

Chapter 1

Niche Tourism: A New Trend for Destination Development and Market Competencies

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ABSTRACT

Tourism development in Southwest Nigeria has seen an increase in niche tourism, destination development, and market competencies. This chapter will focus on the intricate and complex interplay among these factors to arrive at a comprehensive evaluation of their relationships. A quantitative method was used that involved 406 respondents who are tourists from within the region. The descriptive statistics were used in analysing the collected data such as frequency counts and percentages while inferential statistics like SPSS and SmartPLS4 were employed to test hypotheses made by this study. Results indicate that participants highly agree that marketing capabilities serve as a mediator for niche tourism and destination development outcomes. Similarly, respondents also agreed with the fact that market competencies have positive impact on both demand for niche tourism and growth in destinations. They underscored the significance of good marketing strategies and collaborative efforts which can improve Southwest Nigeria's tourism industry.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a critical industry that performs an important function in different aspects of development in nations. It has the ability to create employment possibilities, generate profits, and stimulate nearby economies. Niche tourism has emerged as a new approach to tourism industry and has been gaining a reputation in many nations (Novelli, 2007).

Niche tourism is a particular branch of the travel and tourism sector that focuses on the interests and tastes of a specific target market of tourists looking for distinctive and specialized experiences. According to Richards, G. (2014), niche tourism is distinguished by its concentration on certain pursuits, themes, or interests. Examples of this type of tourism include adventure travel, ecotourism, cultural travel, food

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tourism, and others. In particular, trend niche tourism places an emphasis on newly developing or well-liked trends in the travel industry, such as wellness retreats, dark tourism, volunteerism, and sustainable travel (George et al., 2016). This type of tourism enables visitors to follow their interests and interact with locations in ways that are consistent with their own beliefs and preferences. According to Timothy, D. J. (2014), trend niche tourism gives visitors the chance to immerse themselves in fresh experiences, which can strengthen their emotional bond with the place and increase their level of pleasure with their trip as a whole.

The expansion of niche tourism can also help with economic diversification, employment creation, and income redistribution particularly in rural areas where distinctive cultural practices and natural attractions can be used to draw tourists (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015). In order to plan for and create policies for sustainable tourism, it is essential to understand how niche trend tourism shapes destination development and market competences in this area.

Southwest Nigeria, which is made up of the six states of Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, and Ondo, is known for its rich cultural legacy, beautiful natural surroundings, and expanding tourist potential (Ezenagu, 2020). But this area facing several challenges such as security worries, lack of infrastructure, restricted promotion and marketing, cultural and social boundaries and insufficient human resource improvement (Asenguah S, 2022). By focusing on this particular geographic location, current chapter will delve thoroughly into the context of niche tourism, destination development, and market capabilities. This regional emphasis enables a thorough analysis of the distinctive tourist products, cultural history, and natural features available in each state, which may aid in the formation and expansion of trend niche tourism (Saarinen & Moswete, 2023). In addition, adopting niche tourism in Africa, specifically Nigeria, may position the continent as a competitor in the worldwide tourism industry by providing tourists with a distinctive range of experiences as well as benefiting local people and protecting natural and cultural resources (Ngozi & Adewale, 2019).

The purpose of this chapter is first, to evaluate the effect of niche tourism on destination development and market competencies in Southwest Nigeria. Second, it reveals the challenges going through the tourism enterprise in Southwest Nigeria and after that recommend several strategies for overcoming those demanding situations. On the other hand, the current chapter emphasizes the potential of trend niche tourism as a strategic approach to growing Southwest Nigeria's tourism industry and establishing the area as a global player. Stakeholder and Policymakers can pave the way for developing sustainable tourism in Southwest Nigeria by acknowledging the challenges faced by the tourism industry, like infrastructure concerns and implementing the recommended strategies (Akanni& Akinb ode, 2021). moreover, by comparing its influence with the results of other studies from different countries, the current research has provided a deeper understanding of the function of niche tourism in a global context. The consistent positive impacts found across different geographic settings represent the adaptability of niche tourism as a key tool for develop and boosting destination and promoting sustainable tourism practices worldwide. As the tourist environment evolves, this chapter will be used to provide the groundwork for future studies and policy interventions aimed at maximizing the potential of trend niche tourism in attaining sustainable and competitive tourism growth in Southwest Nigeria and beyond.

The significant of the current chapter derive from several reasons. First, it will offer insights into the connection among trending niche tourism and destination development and market competencies in Southwest Nigeria (Ekundayo Yusuf O., 2014). This can help tourism stakeholders, which includes authorities' groups, non-public sector investors, and tourism operators, to higher recognize the potential

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