveal that 45.2% of respondents travel annually, primarily for business (44.4%), with 37.4% traveling for leisure. Recommendations from travel agencies are a major influence on destination choice, with 51.9% of respondents always using travel agencies for planning and 93% being introduced to new destinations by them. The reliability of travel agency recommendations had the highest mean value of 4.48. Satisfaction with travel agency services, particularly the overall value provided, scored the highest mean of 4.54. The relationship between travel agency influence and socio-demographic factors (age, gender, marital status, religion, education, and income) was significant ($p < 0.05$). There is a significant relationship between tourist motivation factors and travel agencies as a motivating factor for tourism and destination choice ($p = 0.000$). Travel agencies are instrumental in providing tourists with various tourism destination options and significantly influence and motivate tourists' decision of destination and enhance their overall travel experiences.

Keywords: Travel agency; travel motivation; destination choice; tourism destinations

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Introduction

Tourism is a temporary travel activity from one's place of residence to a destination area, motivated not by settlement or seeking livelihood but solely for pleasure, satisfying curiosity, spending leisure or vacation time, and other purposes (Andjarwati et al., 2023). Some travel for improved living conditions, safety, enjoyment, and religion. This process typically includes help from those who arrange their papers, transport, and accommodations to travel to tourist destinations (Mapingure et al., 2019). Tourism serves as an alternative to alleviate boredom from daily tedious activities or exhausting routines (Andjarwati et al., 2023). Travel agency have over the years, provide information on the economic, social, cultural, environmental, and health status of people in tourism destinations (Byrnes et al., 2013). They further help with tourism research, capacity planning, financial evaluation, marketing, and administration (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019). They specialize in airlines booking, hotel booking, visa advisory and supplementary activities. They package tour, itineraries and offer destination management services. The travel industry is more competitive than ever, and travel agency should strive to emerge in this sector by employing strategies that meet consumer preferences, who have a range of criteria in decision making regards destination choice (Pinto & Castro, 2019). Travel agencies serve as a vital link between tourism supply and demand by acting as both information providers and facilitators of tourism products. They connect travellers with service providers, enabling smooth transactions and informed choices. As a result, both tourists and tourism suppliers depend heavily on travel agencies, giving these agencies significant influence over sales and distribution within the industry (Mariana et al., 2018). The importance of travel agencies in the tourism industry is not new, despite several claims that travel agencies could disappear (Cavlek, 2013). Travel agencies have strong persuasive skills, which play a crucial role in enhancing the credibility of publicity and advertising efforts. They perform key functions such as informing potential tourists and creating and promoting destination tour packages. As a result, they are major influencers in the tourism sector, since their perception of and expertise about destinations greatly influence the travel decisions of prospective visitors (Mariana et al., 2018). The issue of the influencing factors of the destination choice through travel agency has not yet been fully investigated by tourism and hospitality researchers. The possible elimination of travel agencies as intermediaries has sparked ongoing debate among tourism scholars. This topic was chosen to validate these debates. Travel agencies, have over the years, played an integral role in distributing the tourism product (Byrnes et al., 2013).

Research methodology

Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State is a major city in the southwestern part of Nigeria. With a population of over three million people, Ibadan is the capital and most populous city of Oyo State, in Nigeria. It is the third-largest city by population in Nigeria after Lagos and Kano, with a total population of 3,649,000 as of 2021, and over 6 million people within its metropolitan area. It is the country's largest city by geographical area, lies approximately on latitude 7.37750N and longitude 3.94700E. The city has a rich cultural heritage and is home to several historical landmarks, including the University of Ibadan, the first university

in Nigeria. The city experiences a tropical climate, with average temperatures ranging from 26 to 28 degrees Celsius throughout the year. The rainy season runs from March to October, while the dry season is from November to February. The city is also known for its vibrant nightlife, with several bars and clubs entertaining until the early morning. A quantitative approach was used for this study. The questionnaire used for this study included five sections. Section A contained the socio-demographic characteristics. Section B contained five items (5) that investigated the tourist motivation factors. Section C contained travel agency influence and services which has five items (5). Section D elicited the motivating factors – of travel agency for tourism and destination choice. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1, representing "Strongly Disagree" to 5, representing "Strongly Agree" was used to rank the perceived motivating factors. Section E induced the respondents' satisfaction with the travel agency's services. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1, representing "Very Poor" to 5, representing "Excellent" was used to rank the satisfactory variables. The research instrument is a questionnaire formulated and adapted from previous research studies, and validated by experts. The questionnaires were distributed online using Google Forms and offline by physically visiting the selected six (6) travel agencies in Ibadan, Nigeria consisting of 270 respondents. The sampling technique employed is proportional sampling, a sampling method where the sample is proportionate to clients patronizing the travel agency. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24.0. Descriptive statistics involved using tables, charts, frequency distribution, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistics involved the use of chi-square.

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed that a higher percentage of the respondents were in the age group 31-42 years (35.2%), 32.6% were between 18-30 years, 17.0% were in the age group 43-55 years, 14.4% were above 55 years and 0.7% were below 18 years. The highest percentage of the respondents were males (52.6%) while 36.3% were females. Also, the highest percentage of the respondents were married, 54.4%, 41.7% were single, 5.6% were widowed, and 3.7% were divorced/separated. Their religion revealed that most were Christians (84.4%), and 15.6% were Islam (Table 1). It further revealed that most respondents had tertiary education (85.2%), 12.2% had secondary education and 2.6% had primary education. Their income reveals that a higher percentage of 35.9% earn between NGN200,000 - NGN399,999, 21.5% earn between NGN400,000 - NGN599,999, 24.4% earn between Below NGN200,000, 10.0% earn above NGN800,000 while 8.1% earn NGN600,000 - NGN799,999.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Frequency (N=270)	Percentage (%)
AGE		
Below 18	2	0.7%
18-30	88	32.6%
31-42	95	35.2%
43-55	46	17.0%
Above 55	39	14.4%
GENDER		
Male	142	52.6%
Female	128	47.4%
MARITAL STATUS		
Single	98	36.3%
Married	147	54.4%
Divorced/Separated	10	3.7%
Widowed	15	5.6%
RELIGION		
Christianity	228	84.4%
Islamic	42	15.6%
EDUCTAION		
Primary	7	2.6%
Secondary	33	12.2%
Tertiary	230	85.2%
INCOME		
Below NGN200,000	66	24.4%
NGN200,000 - NGN399,999	97	35.9%
NGN400,000 - NGN599,999	58	21.5%
NGN600,000 - NGN799,999	22	8.1%
Above NGN800,000	27	10.0%

Tourist motivation factors

The tourist motivation factors are shown on Table 2 below. The result revealed that majority of the respondents traveled once a year (45.2%) while 20.4% traveled 2-4 times a year, 14.4% traveled once a month, 13.0% traveled once in 3months and 7.0% traveled more than 4 times a year. Also, the highest percentage of the respondents had traveled for business purposes (44.4%), 37.4% traveled for leisure and vacation while 18.1% traveled for Pilgrimage or adventures. 30.4% of the respondents stated that Recommendations from travel agencies are the major influence on the choice of destination. 90.4% use travel agencies as their mode of travel and travel mostly alone (50.4%) and with family (20.4%), 16.7% with friends, and 12.6% with colleagues (Table 2).

Travel agency influence and services

The respondents use travel agencies mostly for their trips (98.10%), while 1.90% do not. The result also revealed that the highest percentage of the respondents use a travel agency always (51.9%) for their travel planning, 24.8% use it often, 21.5% sometimes while 1.9% have never used a travel agency before. The result revealed the importance of travel agencies in destination choice of respondents. 76.3% reveal that travel agencies are very important in their choice of destination, 23.3%

claimed it is moderately important while it is not important to 0.4% of the respondents. Additionally, majority of respondents (93.0%) were introduced to a destination they wouldn't have thought of by a travel agency.

Table 2: Tourist motivation factors

Variable	Frequency (270)	Percentage (%)
How often do you travel?		
Once a year	122	45.2%
Once in 6months	39	14.4%
Once in 3months	35	13.0%
2-4times a year	55	20.4%
More than 4times a year	19	7.0%
Primary motivations for travel		
Leisure/Vacation	101	37.4%
Business	120	44.4%
Pilgrimage/Adventure experience	49	18.1%
Factors influencing choice of travel destination		
Cost/Distance	64	23.7%
Conference activities	30	11.1%
Pilgrimage/Adventure activities	76	28.1%
Recommendation from friends/families	18	6.7%
Recommendation from travel agencies	82	30.4%
Mode of travel		
Independently	26	9.6%
Through travel agencies	244	90.4%
With whom do you travel		
Alone	136	50.4%
Family	55	20.4%
Friends	45	16.7%
Colleagues	34	12.6%

Travel agency as a motivation to travel for tourism and destination choice

The mean value on motivating factors ranged from 4.48. ("Travel agency recommendations of destination and tour packages are reliable") to 2.94 ("Travel agencies have difficult terms and conditions") which shows a concrete agreement with the motivating factors statements (Table 3).

Table 3: Motivating factors of travel agency for tourism and destination choice

Motivating factors	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
Travel agencies provisions of places to visit are satisfactory and secured	120 (44.4%)	141 (52.2%)	8 (3.0%)	1 (0.4%)	0 (0%)	4.41	0.57
Travel agency recommendations of destination and tour packages are reliable	130 (48.1%)	139 (51.5%)	1 (0.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4.48	0.51
Independent travel is time consuming and inadequate information	79 (29.3%)	132 (48.9%)	40 (14.8%)	18 (6.7%)	1 (0.4%)	4.00	0.86
Travel agencies are more expensive than travelling independently	46 (17.0%)	99 (36.7%)	26 (9.6%)	86 (31.9%)	13 (4.8%)	3.29	1.22
Travel agencies have difficult terms and conditions	29 (10.7%)	65 (24.1%)	52 (19.3%)	108 (40.0%)	16 (5.9%)	2.94	1.14
Independent traveler is responsible for any error while travelling compared to travel agencies	120 (44.4%)	116 (43.0%)	24 (8.9%)	10 (3.7%)	0 (0%)	4.28	0.78

Keys: SA-Strongly Agree (4.20 – 5.00), A- Agree (3.40 – 4.19), U-Undecided (2.60 – 3.39), D-Disagree (1.80 – 2.59), SD-Strongly Disagree (1.00 – 1.79).

Satisfactory of travel agencies services

The satisfactory mean score ranged from 4.54 ("The overall value of the services provided by a travel agency") to 4.09 ("How satisfactory are the pricing of travel agency services?"). The respondents have a strong perceived level of agreement on the overall services, Travel agency staff knowledge about destinations and travel arrangements, ease of booking through travel agency, and quality of the customer service provided by travel agencies (Table 4).

Table 4: Respondents satisfaction of travel agencies services

Variables	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor	Mean	Standard Deviation
The overall value of the services provided by a travel agency	161 (59.6%)	94 (34.8%)	15 (5.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4.54	0.78
Travel agency staff knowledge about destinations and travel arrangements	133 (49.3%)	122 (45.2%)	15 (5.6%)	0 (0 %)	0 (0%)	4.44	0.60
How would you rate the ease of booking through travel agency?	122 (45.2%)	136 (50.4%)	7 (2.6%)	5 (1.9%)	0 (0%)	4.39	0.63
How satisfactory are the pricing of travel agency services?	90 (33.3%)	113 (41.9%)	67 (24.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4.09	0.76
What is the quality of the customer service provided by travel agencies?	121 (44.8%)	129 (47.8%)	15 (5.6%)	0 (0%)	5 (1.9%)	4.34	0.75

Keys: E – Excellent (4.20 – 5.00), G- Good (3.40 – 4.19), A-Average (2.60 – 3.39), P-Poor (1.80 – 2.59), VP- Very Poor (1.00 – 1.79).

Hypotheses testing

Test of hypothesis showed that there is a relationship between tourist motivation factors and travel agency as a motivating factor for tourism and destination choice (P=0.000) (Table 5). It further revealed that there is a significant relationship between travel agency as a motivating factor for tourism and destination choice and their age (P=0.000), gender (P=0.000), marital status (P=0.000), religion (P=0.000), education (P=0.000), and income (P=0.000) as shown in Table 6.

Table 5: Relationship between tourist motivation factors and travel agency as a motivating factor for tourism and destination choice

Variables	Chi-square ($\chi 2$)	Sig. Value	Decision
Relationship between tourist motivation factors and travel agency as a motivating factor for tourism and destination choice	720.972	0.000	Significant

Decision rule: * Significant (P<0.05); Not significant (p>0.05)

Table 6: Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and travel agency as a motivating factor for tourism and destination choice

Variables	Chi- square (χ^2)	Sig. Value	Decision
Age	203.504	0.000	Significant
Gender	80.430	0.000	Significant
Marital status	162.193	0.000	Significant
Religion	70.512	0.000	Significant
Education	94.599	0.000	Significant
Income	268.020	0.000	Significant

Decision rule: * Significant (P<0.05); Not significant (p>0.05)

Discussion

This study reveals that the majority of the respondents were males, which aligns with findings by Arowosafe et al. (2021) indicating that males dominate the tourism industry more than females. The respondents are primarily in their thirties, ranging from 31 to 42 years, which corresponds with findings by De-Lima et al. (2020) and Arowosafe et al. (2024) on the demographic profile of tourists. Most respondents are married, a finding supported by Jailani et al. (2019). The majority also identified as Christians. Their educational status indicates that most respondents have tertiary education, consistent with Byrnes et al. (2013) and Tunde-Ajayi (2021), who primarily recorded respondents with tertiary education. Most respondents earn a mid-level income between two hundred thousand naira and four hundred thousand naira. Additionally, the frequency of travel among respondents was examined. Most of the respondents travel once a year, primarily for business purposes, indicating that recommendations from travel agencies serve as a significant push factor. This aligns with the findings of Mariana et al. (2018), who emphasized in their research that travel agencies play a crucial role in the tourism industry by providing destination selection, travel services, and information to tourists. They also noted that respondents plan their trips through a travel agency, which supports findings by Byrnes et al. (2013) that revealed the majority of tourists utilize travel agencies, proving to be the preferred distribution channel, and that they often travel alone. In examining the influence and services of travel agencies, most respondents indicated that they always use travel agencies for their travel plans, supporting Mariana et al. (2018), who stated that travel agencies remain a credible and important means of booking travel for many. They also asserted that travel agencies significantly impact their destination choices, often introducing them to locations they might not have considered. Kutty & Joy (2020) support this assertion by stating that travel agencies play a vital role in promoting tourism destinations. This study investigated travel agencies as a motivating factor for tourism and destination choice, and they opined that travel agency recommendations of destination and tour packages are reliable and that travel agencies provisions of places to visit are satisfactory and secured, independent travel is time consuming and inadequate information and independent traveler is responsible for any error while travelling compared to travel agencies. This is in line with Byrnes et al. (2013) who opined in their findings that travel agency saves time and convenience of having the travel agency do the work for them, safer and reliable than purchasing online or independently and travel agency also help to facilitate more complex travel such as long haul or special travel itinerary. They also offer more professional advice and expertise and finally for booking tour packages. In terms of pricing, the respondents state that travel agencies are more expensive than travelling independently which is also ascertained by Mariana et al. (2018) that booking travel independently is generally cheaper than booking with a travel agency. In addition, this study investigated the respondents' satisfaction with travel agency's services, and the respondents rated that the overall value of the services provided by a travel agency is excellent and that the travel agency staffs knowledge about destinations and travel arrangements is excellent. The customer service provided, and ease of booking travel services were all good according to the respondents. Pinto & Castro (2019) support this assertion by stating that travel agencies offer valuable advice and guidance, play a crucial role in providing customers with quality service, leading to high customer satisfaction. Their study also emphasizes the importance of travel agents being friendly, professional, and knowledgeable about the services offered. Hypotheses revealed that there is a significant relationship there is a relationship between tourist motivation factors and travel agency as a motivating factor for tourism and destination choice and this assertion supports Jailani et al. (2019) that travel motivation factors can influence the choice of a particular destination choice through travel agency and could predict their level of satisfaction. It is also revealed that there is relationship between the respondent's socio-demographic characteristics and travel agency as a motivating factor for tourism and destination choice. Socio-demographic characteristics are indicators of tourist reasons to use a travel agency for tourism and destination choice. Travel agency should therefore consider the socio-demographic characteristics of their clients in developing their travel recommendations and itineraries.

Conclusion

It is undeniable the impact that travel agency plays in the tourism industry. The study found that travel agency is instrumental in providing tourists with various tourism destination options, destination information, booking services and pricing information. The study found that travel agency significantly influences and motivates tourists' decision in destination choice and enhance their overall travel experiences. The findings from this research are significant contribution and consistent with previous research in the field, which has highlighted the importance of travel agency in providing tourists with quality services, accurate and adequate information, visa advisory, information on customs regulations, required papers (passports, visas, and certificates of vaccination), and currency exchange rates. In the event of changes in itinerary in the middle of a trip, travel agents intercede on the traveler's behalf to make alternate booking arrangements and diverse tour destination options to choose that align with their preferences and interests. Furthermore, the study found that respondents are generally satisfied with the services provided by travel agency. However, there is room for improvement in terms of pricing and prompt service delivery and offering discounts and promotions to make prices more attractive.

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