

Tourists' Choice For Tour Guides In Enhancing Site Experience At Lekki Conservation Centre, Lagos State

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Abstract – The use of appropriate mechanisms for the interpretation and dissemination of information plays a fundamental role in improving the visitor's experience. This study thus aimed to find out tourists' preference for tour guides as well as their perception on the services of tour guides at Lekki Conservation Center, Lagos State. Well-structured questionnaire; purposively directed at 100 tourists were used to obtain primary data at the site. Data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially. Results revealed that the tourists preferred the use of tour guides over touring alone at the site and they were satisfied with the services of the tour guides. Results further revealed that tour guides interact well and answer questions raised during tours, the tour guides also make the site interesting through their good communication skills. Inferentially, there are statistical significant differences in the tourists' perceived effectiveness of tour guides based on all their socio-demographic characteristics. This study concludes that tour guides are important in enhancing tourists' satisfaction and their services should therefore be encouraged in tourism destinations globally.

Keywords – Conservation, Nature, Tourism, Tour guide, Protected Area.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourist satisfaction is a key determinant of success in the tourism and ecotourism industry (Muchiri, 2018). The use of appropriate mechanisms for the interpretation and dissemination of information plays a fundamental role in improving the visitor's experience, which ultimately guarantees a higher demand for tourist services and boost overall patronage (Moreno-Melgarejo *et al.*, 2020). The study of tourist experience is essential so as to generate an overall satisfactory experience, which in turn increases learning and can also stir up revisit intentions in the tourists (Mahdzar *et al.*, 2017). Even if the visitor does not return, as this is mostly the case of tourists, a satisfactory experience can lead visitors to recommend the visit to others, or repeat the experience visiting other attractions (Kempiak *et al.*, 2017; Trinh and Ryan, 2013). Interpretation is a means of tourism management aimed at enlightening visitors and tourists about the importance of various natural and cultural attractions at a destination so as to spur comprehension, positive impression, and admiration, i.e. to enhance tourists experience by transferring to them symbolic meanings and facilitating changes in their attitudes and behavior (Rabotic, 2007). Interpretation is both a program and an activity. As a program, it establishes a set of objectives for the things a visitor should understand; as an activity, it requires skills and techniques to create understanding (Chen *et al.*, 2006). The key to the interpretation lies in the fact that often a simple object is incapable of transmitting all its cultural, historical, artistic or scientific meaning and value on its own, especially for an audience that is not familiar with the subject (Cave and Jolliffe, 2012). The interpretation therefore seeks to communicate that

hidden value not perceived by the naked eye, which beyond the physical aspect, becomes the reason and objective for which an element is exposed (Lawson and Walker, 2005).

Although there is no consensus on what successful or effective interpretation is, a number of authors have argued that interpretation should do one or more of the following, (1) enhance visitor experiences, (2) protect resources at sites, (3) protect visitors, (4) increase public support for an agency and its management policies, (5) add to or broaden visitors' perspectives about a place or idea and (6) enhance their knowledge and foster positive attitudes and behaviors with respect to the natural and cultural environment (Ham 2007; Moscardo, 2017). As a result, the goals of interpretation are, (1) to satisfy visitors, (2) to instil knowledge gain, (3) to achieve attitude change and, consequently, (4) to achieve behavioral change (Hughes and Morrison-Saunders 2005; Kohl 2005).

Tourism industry bodies perceive a tourist guide's role as providing not only direction but also cultural and environmental interpretation at a site (Lackey, 2016). The interpretive skills of tourist guides can enhance the quality of visitors' experiences and their understanding of an attraction and its culture (Van Loggerenberg *et al.*, 2015; Lackey, 2016). Tourist guides, through their knowledge and understanding of a destination's attractions and culture and through their communication skills, transform tourists' visits from tours into experiences (Látková *et al.*, 2017). In present days, there are hardly any possibilities without the services of tour guides as mediators, at some destinations, resources are too ambiguous to visitors (Aryasa *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, skilled tour guide is necessary for visitors' comprehension, and the more the tour guides' skillfulness, the better will be the quality of communication between them and the tourists. Hence, there is a need of skillful tourist guides for the interpretation of tourist destinations and their uniqueness (Moscardo and Walker, 2014).

Many studies have been carried out in Lekki Conservation Centre (Omorieg *et al.*, 2014; Olabamiyo and Akinpelu, 2017; Salako *et al.*, 2018; Olaleru *et al.*, 2020; Arowosafe *et al.*, 2020; Nwokorie and Adeniyi, 2021), but there is dearth of information on tourists' choice for tour guides in enhancing site experience, hence the need to carry out this study.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Lekki Conservation Centre, Lagos state, Nigeria which is a nature tourism site that is located on latitude 6° 26' N and longitude 3° 32' E. This study made use of well-structured questionnaire to obtain information on tourists' socio-demographic characteristics, their preference for the use of tour guide as well as their perception on tour guides at the site. Purposive sampling was used to select 100 tourists who were recipients of tour guiding experience at the site. Data was retrieved and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 21) and results were presented descriptively using tables and charts. Results were also presented inferentially using T-test, ANOVA and Chi-square.

III. RESULTS

Table 1 reveals the socio-demographic characteristics of the tourists at the site. Majority of the tourists were males (59%) and in the youthful age of 18-24 years. Also, highest percentage of the tourists were single (63%), Christians (80%) and majority of them had tertiary education (73%).

Variables	Frequency (N=100)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	59	59.0
Female	41	41.0
Age		
Below 18 years	19	19.0
18-24years	32	32.0
25-54 years	31	31.0
55-64 years	10	10.0

Above 64 years	8	8.0
Marital status		
Single	63	63.0
Married	23	23.0
Widowed	14	14.0
Religion		
Christianity	80	80.0
Islamic	16	16.0
Traditional	4	4.0
Education		
Secondary education	27	27.0
Tertiary education	73	73.0

Figure 1 shows that highest percentage of tourists prefer the use of tour guides at the site (81%) while 19% prefer the use of interpretive signs at the site.

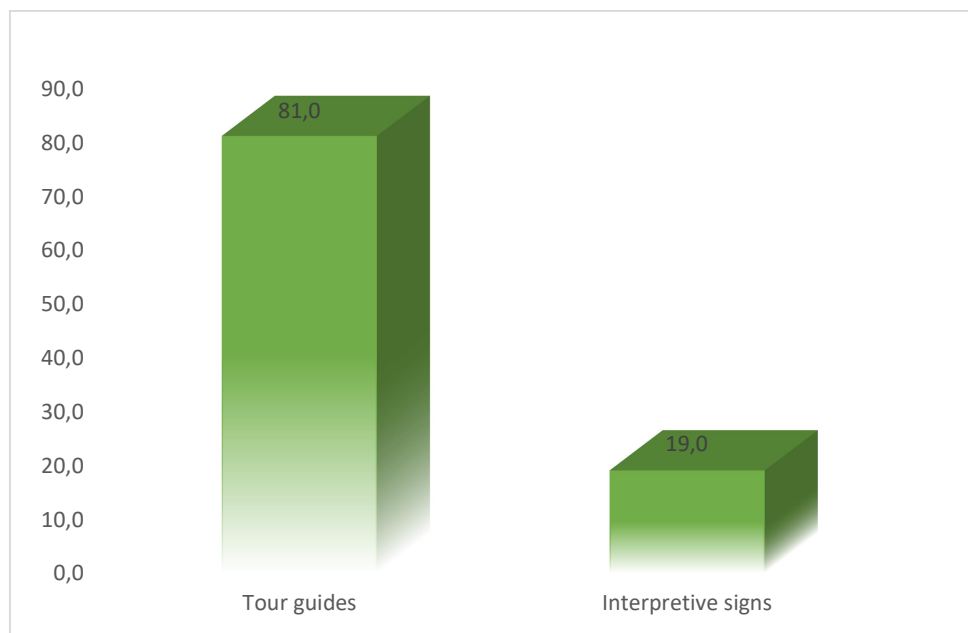


Figure 1: Tour Preference for tourists

Figure 2 shows that majority of the tourists were satisfied with the services of tour guides at the site (89%) while 11% were not satisfied.

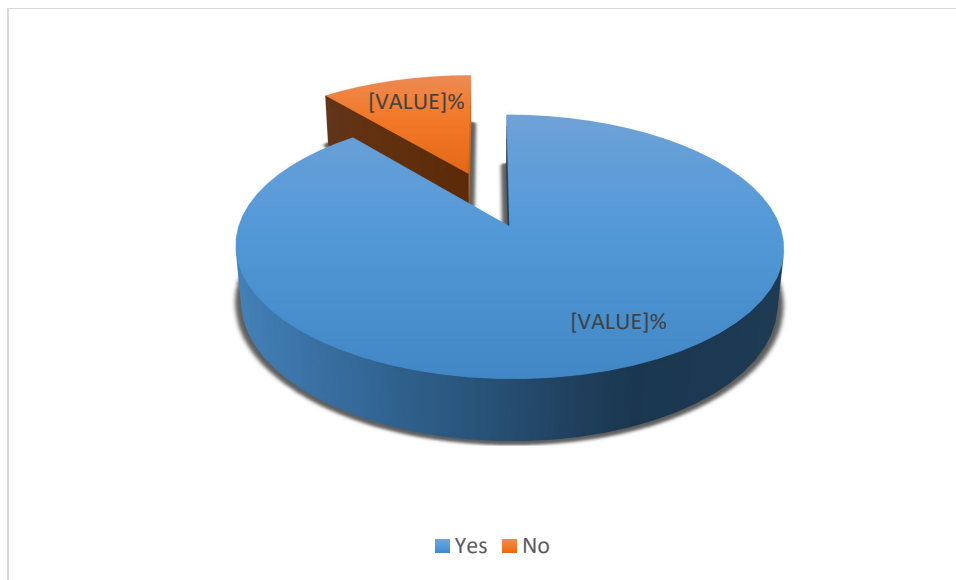


Figure 2: Satisfaction with tour guides

Table 2 shows the tourists' perception on tour guides at the site. The mean value ranged from 3.45 to 4.52. "The tour guide interacts well and answers all the questions raised" had the highest mean value of 4.52 followed by the statement "The tour guide was able to explain all the signs" with a mean value of 4.48.

Table 2: Perception on tour guides

	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	St.D
The services of a tour guide is needed in LCC	43(43%)	22(22%)	0(0%)	7(7%)	28(28%)	3.45	1.720
The tour guide was able to explain all the signs	70(70%)	8(8%)	22(22%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.48	0.835
The tour guide interacts well and answers all the questions raised	74(74%)	4(4%)	22(22%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.52	0.835
The tour guide has good communication skills	66(66%)	15(15%)	15(15%)	4(4%)	0(0%)	4.43	0.891
The tour guide made the tour more interesting	70(70%)	8(8%)	18(18%)	0(0%)	4(4%)	4.40	1.044

Keys: SA- Strongly Agree, A- Agree, N-Neutral, D- Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree

Figure 3 shows that majority of the tourists perceived the tour guides at the site as very effective (66%), 12% of the tourists perceived the tour guides as slightly effective while 11% each perceived the tour guides as moderately effective and ineffective.

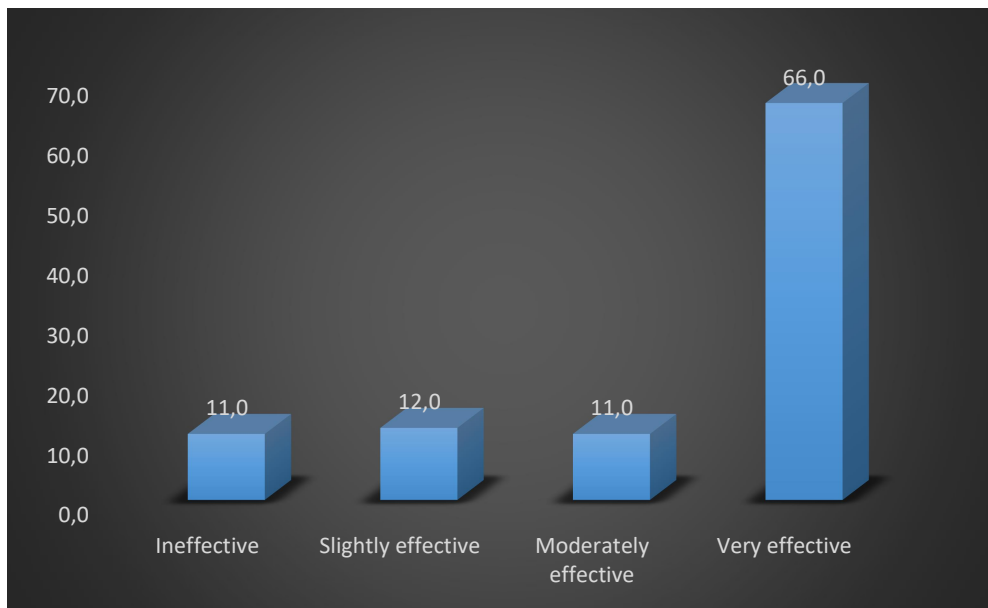


Figure 3: Effectiveness of tour guides

Table 3 shows the computation of T-test and ANOVA test to know if there are significant differences in tourists' perceived effectiveness of tour guides based on their socio-demographic characteristic which were gender, age, marital status, religion and education. There are statistical significant differences in the tourists' perceived effectiveness of tour guides based on all their socio-demographic characteristic (P<0.05).

Table 3: Socio-demographic differences in tourists' perceived effectiveness of tour guides

Variables	t value	Sig. value	Decision
Gender	-2.178	0.032	Significant
Variables	f value	Sig. value	Decision
Age	3.641	0.008	Significant
Marital status	3.544	0.033	Significant
Religion	6.923	0.002	Significant
Education	7.664	0.007	Significant

P<0.05

Table 4 reveals the chi-square test of relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of the tourists and their satisfaction with tour guides. Only marital status of the status had a significant relationship with their satisfaction about tour guides at the site (P<0.05).

Table 4: Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and satisfaction with tour guides

Variables	Chi-square value (χ^2)	Sig. value	Decision
Gender	0.963	0.326	Not significant
Age	8.893	0.064	Not significant
Marital status	11.996	0.002	Significant
Religion	4.111	0.128	Not significant
Education	0.550	0.458	Not significant

P<0.05

IV. DISCUSSION

This study revealed that majority of the respondents are males. They are also mostly youths and singles. This is in line with Jonsson and Devonish (2008) who agreed that younger tourists are more active and are more likely to seek whole range of physical activities when visiting a destination. Also, most of the respondents were Christians and had tertiary education. Majority of the tourists having tertiary education is consistent with findings from Yacob *et al.* (2011) which revealed that majority of their tourists had tertiary education. Findings further revealed that the tourists prefer the use of tour guide services at the site to touring the site alone. The tourists also stated that they are satisfied with the use of tour guides at the site which is consistent with findings by Çetinkaya and Öter (2016) which revealed that tourists were satisfied with tour guiding services.

The tourists revealed that the tour guides interact well and answer questions raised by them. They also revealed that the tour guides were able to explain all signs present at the site. This is an indication that the tour guides serve as intermediaries between the site resources and the tourists as they explain everything about the culture of the site to the tourists in a knowledge transfer process. This is supported by that Huang *et al.* (2010) that a tour guide acts as a cultural interface between the tourists and the destination and thus plays a crucial role in interpreting the host culture to tourists. They revealed that the tour guides have good communication skills which is effective in making them learn about conservation efforts at the site and will also improve their experience with the site as supported by Leclerc and Martin (2004) that tour guides' competence in communication aids their enhanced role as intermediaries between tourists and destinations. The tour guides were perceived to make the site more interesting and this is capable of enhancing tourists' satisfaction with the site as well as their loyalty. This is in line with assertion by Koroglu and Guzel (2014) that the performance of tour guides potentially influences tourists' satisfaction and loyalty, the destination's image, the concluding travel experience and it is a core attribute of a memorable and excellent tour. Ap and Wong (2001) also support this finding by revealing that a tour guide transmits information in an interesting and truthful manner. The tourists opined that the tour guides at the site are very effective in discharging their duties and this is a positive sign towards an enhanced destination image of the site as supported by Min (2010) that the performance of tour guides has an influence on tourist' perception of the destination.

This study reveals there is a significant difference in the tourists' socio-demographic characteristics according to how they perceive the effectiveness of tourist guides at the site. This is an indication that the tourists perceived the effectiveness of tour guides in the site with different perceptions relating to their socio-demographic characteristics.

V. CONCLUSION

This study stresses the importance of tour guides in tourists' destination relating to how it affects the experience of tourists. The study concluded that the importance of tour guides in tourism destinations cannot be overemphasized as they help to improve site experience by interacting well with tourists in explaining site resources as well as making navigation of tourist sites easy for tourists through guided talks and walks. Tour guides also make sites more interesting through their good communication skills in which they use in interpreting site resources. In furtherance to the importance of tour guides, the tourists opined that they are satisfied with tour guide services at the site as they claimed the tour guides are very effective. Tourism destinations should therefore give opportunities for the services of tour guides in their so as to enhance site experience for the tourists.

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