UNDERSTANDING NIGERIAN IMMIGRANTS ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGAGING IN TOURISM IN NIGERIA

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Destination image is important to tourism because it is the selling point of tourism destinations. Africa’s image is generally characterized by a variety of risk factors including disease and political instability. The purpose of this study is to explore Nigeria’s destination image among Nigerian expatriates as well as the motivations and constraints which may influence interest in visiting the country. Because studies indicate there are about 15 million Nigerians residing outside Nigeria, they may comprise a substantial niche market. This study utilized a snowball sampling method and a questionnaire was developed from previously published destination image research (Lepp, Ginson & Lane, 2011). Results indicated that thearians in this sample hold the same image of Nigeria as previous researchers have found out for Africa in general. That is to say, the image of Nigeria included elements of risk including corruption, instability and danger.

Nevertheless, the sample was eager to travel to Nigeria suggesting this is a niche market worth understanding better. Motivations for travel to Nigeria were primarily visiting family and friends, education, culture and affordability. Because interest to traveling to Nigeria was high, few constraints were identified beyond perceived risk. Interestingly, there was very little variation in perceptions of risk or travel motivations
among this sample. This suggests this may be a relatively homogenous market. Overall, this research suggests there is a potential for the Nigerian tourism industry to improve the industry using the identified niche market.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The emotional attachment of immigrants to their countries of birth or ancestry is understood as a continued sense of loyalty and belonging (Asiedu, 2005) and this may lead to a longing for home. Moreover, Douglas (2009) observed that Australia’s migrant population is believed to be keeping the country’s airline in business despite the global economic recession. Indeed, immigrants may be an important niche market benefiting both the countries to and from which they immigrated. Ogundele (2004) described how Nigerian immigrants in the United States for example created economic impact in their home country by utilizing ethnic affiliations to create and transfer social and economic capital. Therefore, it can be argued that the immigrant market is important, not only for the hospitality and tourism industry but for the improvement of developing economies as well as associated businesses because of the many forms that travel and tourism have been characterized over the years, e.g., leisure tourism, ecotourism, ethnic and heritage tourism, medical or health tourism, root tourism, food tourism, dark tourism and so forth.

Nigeria is a sub-Saharan country which lies in the western region of Africa and has a population of about 155 million people (July, 2011 estimate.-Central Intelligence Agency). The British influence and control over what became Nigeria and Africa’s most populous country experienced a substantial growth through the 19th century (CIA 2011); while a series of constitutions after World War II granted Nigeria greater autonomy and total independence from the British in 1960. Following nearly 16 years of military rule, a new constitution was adopted in 1999, and a peaceful transition to civilian government
presented Nigeria with opportunities for a new beginning. According to the CIA (world fact book 2011), the Nigerian government has been facing a series of troubles while attempting to reform a mostly petroleum-based economy, whose revenues have been squandered largely through corruption and general mismanagement.

The CIA world fact book (2011) considers the country as a very high risk destination and this may be due to issues such as lack of access to necessities of life, for example, food, social amenities the prevalence in diseases such as pathogens that causes diarrhea, hepatitis, typhoid fever, malaria and yellow fever. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the country to date has a 23.9% unemployment rate according to publications on trading economics (online) while around 70% of the population lives below poverty line (World Bank, 2011). These statistics probably explain the reason behind the citizens’ desire to migrate for a better life outside the country. For example, there are a considerable number of Nigerian immigrants in countries such as USA, Canada, England and most European countries. Nigeria is documented in the population bulletin (2007) to top the list of countries of birth for African-Born United States Black population. Out of the 871,000 African Born Blacks in the United States, Nigeria had 160,000 representing 18% of the entire population researched. With a high population of Nigerians in different parts of the world, (15 million Nigerians according to Singer, 2002) there may be an opportunity for Nigeria’s tourism industry to capitalize on this niche market.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is composed of more than 250 ethnic groups that speak over 500 indigenous languages. The following are the most populous and politically influential tribes: Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%,
Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, and Tiv 2.5%. It is important to note that English is Nigeria’s official language and this is due to the country’s colonial history. Nevertheless, other major languages spoken are Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Fulani.

The oil-rich Nigeria has been troubled over the years mostly by political instability, inadequate infrastructure, and poor macroeconomic management; however, in recent time the country started pursuing economic reforms aimed at developing other sectors in the economy (Okonjo-Iweala and Osafo-Kwaako 2007). A good example is the Nigerian tourism industry, which can be classified under two broad categories “cultural and natural attractions” (cometonigeria.com). These categories refer to the existing culture and various natural sites that might be of interest to potential tourists willing to embark on innermost discoveries in Africa’s most populous country. Examples are oral histories and traditions (often passed on from one generation to another), coupled with historical artifacts in the museums (dated back to around 11th century), sights, images and monuments among others that are visible while visiting any of the tourist destinations of choice in Nigeria. Further to these examples is the highest plateau in Nigeria (Mambilla Plateau) located in Taraba State and houses Chappal Waddi mountain. It is considered as the highest point in Nigeria and arguably West Africa with an average height of about 2,419 meters (7,936 ft) above sea level (Nigeria-direct.com). This plateau offers attractive settings such as cattle ranches, tea plantations and rolling grassy hills. The Mambilla is home to some rare species of birds and animals most especially at the Gashaka-Gumti National Park.
Another attraction worthy of mention is the Obudu mountain resort located in the highlands of Cross-River State, which is about 45 miles from the border with Cameroon. Obudu possesses a temperate climate due to its high altitude and it can be ranked along with the most magnificent destination in the world because of its tranquil and enchanting scenery. Most recently (2005) a state-of-the-art cable car with 34 cars was built to transport visitors along the four kilometers up through the clouds offering inspiring and dramatic view of the lush green rolling hills (cometonigeria.com). Within Cross-River State is also the Afi Mountain wildlife sanctuary, which is home to rare chimpanzees, gorillas and drill monkeys. The mountain has been listed as important bird areas as it hosts one of the largest migratory swallow roosts in Africa (visitnigeria.com). In addition to destinations in Nigeria is also the Olumo Rock in Abeokuta (Ogun State). This attraction has natural caves with holes on its floor where the popular Egba warriors were said to have hidden their wives and children during the inter-tribal Yoruba civil wars. The rock, according to oral history provided sanctuary to the people as well as a vantage point to monitor the enemy’s advance leading to eventual triumph in inter-tribal war. Olumo Rock is easily accessible and it is located about an hour drive to the metropolitan city of Lagos.

Also in the south-west, is the Ikogosi warm spring. This attraction is a popular destination among Nigerians because of the many mysterious tales toward the flowing and origin of the spring and because of the presence of warm and cold springs flowing side by side. Oral history has it that the springs were wives of the same husband, who after much rivalry and fighting were turned into water springs. The fiery-ill tempered
wife is believed to be the warm spring while the cold tempered wife is regarded as the cold spring and the surrounding hilly areas became the husband. Lastly is the Chad Basin National park located in the Sudano-Sahelian ecological zone of the north-eastern part of Nigeria. The park covers a total area of 2,258 kilometer square and has hosted the Duke of Edinburgh from the United Kingdom, Prince Philip (in 1989), while Prince Charles and Princess Diana also visited in 1990. Tourist attractions in Nigeria is inexhaustible, these are just a brief inventory.

As stated earlier, Nigeria as a country largely depends on the oil industry and the industry alone provides 95% of foreign exchange earnings and about 80% of budgetary revenues in spite of the fact that the country is blessed with other natural resources such as coal, tin, rubber products, wood, hides and skins, textiles, cement and other construction materials, food products, chemicals, fertilizer, printing, ceramics and steel (CIA-world fact book). However, Nigeria as a sovereign nation continues to make efforts in bringing to the world stage the vast culture and unity in diversity (in terms of different ethnicities and languages) that characterize the country. More so, a few reports have it that the country is keen “to attract foreign investment but it is hindered in the quest by security concerns as well as by a shaky infrastructure troubled by power cuts” (BBC News). Thus, it appears that unstable government and developmental policies have not been consistent in the country over the years.

Despite the security concerns in the country, the number of international arrivals to Nigeria according to the UNWTO (2010) publication has been significant over the years. For example, from 1995 through 2006, Nigeria recorded 656,000 to over one
million people in non-resident arrivals. The category of people entering the country can be classified under people on business trip (foreign expatriates) and tourists including returning migrants or their children visiting Nigeria for a vacation.

These arrivals can be argued to have contributed to the country’s economy, most directly by way of visitors bringing in foreign currency. It was also reported by Nigerian Tourist master plan (2004) that spending by international tourists has a direct impact on the national economy estimated at US$280 million. Thus, if understood and well managed, this industry can make a needed contribution to Nigeria’s rural development through downstream economic impacts (Briedenhann, 2004; Gannon, 1994). For example, once these tourists are in the country, they may visit one of the many rural tourist destinations where they buy lodging, souvenirs and even try out local food. During all these encounters, money exchanges hands (Gelan, 2003), also socio-cultural benefits are often evident as McCormick and Besculides (2002) argue that residents are of the opinion that tourism exposes hosts to other cultures, which in turn results in things such as tolerance, understanding, pride and support. On the other hand, in Nigeria, it is important to note that tourism has enriched the states treasury with revenues generated and contributions to the economy through the hospitality sector. For example, Nigerian tourist master plan in the year 2004 observed that, the value added tax (VAT) levies on hospitality sector contributed N1.149 million in income generation while the company income tax generated was recorded at N313 million in 2005.

The majority of the income contributed to the economy highlighted earlier can be argued to have been possible through Nigeria Diaspora visitors (visiting family and
relatives) or from other class of tourists such as expatriates and corporate business individuals visiting the country. However, there are considerable numbers of Nigerians living outside the shores of the country. For example, Singer (2002) estimated that 15 million Nigerians (more than 1 in 10 Nigerians) live abroad. These figures, according to Nworah (2005), have been validated by other sources such as Africa Action, where it was suggested that, “no one knows the exact numbers, but it is estimated that as many as 15 million Nigerians live outside the country, in neighboring countries and across the African continent, in Britain and throughout the Commonwealth, including other European countries, and in many Asian countries as well.”

Nigerians living outside the country for example remits foreign currency up to the tune of $10 billion annually (World Bank report 2010) and it can be argued that this segment of people directly contributes to the growth of the Nigerian economy. These remittances are typically in the form of Western Union money transfers or money spent by Nigerians while on short vacation or visit home to the country. In addition, Nigeria being a country of many cultures, diversity and traditions, it is often a common occurrence to see Nigerian migrants returning to the country at certain period in the calendar year. For example, airlines through travel agencies take advantage (by way of charging premium) of periods such as Christian Easter celebration in April through May of every year and likewise December for the Christmas celebration. It is important to note also that there are other major traditions/celebrations during the year that Nigerian migrants cannot afford to miss such as burial ceremony for aged grandparents, traditional wedding ceremonies, Oshun Oshogbo festival, eyo festival, Yam festival, and Argungu
fish festival. Some Nigerians living abroad even travel home to introduce Nigerian
culture most especially the *egungun* (masquerade) festival to their children (second or
third generation born outside Nigeria) etc. In essence, these migrants travel back home
all year round for a type of tourism adventure, leisure and experience. Therefore,
considering the number of Nigerians living outside the country it is essential to better
understand their motivations for travelling home and their behaviors once there. Thus,
the purpose of this study is to understand Nigerians residing in the United States and their
motivations and constraints for travelling to their country of birth. This unique form of
tourism has been called roots/heritage tourism (Boswell 2011; Debes, 2011, Bromhall &
Spinks 2010) and in the case of Nigeria, this form of tourism has the potential to
contribute to national development goals (Brohman, 1996; Oh, 2005; Kim, 2006).
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies exist in literature that has already examined the sociological composition of tourist types, for example, Cohen (1972, 1974; Wickens, 2002) and tourists travel motivations (Crompton, 1979; Wahlers & Etzel, 1985). However, one of the ways to approach this study will be to review the concept of tourist types, travel motivations, destination image and perception of risk in relation to the roots/heritage type of tourism.

Tourist Type

While defining “tourist” in a sociological context, Cohen (1974) provided some analytical definitions of tourism, which tend to isolate the “touristic component” from a variety of travelers’ roles thereby overcoming the problem of vagueness of boundaries. Cohen (1974) presented quite a number of insights from past literature and scenarios for better understanding “who?” a typical tourist is regardless of the context at which he or she is being defined. Thus, he argued that the essential element in tourism is the pursuit of “novelty and change,” and eventually came up with a specific definition that is, “a tourist is a voluntary temporary traveler, travelling in the expectation of pleasure from the novelty and change experienced on a relatively long and non-recurrent round trip” (p. 533).

The underlying theme as far as tourist type is concerned can then be seen as Cohen further explained how individuals encounter a change of routine which sometimes can be unusual or novel when travelling. He further argued that the farther a tourist travels, the greater the change in novelty. In other words, different tourist types can
experience the same destination in a different way depending on the motive behind their travel choice in the first place. In essence, human beings have different appeal and approach to travelling. Consequently, Cohen (1972) proposed a general theoretical approach to understanding international tourism which includes a typology of tourists on the basis that mass tourism for example is a result that stem from mainly a cultural phenomenon that evolves based on the change in humans attitude to the world; particularly the boundaries of his native habitat. In other words, learning about other culture is an innate characteristic of man. Thus, these characteristics can be attributed to fear of the unknown that invariably leads to curiosity to want to travel and explore among individuals. This notion eventually means that man is always in search of familiarity and novelty regardless of tourist role that is, tourists are characterized by a highly diversified pattern of interest and activities. Bearing this in mind, Cohen (1972) then proposed a typology of four tourists’ roles often exhibited by travelers that is, the organized mass tourists, the individual mass tourist, the explorer and the drifter. It is however important to note that the organized and individual mass tourists according to Cohen (1972) are the type that seek familiarity in their travels and typically travel on pre-packaged tours usually fixed in advance. The explorers and drifters on the other hand, are the type of individuals in search of novelty that is, some new experience from their immediate environment. These touristic roles are argued to be the fundamental variable that forms the basis for “strangeness versus familiarity.” In essence, each of the four tourist roles represents a characteristic form of tourist behavior such that the degree to which strangeness and familiarity prevail in the tourist role determines the nature of the tourists
experiences as well as the impact it has on the society. Consequently, in the study of people who have extensive travel experiences locally and internationally, Pearce (1985), also demonstrate that there is a clear difference among travel related roles among tourists for example, an explorer’s role in a foreign destination is usually different from a sports athlete (independent mass tourist) in the same destination.

Wickens (2002), building on the foundation set by Cohen (1972), was able to justify this same position by suggesting that mass tourists exhibit a certain diversified pattern of interest and activities. The study further stated that different tourist types experience the same host community in different ways because tourists often have the choice to step outside an assigned role (individual mass tourist) and attach themselves to one of its subtypes such as cultural heritage in search of personal history. Therefore, it is possible to assume that there is a relationship between travel motivation and tourist types. Wickens (2002) further stated that past literature have always grouped tourists together in a stereotypical manner rather than understanding why people are motivated to do certain things in a particular way. Thus, it can be argued as an example that self-actualization on the part of an individual on an organized packaged tour is entirely up to the individual to pursue.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to understand familiarity and novelty as it relates to tourist experience with regards to root tourism travel behavior because travelling home, according to (Skrbis 2007), can also be seen as pilgrimages because of the emotional intensity that it encompasses. Thus, it is essential to state here that root/heritage tourism has described as a situation where a subgroup of people sets out to
visit a destination with the main motive being the characteristics of the place according to the tourists’ perception of their own roots (Poria, 2003). Also, Skrbis (2007) implied that migrants exhibit a form of attachment to their homeland regardless of being in the first, second or even third generation. This view is further reiterated in (Lambkin 2008) as he suggested that “birthplace museums” for example strengthen immigrants’ emotional function in sustaining a sense of transnational belonging in immigrants and the descendants of immigrants who visits destinations as “roots tourists.”

In the light of all the tourist types and roles highlighted above is the notion of a type of travel that has often been neglected by previous studies; that is, visiting family and friends (VFR) type of travel (King 1996; Morrison and O’ Leary 1995). It is however important to note that VFR/ ethnic tourism travel not only involves visits to friends and relatives, but it can have a range of other special properties (Moscado et al., 2000). Moscado et al.(2000) argued that the motive behind this type of travel should be visiting just family and friends and that other motives should be seen as secondary. In contrast, Morrison, Hsieh and O’Leary (1995) posit that VFR/ethnic travel should be an activity rather than the prime travel motivation and concluded that in certain cases, VFR/ethnic travel is just one of several activities desired by tourists. In essence, it is essential to investigate whether different tourist types (as defined by Cohen 1972) have different motivations and behaviors when travelling as VFR that is, visiting family and relations. It is possible that the secondary activity they engage in will differ by tourist role. The study will not only help in the strategic provision for tourist needs but can also
inform a repeat business that will eventually benefit both the traveler and the attraction they visit.

**Motivation for Travel**

Cohen, in his sociology of international tourism (1972) as stated earlier, suggested that learning about other culture beyond an individual’s immediate society is an innate characteristic of human being. Thus, people are believed to travel or visit destinations for different reasons depending on the characteristics that necessitated their travel in the first place. Cohen (1972) thus concluded that travel encompasses search for strangeness and novelty (p. 165). Also, Crompton (1979) discussed and concluded the reason “why” people travel to destination or escape from routine as a psychological/innate feeling that is, there is a “pull” and “push” factor that needs to be considered. Generally, the “push” factors are for example those elements that push an individual to travel from a place he regards as home to somewhere else. The “pull” factors however, attract individual toward a destination due to its attributes or location/region. For example, some people are fascinated to see and experience nature while some are just engaging in travel in order to get away from everyday routine thereby discovering a new individual identity and self discovery (Wilson & Richards, 2004; Goodnow, 2008). Also investigating the relationship between vacation activity preferences and individual stimulation needs, Wahlers and Etzel (1985) concluded that some individuals use vacation to add excitement to their lives while some select vacation to reduce stimulation. This concept (Wahlers & Etzel, 1985) was however making attempt to justify Crompton (1979) earlier position that the essence of a vacation is a kind of break from normal everyday routine. Thus, one can
again argue the “why” of destination visit or escape as being more of psychological/innate feeling arousal in an individual. For example, Maruyama and Stronza (2010) suggested that “imagined connection” is the central motivating factor for Chinese Americans residing in the US to want to visit China. Thus, if an individual gets bored or stressed from routine such as the case of an immigrant in a foreign country; a kind of “push” feeling arises from the inside that tend to somehow trigger the need to want to travel/escape for a while in other to rejuvenate the body and mind perhaps in an individual’s country of birth.

The motive for travelling to Africa and within Africa appears to be multi-dimensional. For example, Awaritefe (2003) investigated tourists within Nigeria and concluded that culture, nature and history are important motives while concerns for safety and security were identified as constraints. However, while comparing foreign tourists in Nigeria with domestic tourists in terms of travel motivation Awaritefe (2008) found significant differences. In the study, domestic tourists are motivated by push factors that is, need for relaxation while foreign tourists were motivated by adventure. In similar studies conducted in different parts of Africa, it appears that domestic Africans are motivated by relaxation (Kruger & Saayman, 2010) while foreign tourists in Africa appear motivated by destination induced pull factors such as culture, nature, opportunities for learning and novelty (Lepp et al., 2011, Beh & Bruyere, 2007, Barros, Butler, & Correira, 2008). Thus, in the context of immigrants desire to visit their “ancestral” home it appears that the motive for such travel may stem from both the “pull” and “push” factors. The push factor can be argued to be the needs and wants or desire to escape
routine while the pull can be viewed as attributes such as sunshine, traditional homemade food and it may even be a reunion with old friends and kindred.

Elsrud (2001) also evaluated how risks and adventures are socially or culturally created within the backpacking community about traveler narratives and opined that tourists have a belief that they can use their travel experiences to project an identity of who they truly are and how they want to be seen by others. In some way, one can argue that the “identity phenomenon” to be a kind of strong and masculine self actualization feeling on the part of individual tourist which in turn avails the traveler a new “identity” among peers or in social circle regardless of gender. Therefore, exploration and adventures on the part of a second generation immigrant from Nigeria may create a narrative, which identifies them as a person of Nigerian descent. For example, Lambkin (2008) while examining the emotional function of migrants “birthplace” in transnational belonging observed a situation where Carnegie (1835-1919) describes his first return to Scotland with his mother and a group of American friends. It was reported that Carnegie described the journey/adventure as “one of the happiest excursion of my life” at the point where they arrived at his place of birth and he implored his American friends to obtain a good look. According to Carnegie’s biographers, the great crowd was at first silent for a moment (perhaps in awe or admiration) before they gave a mighty cheer and continued with their journey into the early life of a great achiever and a friend.

Further to this, it can therefore be argued that the four tourist types proposed by Cohen (1972) do exhibit different types of travel motivations. For example, the motivations for organized or independent mass tourists group can be the search to
reconfirm the different stories that have been told about a particular destination or better still; articles from travel magazines may have influenced decisions to visit a destination. Thus, the group might be in search of familiarity and can be said to belong to the psychocentric classification by Plog (1974). On the other hand, the explorer and the drifter in Cohen (1972) typology may be motivated to travel based on their personal/individual psychological thinking of seeking novelty. This group (explorer and drifter) according to Plog (1974) are believed to be allocentrics. In essence, it is important for tourist destinations to understand the psychology of people who travel to visit these destinations. Therefore, in the context of roots tourism, it is important to understand your target audience by carrying out periodic survey as to “who your customers are,” “what programs to include in promotional flyers,” “why are businesses interested in certain group and not other groups” and lastly, “what can be done” to attract other identified niche as far as immigrants market is concerned in other to engage in tourism to a specified destination spot.

The concept of psychocentrics and allocentrics (Plog, 1974) presents another dimension to travel motivations and a clear case of how certain people reason and what can be done in other to capture their interest so much with careful design and packaging. Destinations have the power to present services/products in a way that will generate the desire to influence visits or travel in different individuals. In essence, choosing a destination ahead of others and tourist satisfaction becomes attainable by design rather than as a chance happening. For example, a psychocentric individual prefers a familiar destination with low activity level; therefore, destination managers can capitalize on this
and integrate products and services that will eventually give this individual the desired experience. Thus, understanding travel motivations in individual or group psychology is important to destination success and sustainability.

**Destination Image and Perceived Risk**

Image is believed to have a strong effect on consumer behavior Tasci et al. (2007). Destination image in the real sense is the impressions that travelers are exposed to prior to making travel decision. Awaritefe (2004) stated that “the primary aim of destination promotion is to project images of destination to potential tourists, such that the destination becomes desirable to them” (p.264). Therefore, there is always a need to market, brand and package destination or tours in such a way that will be appealing to potential tourists who are willing to engage on vacation or tour to these destinations. Also, Chen and Hsu (2000) opined that “investigating tourists’ images of their travel destination is a necessary step in better understanding behavior-related issues” (p.411).

While Gunn (1972) proposed image to be twofold: organic and induced, he however argued that a tourist destination image changes with regards to the travelers vacation travel decision making-cycle. Thus, the things individuals see, hear or perceive has a major influence on the mental /mind picture. Gunn (1972) further explained that the organic images are the daily exposure of consumers to such things as family and friends and travel agents while induced are formed by promotional materials such as advertisement. The destination image can be argued to be the selling point of tourism destinations; thus, it should be handled with a lot of considerations in the mind of the planner.
On the other hand, Hunt (1975) while researching image being a factor in tourism argued that image is probably a significant variable ahead of other factors such as access, population concentrations, and physical facilities that the success of a region usually depend upon. Hunt (1975) thus argues in favor of “individual thoughts” or psychological state of mind and what this suggests therefore is more like perceived destination image may not necessarily be the major turnoff as far as destination choice decision is concerned. The study was based on a past literature that supports the idea that image is important because it exists in the mind of consumers of a brand or even vacationers. Consequently, Fakeye and Crompton (1991) opined that images are of paramount importance because they transpose representations of an area into a potential tourists mind and give him or her pre-taste of the destination. Thus, perceived risks and destination image may be a motivation (for drifters and explorers) as well as a constraint (for organized mass tourists). Therefore, “individual thoughts” along with destination image (induced or organic) can be said to be an important tool to understand and use as a competitive tool as far as tourism destination image concept is concerned because it may eventually influence travel decisions made by tourist type.

With variations of third world countries, the African continent is generally perceived as a risky destination by the developed world in terms of poverty, diseases, war, political unrest, terrorism and less development (Carter, 1998; Lepp et al., 2011). It is now a common phenomenon to read in the news that governments throughout the world often issue travel alert warning travelers wishing to embark on journey to do so when it is necessary. Thus, it can be argued that these travel alerts have negative impacts
on travel and any associated businesses and most especially the hospitality and tourism industry. The United States along with Canada, Australia and British government in 2012 issued a fresh travel alert regarding terrorism act being perpetrated in Nigeria, West Africa (ngrguardiannews.com).

Going by the assumption that perceived media image can have effect on the overall destination image; Mercille (2005) examined the extent of these impacts and suggested that the representations given to people (induced through travel agents) often create a positive image in the mind of prospective tourist in contrast to a widely held opinion (organic). Mercille (2005) was quick to indicate a relationship between media representations and tourist images even though the relationship is a weak one. Thus, representations have a limited impact on image but multiple media representation plays a significant role in the mind of a potential tourist.

However, Lepp et al. (2011) argued that peoples view of a destination changes when they are exposed to a different “agent” that is perceived credible such as a country’s or destination website. For example, results from the study on Uganda’s tourism website Lepp et al. (2011) indicate that Uganda is perceived by respondents to lack the attributes of a modern country and thus form the basis of risks associated with tourism to Uganda. Without a doubt, African tourist destinations have suffered a negative image over the years; however a functioning website that promotes a better image in the mind of potential visitors appears to be a good step in the right direction in other to induce more positive image in individuals such as (organized mass tourists) that usually needs more information before embarking on trips. Likewise, destinations
Carter (1998) on the other hand explores international leisure and business travelers and how they use beliefs and ideas to socially determine places as either safe or risky. The logic behind the beliefs and ideas is that people generally carry with them a powerful “sense of place” when travelling such that social construction of “risky locations” is often based on historical and continuing social relations between destinations and the home of a traveler. For example, most places in Africa are considered to be risky in terms of health care related issues “which is considered random” (p.355) and beyond control of individual tourist while some parts in Asia are also considered risky in terms of “sexual contacts and food” as long as it can be consumed with care. Thus, it is important for risky destinations to present series of positive related themes or customer preference theme in other to encourage tourist visit.

Lepp and Gibson (2003) investigated the relationship between tourists’ preference for novelty or familiarity and their perception of risk associated with international tourism; they opined that international tourists are often concerned about security and safety while they engage in leisure/business travel abroad. Although, previous research suggests novelty and familiarity in tourists and most studies have focused on perceived risk and evaluated how tourists seeking familiarity are likely to perceive foreign places as riskier than a tourist seeking novelty. Lepp and Gibson (2003) suggested that individuals are different hence; the degree to which they seek novelty and familiarity may be determined by sociological or individual psychological approach to situations.
words, some individuals may perceive a destination (based on individual personality) above another as being risky. Lepp and Gibson (2003) however reached a conclusion that touristic preferences for novelty can be associated with perceived risk because of the tourist “roles” and how they perceive risks. For example, organized and independent mass tourists are more likely to concern themselves about health risks than those considered as explorers or drifters who may decide to travel to a war or terrorism prone areas.

Also, Sonmez and Graefe (1998) researched the influence of terrorism on foreign tourism decisions and noted that both political turmoil and terrorism have been a major challenge to the tourism industry despite the economic strength and potential for development that comes with tourism. Their research stated that two-million Americans for example; changed their foreign travel plans in 1986, following the U.S- Libya confrontations and terrorism threats the previous year. It appears then that, quite a number of destinations would have earned more income in the form of further development and foreign direct investments from the American tourists in this particular year alone. Although political instability, terrorism, attitude toward foreign travel play a huge role in international travel; Sonmez and Graefe (1998) however argued that political instability may not be in the same category as terrorism, even though terrorism sometimes is the manifestations of a political crisis and concluded that potential travelers’ risk perceptions, attitudes, and income levels are significant predictors of international destination choice. From the foregoing, it is equally important to know if immigrants
from Nigeria are also affected by perceptions of risk, which characterize Africa in the mind of Western tourists.

**Roots Tourism and Nigeria’s Tourism Potentials**

The idea of roots tourism can be regarded to centre on the discovery of an individual’s identity, that is, where people come from and to the extent of the reason behind a particular individual or group behavior (Nicholas 2011). Moreover, Palmer (1998) opined that questions such as “who we are” and “where do we fit in” are becoming increasingly common in today world. Hence, the need by individuals to engage in ethnic/roots tourism type of travel among many immigrant communities around the world and Nigerian immigrants are not exempted from this phenomenon.

Nigeria is the most populous African nation and it is blessed with an array of resources and potentials that could make her one of the leading tourism destinations in Africa. As stated earlier in this study, Nigeria has a considerable number of its citizens living outside the country. Approximately, 15 million Nigerians live and work in Europe and the Americas (Singer, 2002).

Nigeria is often perceived as a risky destination in terms of health, terrorism, less developed and poverty alongside the whole of Africa (Lepp & Gibson, 2003) and the economy has been dependent on crude oil exploration and sale. However, with recent developments (Okonjo-Iweala & Osafo-Kwaako, 2007) the country has been making efforts to diversify its dependency on crude oil to other sustainable sectors such as agriculture and tourism. Perhaps, the Nigerian immigrant group can form an important and stable niche market as the tourism industry for example seeks to expand.
The tourism industry in Nigeria is reported to have started in 1962 in the form of organized tourism through the Nigerian tourism association in partnership with private institutions saddled with the aim of presenting the tourism potentials of Nigeria to the outside world (NTDC). However, government policy on tourism development came much later in 1991 when the government realized the need to promote and develop the tourism industry Bankole (2002). The main focus of the policy was to make Nigeria the leading tourism destination in Africa and to make the tourism industry generate foreign exchange and create sustainable employment opportunities for its citizens.

Tourism is generally believed to be a source of economic growth for developing countries such as Indonesia Sugiyarto, Blake, and Sinclair (2002), and in Latin America Morales and Scarpa (2003). While in West Africa, Odularu (2008) found out that tourism does matter because of the fact that destinations in the region happen to be in commercial nerve centers that offer some of the greatest diversity and density of tourism attractions in terms of historical cities, landscapes and cultures.

However, it is important to reiterate what past literature have highlighted in terms of tourism (root/ethnic) and the economic and social impacts on the society. For example, VFR (visiting family and relative) market is argued to be important to both parties involved (tourists and relations) and to the hotel industry as well (Braunlich & Nadkarni, 1995). Consequently, Darieva (2011), argue that returning immigrants often transfer social and cultural capital into poor lands such that a feeling of incorporation into ‘sacred homeland’ is achieved through the indirect introduction of global ‘development’ and ‘democracy’. Moreover, Ogunberu (2011) suggested that social and economic
tourism are directly the pillars of sustaining tourism because tourism is a vice that is
established by the participating individuals that is, travelers, (host) families, or employees
in related tourism businesses.

Therefore, if Nigeria wishes to experience developments within the tourism
industry -using her own citizens living abroad as a niche of interest- then it will be
important to better understand Nigerians who are resident outside the country and their
attitude towards engaging in tourism activities in the Nigeria. The Study assumed that
destination image and perceptions of risks may affect destination choice regardless of the
purpose of travel in the mind of a Nigerian expatriate. Thus, the literature, so far,
suggests that important considerations in this regard are tourist type, travel motivations
and constraints, Nigeria’s destination image and perceived risk. Going by the purpose of
this study, that is, to investigate destination image, motivations and behaviors’ when
travelling as VFR, certain questions worthy of further study come to mind such as:

1. What is the image of Nigeria among immigrants from Nigeria? Does
   perceived risk influence “image” among Nigerian immigrants? And what
   variable, if any may affect this image?

2. What is the level of interest in traveling to Nigeria among Nigerians living
   abroad and what variables might affect this interest?

3. What are the motivations and constraints influencing Nigerian immigrants’
   interest in traveling to Nigeria?

It is important to note that conducting research of this nature can be approached
through a practical way of reasoning that is, answering certain questions such as “what
are the motive behind the desire for wanting to visit ancestral home”? Thus, necessitating this study to highlight both positive and negative prospect of roots tourism e.g., loss of identity and connection to immigrants home country or on the other hand the loss of economic contribution that tourism brings along with development for local businesses back in Nigeria.

At this point, it appears most studies have come to several conclusions such as fears, risks and terrorism when it comes to travelling to Africa (Lepp et al., 2011). However, it is not conclusive to suggest that the generalization angle of reasoning is also applicable to immigrant groups. Rather, the entire scenario may be argued to be more of personal or sociological thinking of individuals or groups. Bearing this in mind, it is expected that the results in this study will be useful to quite a number of stakeholders in order to strengthen strategic future planning; for example tourism planners, marketers, international tourist businesses (Airlines and Global hotel chains), government travel boards or even local travel agency/businesses back in Nigeria.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Data for this study were comprised of both qualitative and quantitative information. The data were collected during the Fall semester of 2012 (September through December) using Nigerians and people of Nigerian descent residing in the northeast Ohio, United States. Specifically, the researcher visited a number of religious places of worship and social gatherings consisting mainly of Nigerian immigrants. For example, Nigeria’s 52nd independence anniversary celebration (NCGC) that was held in Cleveland and another cultural event organized by NIMAS (Nigerians in metro Akron and surroundings) that was held in the city of Akron, Ohio. Prior to this, a pilot study was conducted among a selected group of students and friends from Nigeria in order to remove obvious barriers and problems with regards to the questions being asked.

Materials

A questionnaire that has been used in similar studies (Lepp & Gibson, 2011; Lepp, Gibson, & Lane, 2011) was adapted to this study. The questionnaire has been used to study Africa’s image among US citizens. However, this is the first time it is being used to study country specific destination image among that country’s own people living outside the African continent. Thus, the questionnaire was slightly modified to measure Nigeria image among a population of Nigerian immigrants living in the US.

The questionnaire was further modified to examine the research questions under study. The questionnaire includes both open ended and fixed choice questions that
revealed perceptions, motivations and constraints of the study group’s travel behavior.

The idea was to be able to capture participants’ images of Nigeria as a tourist destination, travel motivations and constraints with regards to travelling back to Nigeria.

Therefore, in order to eliminate non Nigerian participants, Question 1 was specific in asking respondents if they or their parents were born in Nigeria. Part 1 (question 1-3) asks questions about Nigeria. This is referred to as free-elicitation (that is, a form of word association and it has been used in past studies on destination image; Reilly, 1990). Free elicitation or free association is a direct method of measuring knowledge and usually measure knowledge stored in memory (Kanwar, Grund, & Olson, 1990). Thus, questions in this section are intended to provide an insight as to how expatriate Nigerians perceive Nigeria as a country in relation to other African countries.

Part 2 (questions 4 and 5) asks about travel motivations to Nigeria assuming time and money were not a concern. Question 6 and 7 asks about constraints or barriers to make a travel decision. Question 8 aimed to classify participants travel type according to Cohen’s (1972) classification. Thus, this section was specific in distinguishing participants in the study who prefer packaged tours or those who travel independently of a tour group, or those who travel alone with few close friends and respondents who travel alone and loves to engage completely in a host country’s culture. Question 9 looked carefully at chosen destinations that might be of interest to respondents. These destinations were selected from the three major dominant tribes in Nigeria namely, the North, South-West and South Eastern Nigeria. Respondents were given the choice of rating their interest and further explain their chosen answer in a qualitative manner.
Part 3 of the questionnaire comprises of different variables with which research questions made attempts to evaluate its effects on image, motivations and perception of risk. Examples of the variables are respondent demographics such as gender, age, length of stay outside Nigeria, ethnicity, frequency of travel to Nigeria and respondents level of education.

Lastly, part 4 of the questionnaire presented a mix of questions regarding *image and perceived risks* that past research has associated with the African continent (Carter, 1998, Lepp et al., 2011).

**Procedures**

A snowball sampling technique was used to reach as many participants as possible. Snowball data collection method is a situation where “a participant introduces another participant as the sequence continues” (Babbie, 1998, p. 195). This method was used because of the nature of the population in question. The population is mostly hidden and as such, participant referral is of utmost importance. Altogether, 96 responses were gathered and some of the questionnaires were duly filled out while some were partially filled to the extent that they were rejected. In all, 89 responses were judged to be good enough for analysis in this study.

A non-probability sampling method was used in this study because there are no readily available lists of Nigerian residents living in the United States. Thus, a snowball sampling technique (which is non-probability) was seen as appropriate to collect data for this study. Snowball sampling refers to the process of accumulation of participants as each located subjects suggests other subjects to be studied (Babbie, 1998, p. 195).
As earlier stated, questionnaires were mainly distributed at two social gathering in the northeast Ohio (i.e., The Nigerian annual independent celebration held in Cleveland and another Nigerian cultural celebration in Akron). The researcher was introduced to the gathering by the facilitator in charge of the event and the researcher later met with some of the people in attendance in order to establish connection for a potential onward referral to other Nigerians living in the Northeast Ohio. The data were collected during the months of September through December 2012.

Data Analysis

The SPSS 19.0 Program was used to analyze the data. First, the main characteristics of participants were reviewed in terms of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Cohen’s (1972) tourist roles were combined into two categories that is, (a) organized mass tourist and individual mass tourist (b) the explorers and the drifters. Also in the expatriate status, three groups of roughly equal size were created based on the time spent outside Nigeria that is, 0-7 years, 8-18 years and 19-58 years. Secondly, independent samples t-test, the Chi-square test were also used to examine possible differences between the various groups in the study (i.e., tourist type) while one-way ANOVA was used to compare means among the expatriate status. Finally, the qualitative (open-ended) responses were categorized into unifying themes and frequencies analysis was used to explore these themes. Unifying theme is a situation where similar responses are brought together under one theme. This same approach (unifying themes) was used in a similar study of Uganda’s image (Lepp et al., 2011).
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Eighty nine responses were analyzed in this study \((N=89)\). The sample included 38 females \((43\%)\), 44 males \((49\%)\) and 7 participants did not respond to the gender question. On the survey, one question asked participants on their travel characteristics as defined by Cohen \((1972)\) and the responses were 50 \((55\%)\) identified as novelty seekers while 35 \((38.5\%)\) identified as familiarity seekers and 4 \((4.4\%)\) did not signify their travel characteristic. Lastly, another question asked participants about their expatriate status and the responses were 30 \((33\%)\) have lived outside Nigeria between 0-7 years, another 30 \((33\%)\) have spent 8-18 years outside Nigeria and 29 \((31.9\%)\) have lived outside Nigeria between 19-58 years. Thus, this study will answer two main questions: (a) what is the image of Nigeria among immigrants from Nigeria? Does perceived risk influence “image” among Nigerian immigrants? And what variable, if any may affect this image? (b) What is the level of interest in traveling to Nigeria among Nigerians living abroad and what variables might affect this interest? And what are the motivations and constraints influencing Nigerian immigrants’ interest in traveling to Nigeria?

Research Question 1

What is the image of Nigeria among immigrants from Nigeria? Is risk a part of this image? And what variables, if any, may affect this image?

This question was addressed with the survey by asking each respondent to “list the first two things that pop into their head when thinking of Nigeria.” This produced a list of 144 responses. Analysis of the responses revealed 50\% \((n=72)\) reflected a positive
image of Nigeria. These responses were categorized as “thoughts of home and culture” and these are presented in Table 1. These responses indicated that this group see Nigeria as home, regard the culture and have some good memories while they were among people. The responses in this category include: Family and friends, home, motherland, sweet memories, respectful, resourcefulness and most of all culture. On the other hand, 38% of responses (n=54) suggest a negative image of Nigeria. These responses were categorized as “instability and corruption.” The responses here include: lack of what appears to be basic infrastructure and human need such as access to clean water, power, dilapidated road network, poor governance and most of all lack of trust, corruption and security of life (crime) and property.

Table 1

*Nigeria’s Image (N = 144)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMAGE</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>% Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts of Home and Culture</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instability and Corruption</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>144</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lastly, 12% (n=18) of the respondent have an image of nature; citing examples such as abundant natural resources, landscape and a popular country in terms of wealth
and weather. Thus, Nigeria appears to have a mix of negative and positive destination images among the study population.

However, as insinuated earlier on, these data suggest that perceptions of risk are a part of Nigeria’s image among this sample of Nigerians. This idea was further tested using scales originally developed by Lepp et al, (2011) to measure various elements of risk that US travelers typically connect with the African continent. These elements were:

(a) Attributes of “modern” countries; (b) Attributes of “primitive” Africa; (c) Cultural differences and barriers; (d) Violence, war and crime and (e) Interpersonal relations.

Therefore, for this study of Nigerian expatriates perception of risk related to Nigeria, the scales were slightly modified. Specifically, some items related to cultural differences such as language barriers were not meaningful among this sample of Nigerian expatriates. Thus, meaningful items from the Cultural Differences scale and Interpersonal Scale were combined into a single scale labeled as “not hospitable.” Thus, only four scales were used for this study. These are:

1. Attributes of modern countries (e.g., modern cities, political stability, good health care and economic stability).
2. Attributes of primitive Africa (e.g., wilderness, disease, snakes and dangerous wildlife)
3. Not hospitable (e.g., foreigners mistreated, trouble communicating and strange food)
4. Hostile environment: comprising danger, violence, war and crime (e.g., rebel groups, terrorism, armed robbery, petty crime and chaotic).
These scales were used to measure which, if any of the four risk factors indentified above influence Nigeria’s risky image. The scales measure perceived risk using a seven point Likert type scale (1=Agree, 4=Neutral, 7=disagree). The first scale measured the belief that Nigeria has modern cities and other characteristics of the developed world such as good health care facilities, and economic stability. The score is averaged across six items and the mean response to this was 4.75 ($N=84$, $SD=1.05$). Cronbach’s Alpha (an estimate of the scale’s internal consistency) was .779, which is a high level of internal consistency (i.e., how the items in the scale relate to one another). This suggests respondents slightly disagree with the idea that Nigeria is characterized by modernity, suggesting a slight perception of risk. Therefore, this can be interpreted as contributing somewhat to respondents’ overall perception of risk.

The second scale measured the belief that Nigeria is mostly jungle and dangerous wildlife. The scores are averaged across five items and the mean response to this was 5.00 ($N=81$, $SD=1.19$). Cronbach’s Alpha was .763. This suggests that respondents disagree somewhat with the idea and that it is not a risk factor. The third scale measured the belief that Nigeria is not hospitable. The score are averaged across three items and the mean response to this was 5.74 ($N=85$, $SD=1.44$). Cronbach’s Alpha was 753. This suggests that respondents disagreed with the idea and that Nigeria is perceived as a hospitable destination by these respondents.

The fourth scale measured the belief that violence, war and crime is an image associated with Nigeria. The score are averaged across five items and the mean response to this scale was 2.81 ($N=85$, $SD=1.09$). Cronbach’s Alpha was .673. This suggests that
respondents agree with the idea that violence and danger is a significant risk factor. This can also be interpreted as contributing to the perception of risks associated with Nigeria.

These scales were further examined to determine whether the mean responses varied by (a) Novelty preference, (b) Gender, (c) Expatriate status (i.e., how long have respondents been outside Nigeria). Independent t-tests were used to compare means between two groups (organized/independent mass tourists and explorers/drifters). Gender was classified as male and female. ANOVA was used to compare the expat variable, which had three categories. This expatriate status was grouped along the line of length of stay outside Nigeria (i.e., 0-7 years, 8-18 years and 19-58 years). For the most part there was a trend but it was not statistically significant. The different groups perceive risk similarly and the risk seems to be in the form of danger. Therefore, perceived risk can influence image even among immigrants who have a desire to re-visit the destination where they emigrated from originally.

Therefore, the study question number one suggests that even among Nigerian expatriates, Nigeria possesses the same image as what previous research has identified for other areas of the African continent. Perception of risks and mostly elements of fear appears to dominate the responses.

**Research Question 2**

What is the level of interest in travelling to Nigeria among this sample? And does interest vary by novelty preference, gender or time spent living outside Nigeria? What are the motivations and constraints influencing immigrants’ from Nigeria’s interest or lack of interest in travelling to Nigeria? And, looking more closely at those respondents
who expressed an interest in travelling to Nigeria, what is their interest in visiting specific attractions within Nigeria (in other words, is there an interest to do more than simply go home to visit family and friends).

Result shows that 71 respondents (80%) are interested in travelling to Nigeria while 15 respondents (17%) are not. A chi-square analysis was conducted to determine whether this interest varied by novelty preference, gender or expatriate status. Results show that novelty seekers were more likely to be interested in travelling to Nigeria than travelers averse to novelty ($X^2=4.886, p=0.028, df=1$). It is also important to note that gender was also significant with males more likely to travel to Nigeria than females ($X^2 = 42.689, p=.000, df=4$). Lastly, expatriate status was not however significant ($X^2 = 3.839, p=.428, df=4$).

Participants were asked to provide two reasons for their interest or lack of interest in travelling to Nigeria. The “free elicitation” produced a list of 119 items that were categorized into 5 motivations. The majority of the respondents 49% ($n=58$) are motivated to travel back to Nigeria with the aim of meeting with family (i.e., visiting family and relations or VFR), food and heritage. On the other hand, 18% ($n=21$) are motivated mainly because of education, music, arts and culture. While on the other hand, 14% ($n=17$) indicated no reason at all to want to visit Nigeria. Some of the respondents simply said NO while some simply left their response blank. This suggests a difficulty in identifying motivations on the part of 17 people that participated in the study. Another 14% ($n=17$) have their motivations in the accessibility of weather, beach and affordability of cheap organic food. Lastly, 5% ($n=6$) were motivated by adventure.
Similarly, the “free elicitation” technique produced a list of 17 items, which were categorized into 3 constraints. These correspond to participants with no interest in travelling back to Nigeria.

A glance at the constraints shows (even though the question stated ‘assuming time and money are not concerns’) that costs and readily available alternatives (representing 53%, n=9) is a constraint for travel to Nigeria among this sample. While 23% (n=4) believed that security and lawlessness is a big reason they will not travel back to Nigeria even for tourism purposes.

Table 2

*Travel Motivations (N = 119)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOTIVATIONS</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>% Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family/Food/Heritage/Visit-Reunion</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Music/Arts and Culture</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response provided</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheap Life/Weather/Beach</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventure</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>119</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This study next looked more closely at respondents who did express an interest in travelling to Nigeria. Specifically they were asked their interest in visiting specific tourism destinations within Nigeria the next time they visit the country. After each destination was described, interest to travel there was measured on a seven point Likert type scale (1= Very interested, 4=Neutral, 7=strongly not interested). It was observed that their interest in visiting these specific attractions within Nigeria was moderate (Table 4). Therefore, result suggests a moderate interest in visiting specific tourist attractions while in Nigeria.
Table 4

*Interest in Visiting Selected Tourist Attractions (N = 71)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTRACTIONS</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lekki Beach</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obudu Mountains</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ile-Ife Museum</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yankari National Park</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogbunike Caves</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.629</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This result was further examined to determine whether the mean responses varied by (a) novelty preference, (b) gender, and (c) expatriate status. Independent t-tests were used to compare the mean between two groups and ANOVA was used to compare means for the expatriate variable, which had three categories. Result showed that there were no significant differences for all group (p > .05). Therefore, interest in travelling to these specific destinations within Nigeria does not vary by any of the groups investigated.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSIONS

Lepp and Gibson (2003, 2011) and Lepp et al. (2011) concluded that “both Africa and the Middle Eastern countries and some tourist destinations around the world” have a perceived risk ideology attached to their image. The purpose of this study was to investigate destination image and perceptions of risks, motivations and constraints when travelling as VFR (visiting family and relations) especially among immigrant groups. Reviews of past-related literature on destination image (Taski, 2007; Chen & Hsu, 2000; Awaritefe, 2004) have reiterated how important it is for destinations around the world to manage “image” because it is a selling point for potential visitors.

This study assumed that destination image and perceptions of risks might affect destination choice regardless of the purpose of travel in the mind of a Nigerian expatriate. Results in this study have however indicated otherwise. It is important to state that there appears to be an interest in travelling to Nigeria despite the image and perceptions of risks associated with Nigeria. Results in this study indicate that Nigerians have a positive image of Nigeria as a destination to visit regardless of perceptions of risks element attached to this positive image. The positive review is good news for the tourism industry in Nigeria to develop this niche market, which has potential tourists in it as Nigeria continues to make effort towards developing the tourism industry. The positive review is also good considering that Nigeria has a huge number of her citizens living outside the shores of the country. Therefore, there is an opportunity for Nigerian tourism industry to explore the expatriate market.
However, going a step further in carefully discussing this element of perceived risks using one of the four factors identified as risk related images associated with Africa; results suggests that this identified group may be the potential niche market for tourism planners in Nigeria to target. The argument is simply that Nigerian immigrants in the US will tolerate greater perceived risk than non-Nigerians can tolerate. Thus, this makes the target (immigrants) a potential market to develop.

Particular interest was also in the fourth scale that measured the belief that violence, war and crime is an image associated with Nigeria. The mean response here was 2.81 \((n=85, SD=1.09)\). This suggests that risky conditions describe destination Nigeria. Thus, it was not a surprise as 70 respondents \((78\%)\) still signify interest in travelling to Nigeria despite all the risks identified. Although, results have been consistent with previous studies (Carter, 1998, Lepp et al., 2011, Lepp & Gibson, 2011) that Africa is perceived a dangerous destination. Thus, results of this study in general support the notion that Nigeria has the same image as the rest of the African continent regardless of a visitor being a potential foreign tourist or an expatriate originally from Nigeria.

Generally, the level of interest to visit Nigeria is high among the sample. The interest is mainly to visit and reunite with immediate and extended families. This suggests that Nigerians value culture as some responses in the open-ended questions mentioned that they “want to attend festivals,” “they want to show their children how to dance, cook in the traditional way,” “visit local historical places.” This apparent contradiction between perception of “danger” and “interest” somehow supports the idea
put forward that root tourism is important and often regarded to centre on the discovery of an individual’s identity, that is, where people come from (Nicholas 2011). Moreover, Palmer (1998) supports this idea by suggesting that questions such as “who we are,” and “where do we fit in,” are becoming increasingly common in today world. Perhaps, the “pull” factor in ethnic/roots tourism is the “identity” concept which tourism planners in Nigeria need to address.

Results from the study also suggest that there is an opportunity for tourism development beyond roots tourism or VFR. A closer look at the motivations for travel in Table 2, show that participants (37% of responses) are interested in activities such as music, arts and culture, beach and adventure type of tourism.

Moving further in analyzing the interests that were signified by respondents in visiting specific attractions within Nigeria, it was observed that there is a mild interest in visiting the specific destinations described within the survey. One of the results indicated that participants have a good knowledge of Nigeria and it is expected that the perceptions is valid. However, it appears they know little about tourist attractions waiting for touristic future visits.

The most popular destination of interest (Table 5) is the Lekki beach (Lagos) along with Obudu Mountains in Cross-River State. These are two different attractions and about one thousand miles apart. A logical explanation to their knowledge is perhaps the location and development surrounding these attractions. Obudu mountains offers a serene environment and perhaps a nice relaxation spot for nature enthusiasts while Lekki beach is in the city of Lagos, Nigeria and offers a form of getaway while still within the
city. The city of Lagos is presently the nation’s commercial capital and formerly Nigeria’s capital. Therefore, there is a need for planners to provide destination specific image and reports to potential visitors as past studies have suggested that it helps in changing perceptions (Barros et al., 2008; Gartner, 1993; Lepp et al., 2011).

At this point, it is important to note a probable cause for lack of destination knowledge. This answer perhaps is within the conscious or subconscious making of the ministry of tourism. The ministry of tourism is the initial point of contact for visitors to check out useful information when planning a touristic adventure. However, the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) does not have a functional web page. There is little information on the website regarding places that might be of interest to potential visitors to Nigeria. Moreover, it appears the webpage comes on and off intermittently and the links provided appears not to be taking visitors to the site past the front page.

The ministry of tourism needs to be the organization saddled with the responsibility of telling the world stories about Nigerian arts, culture, entertainment and places of interest. Perhaps, if attractions in Nigeria are able to promote and present a functional website, form partnership with organizations to sponsor events, returning visitors might develop interest in doing more than visiting families but visit attractions as well.

Thus, the author is of the opinion that the Nigerian tourism planners have a lot of work to do concerning changing the country’s image. A good place to start perhaps will be to learn from past studies (Lepp et al., 2011) that found out that websites, advertisements, and so forth, can positively enhance and promote a desired image to potential tourists. Mercille (2005) also suggested that organic and induced images could
be used to manage a destination image. However, organic image of Nigeria may not be suitable with recent terrorist attacks in Nigeria. However, induced images (through travel agents and advertisements) may be used to change the image positively. Further to this, a visionary-leader that is free from political recognition and gains might be considered for appointment to direct affairs in the ministry of tourism.

**Implications and Conclusion**

This study has been able to explore Nigerian expatriates’ interest and motivations towards engaging in tourism activities while traveling back home as VFR (visiting family and relations). Results show that there is interest on the part of the sample under study to visit attractions. What appears to be the issue is perception of risks associated with the Nigerian image and that there is lack of reliable source of information regarding most of the attractions. It is important that tourism planners take advantage of appropriate medium of communication in presenting these destinations in other to promote Nigeria’s image positively. Plog (1974) suggests that it is imperative for tourism planners to understand the psychology of people who travel in other to be able to develop necessary and long-term strategy that will sustain or prevent a resort/destination’s rise and fall in popularity. In essence, understanding travel motivations in individual or group psychology is important to a destination success.

Butler (1980) suggests that almost every destination passes through certain developmental stages and eventually drops in popularity. Perhaps, attractions in Nigeria are going through development stages now. Therefore, some of these destinations may appear unpopular. The good news is that attractions can still be rejuvenated through
introduction of previously untapped activities such as culture and various festivals across the country. Therefore, it is important for those who are responsible for planning, developing and managing tourist areas to be creative and have the right attitude towards the provision, protection and preservation of destinations.

Findings from the study also indicated that cost of travel and fear is still a constraint for making travel decisions to Nigeria. Fears have always been a consistent barrier to international travel and travel to Africa (Sonmez & Graefe, 1998; Lepp et al., 2011); however, cost is another factor that has equally emerged as important in this study. For example, some respondents are of the opinion that traveling to Nigeria requires a lot of careful planning as far as cost is concerned. Hence, they still see cost a barrier because of availability and affordability of alternatives available.

However, this is an opportunity for travel agents and airline businesses. Perhaps, these businesses need to conduct more research into how cost reduction strategy can be used to motivate root tourists to travel all year round regardless of other variables such as the time of the year, ease of travel planning and reason behind the travel. From the responses, it appears most respondents travel to Nigeria during festive periods such as Christmas celebration or Muslim holidays and this perhaps makes the destination to be desirable among Nigerians because it presents an opportunity to reunite with family and friends. However, in order to make it more attractive and also to ensure that the visit home is not limited to just family, tour operators need to work closely with tourism planners in Nigeria and offer sustainable solutions to the constraints hindering tourism development using this expatriate niche market. A public, private partnership initiative
or build, own, operate and transfer (BOOT) is another avenue that the tourism industry can explore in other to develop the Nigerian tourism industry. This is suggested because it appears that the tourism industry (while within Federal Government operational management) has failed to develop since inception in 1962. Public private partnership involves “an engagement with, or participation of private companies and the public sectors in the financing and provision of infrastructures” (Akintoye et al., 2008).

This study also indicated that 14% of participants indicated “no response” that is no motivations for wanting to travel to Nigeria. What this suggests is that this small group is indecisive presently and as such, given proper reasons, this 14% will travel to Nigeria when the time is probably right in their mind. Therefore, it is suggested that future research may focus on attempts to develop a tool to measure how cost and image affect ethnic type of tourism. This is suggested because, the weaknesses in the Nigerian tourism can be successfully transformed into opportunities in the near future by conducting further studies such as “Travel costs and security risks: A means to encourage roots tourism in volatile destinations.”

In conclusion, the sample in this study is relatively small and the study was conducted in Northeast Ohio in the United States, it is not advisable to generalize the findings even across the whole country of study. Another factor limiting the result is that the study primarily focused on the Nigerian expatriate and the timing of the study may have had impact on the results. Thus, expatriates from other African nations may have a different result pertaining to their respective country. As such, other African countries and views about their respective homeland beg for further study. However, the study has
been able to contribute in a way to the understanding of Nigerian expatriates perception of travel to Nigeria for tourism purpose. With this knowledge, the tourism planners, businesses and operators can package and design tours that will attract the identified group as potential tourists that will visit Nigeria for leisure and adventure activities other than visit family and relations. For example, 78% of the respondents signified interest and that Nigeria is home and they would love to visit despite the reservations (risks) highlighted in the study.

Finally, since Nigeria already has a core competence in the number of its nationals residing in different parts of the world, therefore providing destination specific information through a trusted format such as NTDC website, buying television time (Cable News Network International) and promotional materials (during October independent celebrations) can create the much needed awareness among Nigerian communities in different parts of the world. This can be used as a selling point for destinations within Nigeria among Nigerian expatriates community. This move will not only create jobs at the local level, but also benefit communities hosting the different attractions while promoting tourism and hospitality industry at the same time.
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