

Safety And Security as Predictor of Tourism Destination Preference on Tourist Satisfaction among Leisure Seekers in Cross River State

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated safety/security as predictor of tourism destination preference on tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State. The study was undertaken to determine the extent to which safety and security predict tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in the State. Specifically, the study examined the individual influence of these destination selection preference variables on tourist satisfaction. The study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study comprised leisure seekers and tourists visiting major tourism destinations and hospitality facilities within Cross River State. An estimated accessible population of 300,000 tourists was used for the study based on official tourism statistics. A multistage sampling technique involving purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling procedures was adopted to select a sample size of 747 respondents. Data were collected using a researcher-designed instrument titled Security as Predictor of Tourism Destination Preference and Tourist Satisfaction Questionnaire (*SPTDPTSQ*). Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression analysis at the .05 level of significance. The findings revealed that safety and security significantly predicted tourist satisfaction (Adjusted $R^2 = .807$, $F = 3124.91$, $p < .05$). Based on the findings, the study concluded that tourism destination selection preference variables are strong determinants of tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State. The study recommended that tourism stakeholders, hospitality operators, and government agencies should improve tourism infrastructure, strengthen destination security systems, enhance transportation services, provide quality accommodation and cuisines in order to improve tourist satisfaction in Cross River State, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Cross River State stands out as a premier global tourism destination due to its unique and captivating tourism attractions sites. It holds the highest rating among Nigeria States for its remarkable and beautiful tourist sites, including Obudu Mountain Resort, Cross River National Park, Agbokim waterfalls, Kwa falls and the colourful Calabar Carnival festivals. The numerous tourism sites and cultural celebrations in Cross River State, Nigeria has helped to improve the economy of the State as travellers are motivated to make their choice of destination for vacation and holidays. This is premised on the fact that these choices are made based on certain factors like attractiveness, accommodation, safety/security, cuisine, transportation and destination image which enhance free travelling and satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Additionally, the improvement of destination facilities and amenities across tourism sites in Cross River State would significantly enhance the attractiveness of the State as a preferred destination for holidays and recreational travel. The provision of quality infrastructure, modern amenities, and efficient tourism services would encourage travellers to select Cross River State for leisure activities and vacation experiences. These improvements would also enable tourists to obtain memorable and unique experiences capable of increasing their level of satisfaction and strengthening their intention to revisit the destination. Furthermore, the creation of unique and satisfying tourism experiences has important implications for economic growth and sustainable development, considering that tourism remains one of the fastest-growing industries globally. Effective tourism development therefore requires adequate infrastructure provision, efficient destination management, strategic marketing, and continuous improvement of tourism products and services. In contemporary society, tourism is widely

recognized as one of the largest and most dynamic service industries in the world, contributing substantially to employment generation, revenue creation, and regional development.

Tourism development entails community development. If handled appropriately, tourism can become an important engine for achieving broader social goals. Whereas societies may aspire to achieve these goals, communities are trying to manage tourism development effectively. Unfortunately, no integrative model exists for managing all facets of tourism development. In other words, tourism products are conceived on the basis of their ability to meet the real needs of the guests and to let them live a unique experience which makes them satisfied (Midilli, 2015).

Tourism plays a central role in contributing to economic growth, which is an integral part of economic, social, regional and physical development. In 2018, tourism performance of the world grew by 5% of international tourist arrivals; thereby reaching 1.4 billion arrivals and generating USD 1.7 trillion of export earnings from tourism (UNWTO, 2019). Therefore, the tourism industry is one of the most important contributors to the growth of countries including Nigeria. Globally, many countries have realized the importance of this gigantic industry and there has been continuous growth and development of tourism destinations. There is enormous competition among destinations as they try to lure international tourist (Rafat, 2022). Faced with increased competition, destinations ought to strategically position themselves by creating acknowledged brand image, hence, issues of tourism destination selection preferences as well as tourist satisfaction has become of paramount importance in the tourism industry (Midilli, 2015).

Satisfaction is one of the main objectives of companies in order to maintain warm relationships with customers in the long run. Moreover, countries that experience low levels of tourist satisfaction witness significant reductions in tourism businesses. Tourists will not revisit the same destination if they feel dissatisfied, which may cause a significant decline in tourism patronage and the economy of the country (Kozak, & Remington, 2021). Positive association between tourist satisfaction and their intention to return has been established. Daud and Rozana (2021) corroborates that satisfied tourist will either revisit the destination or share positive words about the destination. When consumers plan to travel, usually they recall the past memories to select the destination, therefore there are less likely chances that unsatisfied traveler will repeat the visit to the same destination (Zhang, 2018). Visitors' satisfaction is a function of a visitor pre-purchase expectations and self-evaluation of post purchase, and it determine repeated visits to a particular destination.

Tourists' preference is visitors' perceptions and comments on destinations after an actual experience and these can be positive, negative, and neutral. Tourist preferences and choices reflect the ability of different destinations to attract tourists and win the tourist inflow by utilizing tourism resources effectively. Besides, tourist preference acts as an important factor in destination competitiveness. The reason for measuring tourists' preference or choice is that it is very significant for producing visitor satisfaction to match destination tourism products and tourist preference (Gong, Yang, Ling, & Liu, 2023). Now tourists are more conscious about attractiveness, accommodation, safety/security, cuisines, transportation, environmental issues, and quality of services, available information and expenses rather than visiting a place without proper prior information. These factors to a great extent will influence tourism destination selection preference (Gong, Yang, Ling, & Liu, 2023). Distance is no longer a major obstacle to visiting a location whereas more important is accessible information and destination preference.

In terms of spatial dimension, destination attractiveness is considered as places or geographical regions that offer an amalgam of tourism products and services (Buhalis, 2010). Destination

attractiveness is the driving force of tourism and without which tourism would be almost nonexistent. If tourists are attracted by special features embedded within a destination, their place attachment would be enhanced. Doosti, Jalilvand, Asadi, Pool, and Adl (2016) noted that the attractiveness of a tourism destination, therefore, has an incredible power on establishing a person's destination of choice, expectations of satisfaction, intentions to revisit, perceptions of benefits and motivations, positive perception of opinion leaders, the amount of money spend and the duration of stay. Buhalis (2010) operationalizes destination attractiveness concept as tourist's feelings, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, or perceptions of specific destination attributes or factors that influence a tourist's decision of which specific destination should be selected. The author further observes that the overall or global attractiveness is the function of the affective evaluations of the destination and the perceptions of attribute.

Security/safety is considered one of the key selling points in the practice of destination selection. Security and emergency preparedness are increasingly becoming affiliated with branding practices and utilized by governance regimes to promote and brand particular locales as safe, secure and resilient to attack (Zhang, 2018). More than any other economic activity, the success or failure of a tourism destination relies on the ability to provide tourists with a safe and secure environment. People cannot be complacent, since there is an emerging consensus that crime - which raises safety issues - is a growing concern among tourism stakeholders who fear the potential damage that it may inflict on the perception of safety and, by extension, the industry.

In this regard, the power of destination image is acknowledged universally due to its effect on perception, consequent behaviour, and destination choice of tourists (Zhang, 2018). This connotation has accelerated tourism authorities and tourism destinations to constantly develop sustainable destination image among the tourists (Pike and Page, 2014). Various ways could enhance tourists' visitation and one of them is through information technology. Therefore, tourism destination selection preferences is not a product that stands alone, but is a product of a combination of various attributes of tourism destinations being considered by travellers to make the decision of either to visit or re-visit. It is against this background that this study investigated safety and security as predictor of tourism destination selection preferences on tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Despite the enormous tourism potential and rich tourism assets available in Cross River State, the State has continued to experience challenges in sustaining tourist patronage, tourist satisfaction, and destination competitiveness. Cross River State possesses some of Nigeria's most prominent tourism attractions including the Obudu Mountain Resort, Tinapa Business and Leisure Resort, Agbokim Waterfalls, Kwa Falls, the Calabar Carnival, and several ecotourism and cultural heritage sites. These tourism destinations were expected to position the State as a leading tourism hub capable of generating substantial revenue, employment opportunities, and economic development. However, evidence from tourism activities within the State suggests that tourist inflow, revisit intentions, and overall tourism performance have not matched the enormous tourism investments and expectations associated with the sector.

A major concern is that many leisure seekers who visit tourism destinations in Cross River State appear not to attain the level of satisfaction necessary to encourage repeat visitation, destination loyalty, and positive recommendations to other potential tourists. Tourist satisfaction is a critical determinant of tourism sustainability because dissatisfied tourists are less likely to revisit a destination

or promote it through positive word-of-mouth communication. This situation poses serious implications for the tourism industry in the State, particularly in terms of declining tourism competitiveness, reduced tourism revenue, low investor confidence, and limited contribution of tourism to economic development.

The problem appears to be associated with several tourism destination selection factors that shape tourists' perceptions and experiences within the State. Although efforts have been made by government and private tourism operators to promote tourism through festivals such as the Calabar Carnival, hotel development, and tourism publicity campaigns, there are still concerns regarding the safety and security. Many tourism destinations within the State continue to face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poor accessibility, inconsistent service quality, insecurity concerns, weak destination branding, and limited modernization of tourism facilities. These conditions may negatively influence tourists' destination preferences and reduce their overall satisfaction.

Furthermore, increasing competition within the global tourism industry has made tourist satisfaction and destination preference more important than ever before. Tourists now have multiple destination options and are more likely to select destinations that provide attractive facilities, secure environments, quality accommodation, efficient transportation, memorable experiences, and positive destination images. Unfortunately, many tourism destinations in Nigeria, including those in Cross River State, have also suffered from negative publicity associated with insecurity, poor infrastructure, high costs of tourism services, and weak tourism management systems. Such challenges may discourage potential tourists and weaken the attractiveness of the State within the competitive tourism market. Another major issue is that previous tourism studies in Cross River State have focused largely on tourism development, economic benefits of tourism, ecotourism, and cultural festivals, with limited empirical attention given to the predictors of tourism destination selection preferences and how these factors influence tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers. Consequently, there is inadequate empirical evidence explaining the relative influence of safety and security on tourist satisfaction within the State.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate Safety/security as predictor of tourism destination selection preferences on tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

Determine how safety/security predict tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State;

Research questions

The following research question was raised to guide the study:

How does safety/security predicts tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State?

Statement of hypotheses

The following research hypothesis were formulated to give direction to the study.

Safety/security will not significantly predict tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Safety/security and tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers

Safety and security refer to the protection of tourists, tourism facilities, and tourism environments from crime, violence, terrorism, health risks, and other forms of danger capable of affecting tourism experiences negatively. Safety and security have become critical factors influencing tourism destination selection and tourist satisfaction globally.

According to Abraham, Pizam and Mansfel (1996), tourism destinations require high levels of safety and security because tourists are highly sensitive to risks associated with travel experiences. Tourists generally prefer destinations where they feel physically safe and psychologically secure. Tarlow (2014) further emphasized that the success or failure of tourism destinations depends largely on their ability to provide secure environments for visitors.

Research by Mohd and Masron (2014) and Eitzinger and Wiedemann (2009) indicated that insecurity, crime, terrorism, political instability, and health concerns negatively influence tourists' destination preferences and satisfaction levels. Destinations with poor security images are less likely to attract tourists and sustain tourism growth. Consequently, tourism destinations must maintain effective security systems, emergency preparedness, and crime prevention mechanisms to enhance tourist confidence and satisfaction.

Also, Alves, Martins, Pedro, João, Paulo and Goreti (2022) carried out a study on group recommender systems for tourism: how does personality predict preferences for attractions, travel satisfaction, preferences and concerns? The research work aimed to find how personality relates to the choice of a wide range of tourist attractions, travelling motivations, and travel related preferences and concerns, hoping to provide a solid base for researchers in the tourism RS area to automatically model tourists in the system without the need for tedious configurations, and solve the cold-start problem and conflicting preferences. By performing Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis on the data gathered from an online questionnaire, sent to Portuguese individuals from different areas of formation and age groups (=1035), the study showed that security as well as all five personality dimensions can help predict the choice of tourist attractions and travel-related satisfaction and concerns, and that only neuroticism and openness predict travelling motivations.

López-Guzmán, Pérez and Muñoz-Fernández (2018) investigated safety, satisfaction, motivation, loyalty and segmentation of tourists in World Heritage cities. The study presents research that deals with the study of the motivation, satisfaction and loyalty of tourists visiting the city of Cordoba, Spain, a World Heritage Site. For this, the results of a study carried out on tourists during their stay in the city are presented. The study identifies two motivational dimensions in connection with the visit: one cultural and the other multi motivational, which includes a variety of reasons such as gastronomy and pleasure seeking. Additionally, also analyzed in the research is how the motivation for visiting the city leads to tourists having greater satisfaction with their visit and more loyalty to that tourist destination.

Yusendra and Paramitasari (2018) conducted a study titled Identifying Factors Affecting Domestic Tourist Satisfaction on Tourist Destinations in Indonesia. The purpose of the study was to identify the major factors influencing domestic tourist satisfaction on tourism destinations in Indonesia. Specifically, the study sought to determine the dominant attributes affecting tourist satisfaction and classify these attributes into major tourism satisfaction factors that could guide tourism stakeholders in improving destination competitiveness and customer satisfaction. The study adopted a quantitative descriptive research design using Cochran Q Test Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The population of the study comprised domestic tourists travelling to various tourism destinations within Indonesia. According to the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics, the target population included approximately 55.7 million domestic tourists. The researchers employed an online snowball sampling technique by distributing questionnaires through tourism social media groups and online tourism communities. Respondents consisted of domestic tourists who frequently travelled within Indonesia for leisure, adventure, and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) activities.

The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved the use of Cochran Q Test Analysis to identify the most dominant and important tourist satisfaction attributes. The second phase involved Factor Analysis to reduce and cluster the identified attributes into broader tourism satisfaction dimensions. Preliminary observations, interviews, and surveys initially generated 42 tourism satisfaction attributes associated with tourist attractions, accommodation, accessibility, safety, hospitality, transportation, tourist facilities, tourism information services, and destination management. The findings from the Cochran Q Test Analysis revealed that 38 out of the 42 attributes significantly influenced domestic tourist satisfaction in Indonesia. Four attributes namely climate condition, leisure atmosphere, transportation cost, and availability of parking spaces were found not to be dominant determinants of tourist satisfaction and were subsequently eliminated from the model. The study further ranked the most important satisfaction-constructing attributes. The highest ranked factor was the beauty of natural attractions, followed by artificial tourist attractions, while the third-ranked factors were affordable costs and cleanliness of facilities and tourism environments. Other highly ranked factors included smooth traffic flow, tourist safety warranty, friendly local people, accessible ticket reservation systems, adequate accommodation, low crime rate, and accessible tourist information centers.

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis further grouped the 38 attributes into five major tourism satisfaction dimensions. The first factor was Attraction, which included natural attractions, artificial attractions, cultural diversity, culinary experiences, shopping activities, adventure activities, religious attractions, and affordable tourism costs. The second factor was Amenities, which included accommodation, shopping centers, event venues, restaurants, public utilities, medical facilities, public hygiene, and prayer facilities. The third factor was Accessibility, which included transportation systems, traffic flow, road access, transport station proximity, and traffic control systems. The fourth factor was Hospitality, which comprised tourist safety, low crime levels, cordial local people, professional tourism workers, ease of interaction with local residents, courtesy, and absence of illegal charges. The fifth factor was Ancillary Services, which included tour guides, travel agencies, ticket reservation systems, tourism management, financial services, tourist information centers, and tour packages.

The scree plot and eigenvalue analysis showed that the five extracted factors were statistically adequate in explaining tourist satisfaction. The eigenvalues recorded for the five factors were 10.435 for Attraction, 8.022 for Amenities, 6.924 for Accessibility, 5.342 for Hospitality, and 3.614 for Ancillary Services respectively. The rotated component matrix further showed strong correlations between the identified attributes and their respective factors, with most factor loadings exceeding 0.70.

The researchers concluded that tourist satisfaction in Indonesia is multidimensional and depends largely on attraction quality, tourism amenities, accessibility, hospitality, and ancillary tourism services. The study emphasized that tourism stakeholders must focus on improving tourism infrastructure, destination cleanliness, accommodation facilities, transportation systems, customer service, and destination management in order to improve tourist satisfaction and destination competitiveness. The authors further recommended that tourism policymakers should use the identified factors as indicators for measuring customer satisfaction and tourism performance within tourism destinations.

The study is highly relevant to the present research because it empirically demonstrates that tourism destination attributes such as attractions, accommodation, accessibility, hospitality, and destination services significantly influence tourist satisfaction. The findings support the assumptions of the present study that destination selection preference variables including attractiveness,

accommodation, safety/security, transportation, cuisines, and destination image significantly influence tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers. However, while Yusendra and Paramitasari (2018) focused broadly on domestic tourist satisfaction factors across tourism destinations in Indonesia, the present study specifically examines predictors of tourism destination selection preferences and tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Gong, Yang, Ling and Liu (2023) investigated the influencing factors of tourist satisfaction in mountain outdoor tourism destinations-a case study of Siguniang mountain. This study mainly examines the factors influencing mountain outdoor tourism development in light of the regional economy, security, human environment, infrastructure, talent services, and other aspects. It analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of mountain outdoor tourism development in the process of regional development by combining qualitative research with quantitative research, and puts forward corresponding sustainable development measures in combination with an actual investigation. Taking Siguniang Mountain as the research area, the study adopted the methods of literature review, questionnaire survey and field interview, and used SPSS26 and Smartpls to construct a structural variance model for the related dimensional impact analysis. The results show that the security of a mountain outdoor tourism destination and the attractants environment of the destination have a highly significant relationship with tourist satisfaction. Mountain outdoor tourism destination services and facilities have a low degree of significant relationships with tourist satisfaction. Among them, the path coefficient of outdoor tourism destination consumption in mountainous areas is close to 0, and the significance level is greater than 0.05, so the relationship between destination consumption and tourist satisfaction has not been affected.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was the survey research design. Survey research design involves the systematic collection of data from a sample of respondents in order to describe, explain, or interpret the characteristics, opinions, behaviours, or experiences of a population. According to John W. Creswell, survey research provides a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Similarly, Uma Sekaran and Roger Bougie explained that survey research is appropriate for studies that seek to obtain information about people's perceptions, preferences, and behaviours in a structured and objective manner (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

Survey research design is suitable for this study because it enables the researcher to collect data directly from leisure seekers regarding their tourism destination preference and level of tourist satisfaction. The design also allows the researcher to study a representative sample and make valid generalizations about the target population. In addition, survey design is considered appropriate because it facilitates the use of questionnaires for gathering standardized responses from a relatively large number of respondents within a limited time and cost.

The area of study is Cross River State. Cross River State is a coastal State in South South Nigeria, named after the Cross River, which passes through the State. Located in the Niger Delta, region. Cross River State lies between Latitude 5.8702°N and longitude 8.5988°E. Cross River State occupies a landmass of 20,156 square kilometers. It shares common boundaries with Benue State to the North, Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi and Abia States to the West, to the east by Cameroon Republic and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. Its capital is Calabar.

The population of this study comprised all tourists visiting Cross River State, Nigeria. The study focused specifically on domestic and international tourists visiting major tourism destinations

within the State, including Obudu Mountain Resort, Tinapa Business and Leisure Resort, Agbokim Waterfalls, Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Marina Resort, Cross River National Park, and other recreational and cultural tourism sites. Cross River State is one of the leading tourism destinations in Nigeria and records substantial tourist inflow annually, especially during festive periods such as the Calabar Carnival. According to the Cross River State Bureau of Statistics (2025) and Tourism Bureau Report (2025), the State recorded significant tourist and visitor arrivals in 2024 through air, road, and water transportation. Furthermore, the Cross River State Carnival Commission Report indicated that about 541,036 spectators, visitors, and tourists attended the 2024 Carnival activities, while the Cross River Tourism Bureau estimated over 300,000 tourist arrivals during the 2024 Calabar Carnival season. Based on these official tourism statistics, the researcher estimates the accessible population for the study at approximately 300,000 tourists visiting Cross River State annually. This population is considered appropriate because the study seeks to examine tourism destination preference and tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers visiting the State.

A multistage sampling technique was adopted for this study. In the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select major tourism destinations in Cross River State based on their popularity, accessibility, and high tourist patronage. The selected tourism destinations included Obudu Mountain Resort, Tinapa Business and Leisure Resort, Marina Resort/Slave History Museum, Agbokim Waterfalls, Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Cross River National Park, Nkarasi Monoliths, and other notable recreational and ecotourism sites within the State. In the second stage, proportional sampling technique was used to allocate respondents across the selected tourist destinations based on the estimated volume of visitors to each site. This approach was considered appropriate because tourist arrivals varied from one destination to another. In the third stage, accidental (convenience) sampling technique was used to select tourists and visitors encountered at the various tourism destinations during the period of data collection. This technique was suitable because the study targeted tourists who were available and willing to participate at the time of the administration of the research instrument. In addition, simple random sampling technique was employed where necessary to ensure fairness in the selection of respondents within the selected tourism sites.

The sample for the study consisted of seven hundred and forty-seven (747) tourists and visitors drawn from selected tourist attractions in Cross River State. The respondents were selected proportionately from the identified tourism destinations based on the estimated volume of tourist patronage and accessibility of the sites. The sample was considered adequate for obtaining reliable information on tourism destination selection preferences and tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State. The proportional distribution of the sample ensured that tourism destinations with higher visitor traffic had larger respondent representation in the study. The selected tourist attractions included Obudu Mountain Resort, Tinapa Business and Leisure Resort, Marina Resort/Slave History Museum, Cross River National Park, Agbokim Waterfalls, Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Nkarasi Monoliths, and Akamkpa Warm Spring. The sample distribution is presented in Table 1.

The estimated tourist population for each attraction was proportionately derived from the estimated annual tourist population of 300,000 visitors to Cross River State. The sample allocation was thereafter proportionately distributed across the selected tourist attractions to ensure fair representation of respondents in the study.

TABLE 1: Sample distribution by tourism related outfit in Cross River State

S/N	Tourist Attraction	Estimated Tourist Population	Percentage Allocation(%)	Sample Allocation
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1	Obudu Mountain Resort	66,000	22%	164
2	Tinapa Business and Leisure Resort	54,000	18%	134
3	Marina Resort/Slave History Museum, Calabar	45,000	15%	112
4	Cross River National Park	42,000	14%	105
5	Agbokim Waterfalls, Etung	30,000	10%	75
6	Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Boki	24,000	8%	60
7	Nkarasi Monoliths, Ikom	21,000	7%	52
8	Akamkpa, Qua Falls	18,000	6%	45
	Total	300,000	100%	747

Source: field work, 2025

The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-designed structured questionnaire titled "Safety and Security as Predictors of Tourism Destination Preference and Tourist Satisfaction s Questionnaire (SPTDPTSQ)". The questionnaire was designed specifically for tourists and visitors to selected tourism destinations in Cross River State. The instrument adopted a five-point Likert scale response format consisting of: Very Satisfied (VS), Satisfied (S), Undecided (U), Dissatisfied (D), and Very Dissatisfied (VD). The questionnaire contained a total of 46 items divided into three sections: Sections A, B, and C.

Section A consisted of 5 items designed to obtain information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as gender, age, marital status, educational qualification, occupation, and frequency of visit.

Section B contained 10 items developed to measure the determinants of tourism destination preference among leisure seekers. The items addressed security and safety. Section C comprised 10 items that measured the level of tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers based on their experiences at the selected tourism destinations. The scoring of the instrument was based on the following scale: Very Satisfied (VS) = 5, Satisfied (S) = 4, Undecided (U) = 3, Dissatisfied (D) = 2 and Very Dissatisfied (VD) = 1. Negatively worded items were reverse scored during data analysis to ensure consistency in interpretation.

Procedure for data collection

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Department of Environmental Education, University of Calabar, which was presented to the management of the selected tourist destinations in Cross River State to seek permission for the conduct of the study. Upon approval, copies of the questionnaire were administered directly to tourists and visitors at the selected tourism destinations with the assistance of two trained research assistants. The administration of the instrument was carried out between November 1, 2025 and February 31, 2026, a period considered appropriate because of the high influx of tourists associated with festive and tourism activities in Cross River State, especially the Calabar Carnival season. The respondents were approached at different tourism attractions and were requested to voluntarily complete the questionnaire after the purpose of the study had been explained to them. The researcher and the research assistants personally visited the selected tourist sites to distribute and retrieve the completed questionnaires. Out of the total 747 copies of questionnaires

administered, about 98% were properly completed and successfully retrieved for analysis. A coding schedule was designed to code the responses of the respondents accordingly.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presentation of result

In this section, each hypothesis is restated, and the results of the data analysis carried out to test it are presented. Each hypothesis of the study was tested at .05 level of significance.

Hypothesis

Safety/security does not significantly predict tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State. The independent variable in this hypothesis is Safety and Security, while the dependent variable is tourist satisfaction. Simple linear regression analysis was employed to test this hypothesis. The result of simple regression analysis on Table 2 shows the relationship between safety and security and tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers produced an adjusted R2 of .807, implying that 80.7 per cent of the variance in tourist satisfaction can be predicted from the independent variable-safety and security among leisure seekers in Cross River State. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was F=3124.91, having a p-value of .000 with 1 and 745 degrees of freedom at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore signifies that safety/security significantly predicted tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State by 80.7 per cent, and the identified equation to understand this relationship was that: Tourist satisfaction =3.95+0.85(Safety/Security)

TABLE 2

Summary of data and simple regression analysis of the prediction of safety and security on tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	48882.43	1	48882.43	3124.91	.000
Residual	11653.91	745	15.64		
Total	60536.34	746			

Unstandardized β	Coefficients Std.Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	1	Sig.
(Constant)	3.95	0.41		9.59
Safety/Security	0.85	0.02	0.899	55.90

p<.05; R=.899; R-Square=.807; Adjusted R Square=.807; Predictors: (Constant), Safety/Security

Dependent Variable: Tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State

Discussion of findings

The result of descriptive statistics on shows that the mean score for safety and security is 25.32, while the standard deviation is 9.50. The result of the Simple linear regression analysis revealed that the relationship between safety/security and tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State produced an adjusted R² of .807. This result implies that 80.7 percent of the variance in tourist satisfaction can be predicted from the independent variable-safety and security among leisure seekers in Cross River State. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was F=3124.91, having a p-value of .000 with 1 and 745 degrees of freedom at .05 level of significance. This result means that safety and security significantly

predicted tourism destination selection preferences and tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State by 80.7 per cent. This is identified with the equation this: Tourist satisfaction= $3.95+0.85$ (Safety/Security).

The findings indicate that safety and security exert a strong and statistically significant influence on tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State. The mean score of 25.32 for safety and security, with a standard deviation of 9.50, suggests that respondents generally perceived safety conditions at a moderately high level, though the relatively high standard deviation also indicates noticeable variability in these perceptions. This variation according to Abraham, et al. (2016) implies that while many tourists feel secure, some may still experience concerns, which can directly shape their overall satisfaction with the destination. Furthermore, these perceptions might not be unconnected with the current State of insecurity in the country, kidnapping, armed robbery, ritual killings among others. The result of the regression analysis provides compelling empirical evidence of the predictive power of safety and security. With an adjusted R^2 value of .807, the model explains 80.7% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. This is a remarkably high proportion, demonstrating that safety and security is not merely one of many contributing factors, but rather a dominant determinant of how satisfied leisure seekers feel about their tourism experience in Cross River State.

This result supports that of Akbar, et al. (2020) who found that in tourism studies, such a high explanatory value underscores the centrality of perceived safety in shaping destination evaluation and repeat visitation intentions. Again, the ANOVA results further confirm the strength of this relationship. The F-value of 3124.91 with a p-value of .000 at the .05 significance level indicates that the regression model is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating that safety and security does not significantly predict tourist satisfaction was rejected. This means that improvements or declines in safety and security conditions are very likely to produce corresponding changes in tourist satisfaction levels. In practical terms, tourists' perceptions of personal safety, protection of property, and general security infrastructure are critical drivers of their overall evaluation of the destination.

The regression equation, Tourist satisfaction = $3.95 + 0.85$ (Safety/Security), further clarifies the nature of this relationship. The positive coefficient (0.85) indicates that for every one-unit increase in perceived safety/security, tourist satisfaction increases by 0.85 units. This strong positive slope reflects a direct and substantial effect, suggesting that enhanced security measures, visible law enforcement presence, emergency preparedness, and crime reduction initiatives could significantly boost tourists' satisfaction levels. The constant value of 3.95 also implies a baseline level of satisfaction that exists independent of safety perceptions, but this baseline is considerably amplified when safety improves. This was the position of authors like Eitzinger and Wiedemann, (2019); Kim, et al. (2021) whose result found a positively high significant relationship between safety and security as determinants of tourism destination selection preferences and tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Arising from the very rigorous process of data collection and analyses on the topic safety and security as predictors of tourism destination preference and tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State Nigeria, the result obtained shows that the variable (safety and security) was significant predictors of tourist satisfaction in tourism destination preference among leisure seekers in Cross River State. Based on this result or finding, safety and security is a predicting factor when considering tourist satisfaction among leisure seekers in Cross River State, Nigeria and beyond.

Implications of the findings

The findings of this study have several implications for tourism development, tourism management, hospitality businesses, policy formulation, and sustainable tourism planning in Cross River State. The implications are presented as follows:

1. The findings validated tourism destination selection theories which posit that tourist satisfaction is influenced by tourists' perceptions of destination attributes such as safety and security.
2. The strong predictive influence of safety and security implies that tourists place high priority on personal safety, protection of property, and secure tourism environments when selecting tourism destinations. This suggests that tourism development cannot thrive in an insecure environment.
3. The findings imply that government and tourism stakeholders must strengthen tourism security systems, surveillance mechanisms, emergency response strategies, and community policing in tourism destinations across Cross River State.

Recommendations

Arising from the result of data analysis and findings, the following recommendations are hereby made to guide policy directions

1. Entrepreneurs who are engaged in tourism and hospitality business should strive to make their facilities attractive, provide State of the arts facilities, provide quality accommodation and cuisines for tourist to have a revisit intention or behaviour
2. Proprietors of tourism outfit should as a matter of utmost concern provide function and tailor-made security architecture a cardinal component of the tourism and hospitality business, because this is a very important component of this business.
3. Government should also monitor the practice and activities of these tourism outfits, because security and the safety of tourist are also the duties of government.
4. This study shows that transportation in most tourism outfit has not reached the level of sophistication it should attain. Government and proprietors should work together to provide functional transport systems, rail, road and air transport including waterways to enable tourist from different location access the tourism destination.
5. Tourism regulatory bodies including Ministry of industries, commerce and other agencies should stand up and exercise their regulatory duties to improve the quality of services and the tourism products these proprietors dish out to the masses.
6. Owners of tourism outfits including government regulatory agencies should routinely organize professional workshops for service staff including duty bearers on how to be polite and, manage guest during their tourism experience, this will bring professionalism into the business
7. More locals should also be encouraged to participate in the tourism business, selling of safaris, souvenirs, local cuisines among others.

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