

Examining the Challenges of Accessible Tourism Related to staff Attitude in Selected Tourist Attractions in Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The recent rapid increase in the number of people suffering from difficulty of movement is linked to, worsening insecurity caused by terrorism, in addition to factors such as traffic accidents, medical misdiagnosis and refusal for polio immunization. Even with this increase, some experts have expressed concerns with the current law dealing with the needs and aspirations of the disabled Nigerian citizens. It is observed that most of the tourism attractions in the country lack personnel to professionally handle people with difficulty of movement, also the attractions mostly do not have ramps, sidewalks, rooms for the disables and other facilities and services for people with difficulty of movement. This study examined the challenges faced by people with difficulty of movement in Nigeria's tourism attractions in relation to attitudes of staff. Hundred survey questionnaires were administered to people with difficulty of movement. This covered those with vision impairment, the old, pregnant women, tourists travelling with kids and tourists with mobility issues. Convenient sampling was used because of the difficulty of reaching out to this group of tourists. It was more convenient locating them in tourist attractions and getting the questionnaire administered to them. The findings of the study show that the attitude of persons working in tourist's establishment towards tourists with difficulty of mobility is less favorable. The reasons for the unfavorable attitude are poor understanding and awareness of disability by staff and absence or shortage of accessible equipment. The study found out challenges faced by this group of tourists while travelling as rules and regulations for carrying equipment not favorable and inadequate auxiliary services. In tourists' attractions, the challenges are insufficient laid pathways, ramps available but not at all required locations. In accommodations the challenges includes lack of lifts or faulty lifts, inappropriate location of rooms and lack of

personal aids. It is recommended that guidelines should be provided to all tourism producers on making access for all and such guidelines should be strictly followed. Tourism should be provided to all groups of tourists to have a pleasant experience without difficulty of having access to tourism facilities.

Key words: Accessible, Attraction, Challenges, Tourism, Tourists

I. INTRODUCTION

Accessible tourism involves a collaborative process among stakeholders that enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments (United Nations, 2005). Meeting the needs of tourists with reduced mobility is known as accessible tourism (India Institute of Tourism and travel management, 2010). Accessible tourism is not only about those on wheel chair, neither is it about disabled people, it consist of all people living with limited movement (Buj, 2010). Darcy (1998) Categorised accessible tourism into three areas; the first category involves people with physical disability that is people with the need of wheel chairs and working aids. The second one covers sensory accessibility for people with vision and hearing impairment. The last category deals with communication accessibility for people having difficulty in reading, writing, hearing and speaking. In addition, Darcy & Dickson (2009) identified the different group of people that need accessible tourism as follows; parents travelling with kids, wheel chair and walking stick users, old people, injured, pregnant mothers and people with limited movement. Cape Town Declaration (2002) explicitly demanded Responsible Tourism to be accessible for physically challenged people and set

as a guiding principle to make tourism an inclusive social experience and to ensure that there is access for all.

The number of individuals with limited movement has grown very fast (IITTM, 2010). Likewise the wish to travel like any other person (Kwai-sang, McKercher, Tanya & Parker, 2004). However, meeting the need of this people has been difficult making access to tourism hard for them (Daniel, Rogers, Wiggins, 2002). There are concerns that people with difficulty of movement have usually been devalued and treated poorly in many areas of service provision (Darcy & Daruculla, 1999). Such people find it difficult to access leisure and vacation among other things (IITTM, 2010). Thus, tourism is a one area that is receiving blames for discriminating against people with disabilities (Darcy and Daruwalla, 1999). A study by (Buj, 2010) states that attitude of people working in tourism establishments is often reported as a major factor determining travel propensity of tourists with disabilities. It was encouraging to find that employees working in the industry in general were supportive with two-third of respondents reporting accordingly. But, when reason for unfavourable attitude was probed, need of extra-time and poor understanding of the problems of disabled people figured prominently. There was also a section of them holding the opinion that attitude of the tourism industry in general are favourable towards them. However, it is to be born in mind that about one-third of tourists feel otherwise as well. IITTM(2010)explains that when it comes to major problems at booking stage, poor understanding of the specific problems of people living with difficulty of movement among booking staff and their inhospitable attitude to certain extend appear to be major problems. And, that is perhaps common to both tourist segments. While travelling, intra-destination travel was reportedly most difficult one, followed by lack of proper information and inadequate signage, which was common for both tourist segments. There are also other constraints during travel worth paying attention. Hutchinson (1980) identified that more problems they encounter at places of stay are mounting in nature and justifiably calls for qualified attention. Major among those are lack of necessary facilities in the rooms meant for tourists with reduced mobility, lack of understanding about their special needs and inappropriate location of such rooms. Absence of lift and inaccessible lobby also call for attention. At attractions also, these groups face certain set of specific problems like absence of toilets or its unhygienic condition, non-availability of public utilities and the like. Their easy

movement inside the site is also a major constraint, especially scarcity of ramps or their unsuitable arrangements (IITTM, 2010). Despite numerous studies on issues of accessibility available, there is no research on the attitude of staff towards people with difficulty of movement which includes pregnant women and those travelling with kids in Nigeria.

The market of travellers with disabilities or difficulty of movement is profitable, but frequently neglected by the tourism industry (Buhalis, 2000). According to the United Nations (2010), the increasing ageing population in developed countries is contributing to an increase in the rate of people demanding tourism travels and associated services. This trend serves as a boost to the market value of accessible tourism. The report also contends that availability of income to the senior population; the desire and capacity to travel for longer periods also combine to make their expenditure on tourism higher than that of other tourists. For instance, the rapid growth in demand for accessible tourism in the UK is linked to the nearly 10 million disabled people, whose collective spending power is put at £50 billion (Garulnik 1999). Also, data from the Tourism for all UK scheme (2009) shows that one in six Britons who are aged 65 or above, amounting to a total of 10 million people. This population is said to take at least ten overnight holiday trips annually, spending six weeks or more travelling every year. A somewhat similar statistics obtained for the EU countries (see EUROSTAT, 2009) and the US (see STCRC, 2008). This evidence shows the opportunities that are available for accessible tourism in developing countries and other emerging centres of tourist attraction.

One of these emerging markets of tourism is Nigeria. With a population of over 200 million (Nigeria Population Commission, 2005), this West African country is not only the most populous country in Africa but also the continent's largest economy. The country is a potential hub for tourism if the potentials of the industry are adequately harnessed. Sufficiently harnessing the huge tourism potentials of the country requires making it accessible and affordable to all groups of people, including those with disabilities or difficulty of movement. Within Nigeria, some estimates suggest that there are over 20 million people experiencing a form of disability or the other (Lenegen & Kayode, 2014; Usman, 2015). Although this figure is contested by some experts (see Amosat 2014), there is no doubt that millions of Nigerians are suffering from different forms of disabilities. Despite the growing number of people

living with disabilities or difficulty of movement in Nigeria and the increasing campaigns for the rights of these groups of people, there are concerns that issues of disability are not receiving enough attention (Usman, 2015). Some observers (such as Ojo, 2012 and Lang & Upah 2008), for instance opined that people with disability in Nigeria are being marginalised, excluded and vulnerable. In this situation, accessibility to tourism for disabled Nigerians is affected by the general lack of concern for their needs and aspirations; this can be observed on the way staff handle issues regarding these people. It was reported by Ojo (2012) that staffs in tourist’s attractions in Nigeria do not give special care to tourists with difficulty of movement. Given this situation, it is unlikely for Nigeria to benefit from both the local and global surge in demand of tourism and vacations unless something is done to address this issue of access.

This study is aimed at examining the attitudes of staff to tourist with difficulty of movement in northern Nigeria.

II. METHODS

The study area is the north eastern part of Nigeria; this consists of 6 states of the country. The choice of this area is as a result of the numerous tourism resources that are located in the state. The north eastern Nigeria has natural and manmade tourist’s attraction which attract both domestic and international tourist, making it a potential destination for accessible tourism. This study used survey questionnaire. This is because the study

entails collecting large amount of data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2010). Survey questionnaires were self-administered to tourist with mobility difficulties while interviewer administered questionnaire were administered too. The interviewer questionnaire was administered because of people with hearing and vision difficulties. The services of a specialist were needed for the interpretation of the questions to respondents. Also, given the low literacy level in this region, it is expected that some of the tourists with disabilities and special needs cannot read, write or understand English. The Population for the study are all tourists and people living with disabilities and needs for special services/facilities in the study area. The following types of people were sampled; pregnant women old, travellers with kids, and all those with difficulty in mobility through convenient sampling. Although there are some drawbacks to convenience sampling, it seems to be the most appropriate technique for this study because locating the disabled tourists while at the facilities was easier. A combination of both self-administered and interviewer-administered questionnaires was administered. The self-administered questionnaires were handed to participants who can read and write. Those that have difficulty in reading and writing were administered by a specialized person in form of questionnaire interviewer. However, travel companions helped on behalf of the other respondents.

III. RESULTS

Table 1 Attitudes of persons working in tourists establishments towards tourists with reduced mobility

Variables	Frequency	Percentage Valid	Percentage
Favourable	19	20.0	20.0
Unfavourable	51	53.6	53.6
Indifferent	9	9.5	9.5
Veryunfavourable	13	13.7	13.7
Less favourable	3	3.2	3.2
	95	100.0	100.0

Source: Field study (2016)

The table above talks of the attitudes of persons working in tourists establishments towards tourists with reduced mobility. 19 respondents said the attitude is favourable which represents 20% of the response. 51 people said it is unfavourable

representing 53.6% of the total response. 9 were indifferent which equals to 9.5%. 13 respondents found the attitudes of the staff to be very unfavourable with 13.7. Those that saw the attitude less favourable are 3 with 3.2%.

Table 2 Reason for unfavorable attitude

Variables	N	Mini	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Extra time needed for guest with special needs	95	1.00	5.00	1.3474	.72594
Poor understanding and awareness of disability by staff	95	1.00	4.00	1.5368	.72656
Absence or shortage of accessible equipment	95	1.00	2.00	1.6632	.98511
Economic consideration	95	1.00	2.00	2.7053	.93255
Non challant attitude to work	95	3.00	5.00	3.5684	.76542
Lack of skill in handling such people	95	1.00	5.00	2.6783	.98721
Valid N (listwise)	95				

Source: Field study (2016)

Table 4.17 displays data on reasons for the unfavourable attitude of staff towards people with difficulty of mobility. Extra time needed for guest with special needs has an average mean score of 1.3474 which shows that the respondents strongly agree with the point. Poor understanding and awareness of disability by staff has an average mean score of 1.5368 which is strongly agree. Absence or shortage of accessible equipment has strongly agree which an average mean score of 1.6632. Economic consideration is a reason for staffs' unfavourable attitude with an average mean score of 2.7053. Non challant attitude to work of some of the staff has an average mean score of 3.5684 which translates to neither agree nor disagrees. Lack of skill in handling such people that is the people with difficulty of mobility has an average mean score of 2.6783 which translate to agree.

IV. DISCUSSION

Attitudes of persons working in tourists establishments towards tourists with reduced mobility is unfavorable, some respondents opined it is very unfavorable. This negative attitudes show hostility and disapproval from the tourists. Grady and Olly (2009) states that unfavorable attitudes by staff is because they don't understand that guest with mobility impairment needs to be treated with respect and dignity in a way that focuses on them not their disability. A study by (Buj, 2010) states that attitude of people working in tourism establishments is often reported as a major factor determining travel propensity of tourists with disabilities. It was encouraging to find that employees working in the industry in general were not supportive with two-third of respondents reporting accordingly. But, when reason for unfavourable attitude was probed, need of extra-time and poor understanding of the problems of disabled people figured prominently. There was also a section of them holding the opinion that

attitude of the tourism industry in general are unfavourable towards them.

The reasons for the unfavorable attitude by persons working in tourists establishment is the need for extra time needed for guest with special needs. Attending to guest with mobility difficulty requires extra time and special care. Any staff that tries to hasten the process may end up not meeting up the desired attention the tourist wants. More explanation on this is given by Walker and Adams (1999) decision confirms that those working in tourism establishment must provide their services in a non-discriminatory manner. This requires the staff to take any steps necessary not just to ensure that no individual with a difficulty of mobility is handled with care but attended to by giving all the attention needed.

Poor understanding and awareness of disability by staff is another reason for unfavourable attitude displayed by staff in tourism attractions. Some staff do not understand what disability is and therefore find it difficult to give the required assistance, information or care needed for such group of tourists to enjoy their stay while in the destination. This finding is not in accordance with Grady and Olly (2009) which states that focus on clear giving of knowledge to employees as well as understanding of the product offerings for guest with mobility impairments.

The study further found out that absence or shortage of accessible equipment is a cause for unfavourable attitudes of employees working in tourism centers. If establishments do not have the required equipment to meet the need of people with difficulty of movement, it can be frustrating. Tourists leave their homes to destination with the hope of being home away from home. They expect the destination to have facilities that will meet their needs. The unavailability of the facilities could lead to having unpleasant experience and causing inconveniences. Likewise having shortage of equipment can be frustrating too. (Olly, 2009)

states that it could be depressing seeing some tourists provided with equipment while on tour and one is not give.

Marginalization of tourists with difficulty of mobility is a reason for unfavourable attitudes of staff. When staff relegates this group of people and concentrate on mobile ones is not pleasant. Tourists with difficulty of mobility feel discriminated when such happens. They feel side-lined and downgraded. According to Mc Kercher et al. (2003), this happens when staff are largely ignorant of the specific needs of people with disabilities, which lead to overt or subtle discrimination. In this sense, the retail travel sector is deterring to travel rather than a facilitating.

Lack of skill in handling people with difficulty of mobility, some staff may have knowledge and understanding on this group of people but lack the skill to handle this group of people. Weiss (1986) observed that except for a very small number of agents and tour operators who have been specialists in the field for a long time, there is little or no skill in handling or using of the facilities that are available to disabled tourists. However the respondents neither agrees nor disagrees that non challant attitude to work by the staff is a reason for unfavourable attitude.

V. CONCLUSION

The unfair situation in which some people have more rights or better opportunities than other people in tourism is of great concern. People with difficulty of mobility are often not considered while developing tourist's attractions, providing services and packaging of tours. The market for this group of people is growing globally and developed countries are focusing their attention on how to attract the market. As discovered in the study, this group of tourists in Nigeria has interest in participating in tourism activities but often find the environment unfavourable for such. Nigeria has marginalised and neglected accessible tourism, access to tourism is focused on tourists with ability. Those with difficulty of movement are marginalised and less concern is shown for them to participate or experience pleasant tourism activities. This is not in accordance with the advocacy given by the United World Tourism Organisation through the United Nations who has been making it possible for all groups of people to have access to tourism. If Nigeria wants to derive the benefits of accessible tourism staff must learn to take care of this group of tourists who need special care and attention. There should be serious regulation of the guidelines to ensure adherence.

The bill for people with disability should be passed and the present should give his accent to ensure it becomes law. This is because; the bill covers areas of giving equality to people living with difficulty of movement.

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