

INFLUENCE OF MARKETING STRATEGIES ON TOURIST INFLUX AT GASHAKA NATIONAL GAME PARK TARABA, NIGERIA

¹Dr Olabosinde Samuel Taiwo; ²Iwuzor Odili Markanthony, Ph.D and ³Mr Akintunde Sunday Emmanuel

¹Department of Business Administration Federal University, Wukari, Taraba State, .Nigeria

²Department of Business Administration

University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria

¹olabosinde@yahoo.com. Telephone: +2348034934134

²iwuzor.odili@uniabuja.edu.ng

³sundayakintunde@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

*The economic growth of tourism remains vital to national development yet Gashaka National Game Park along with other destinations are experiencing limited potential because of their inefficient marketing strategies and approaches. This research evaluated the marketing strategy influence on tourist flow at Gashaka National Game Park which stands as Nigeria's biggest national park with its diverse biodiversity and cultural heritage. 15,038 Tourism stakeholders who included park management personnel and local businesses and visiting tourists made up the research population. The researchers chose 300 respondents through stratified random sampling to guarantee stakeholder group representation from the total population. The research data collection involved questionnaires which researchers processed with descriptive statistics of percentage and frequency and inferential statistics of simple regression models was used to test the hypotheses with the aid of SPSS software statistical package. The research hypotheses are stated in null form: **H₀₁**: Digital marketing strategies do not significantly affect tourism enterprises and visitor numbers in Gashaka National Games Park. **H₀₂**: Destination branding does not significantly influence the number of tourists visiting Gashaka National Games Park. Digital promotional methods proved effective in attracting more tourists according to research results and destination branding holds equal importance although stakeholders do not implement branding strategies to their full potential. Three main obstacles blocking tourism growth at Gashaka National Game Park were established as inadequate infrastructure and low public awareness coupled with poor branding efforts. The research demonstrates that Gashaka National Game Park requires strategic marketing approaches to develop its tourism sector. The research suggests that Gashaka National Game Park should improve digital marketing together with competitive pricing and promotional campaigns and destination branding investments to draw more visitors. The implementation of infrastructure projects and community outreach programs must receive top priority to enhance visitor satisfaction during their stay at the destination. These initiatives will sustain tourism development in a responsible manner.*

Keywords: Marketing Strategies, Digital Marketing Strategies, Tourism Influx, Pricing Activities, Tourism Entrepreneurship.

INTRODUCTION

According to Abuhjeeleh (2019), the global economic growth has been found to depend heavily on tourism because marketing strategies ensure sustainable enterprise management and performance improvements. Many services formed the bases of tourism marketing efforts which include promotional activities together with destination branding elements along with pricing systems all combined with digital marketing approaches that serve to pull in and keep visitors (Morton 2018). The success of destination marketing initiatives controls how well a place develops awareness and competition by differentiating from market competitors worldwide. Marketing strategies directed at the rising contemporary travel trend have focused on digital platforms and social media engagement together with promotional campaigns for unique tourist groups (Ginting & Sasmita, 2018). Destinations implementing modern marketing strategies will obtain increased tourist flow and maintain durable sustainability.

Tourism performance evaluation depends heavily on tourist influx which represents the total number of visitors who visit a destination during a specific period (Bagri & Kala, 2015). The influx of tourists depends on multiple elements such as tourism infrastructure quality together with destination appeal and accessibility and safety standards but marketing effectiveness stands as the most decisive factor. The successful implementation of marketing together with management strategies results in increased visitor numbers which generates economic benefits while creating employment and boosting social and economic development in host communities (Najar & Saini 2018). Places in developing regions face challenges in visitor attraction despite their tourism potential because their marketing strategies lack funding and implementation quality.

Tourism operates as a vital economic growth and development catalyst throughout Sub-Saharan Africa (Chand, 2020). Multiple attractions such as wildlife reserves and natural landscapes and cultural heritage sites exist throughout this region.

This research strengthens the existing body of work regarding tourism marketing strategies specifically in areas with limited academic investigation that need conservation focus. The study fills literature gaps by providing evidence-based recommendations which aim to foster sustainable tourism growth in Gashaka National Game Park and comparable locations.

Objectives of the Study

The main goal of this research investigates how marketing strategies affect visitor numbers for tourism businesses operating within Gashaka National Games Park. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Investigate whether digital marketing strategies need assessment regarding their effect on tourism enterprise with tourist numbers in Gashaka National Games Park.
- ii. Investigate how destination branding affects the number of tourists who visit Gashaka National Games Park for tourism enterprises.

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses are stated in null form:

H₀₁: Digital marketing strategies do not significantly affect tourism enterprises and visitor numbers in Gashaka National Games Park.

H₀₂: Destination branding does not significantly influence the number of tourists visiting Gashaka National Games Park.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Research studies use conceptual reviews to analyze fundamental concepts, theories and ideas that establish their foundation. The paper defines important terms and establishes their relationships and variables while operating within the research framework. The article examines marketing strategies together with their influence on tourist flow specifically at Gashaka National Game Park.

Concept of Marketing Strategies

Tourism destinations require marketing strategies to bring forth stratagems that determine visitor perceptions as well as promotional placement and reach for attracting and holding onto travelers. Effective marketing strategies according to Abuhjeeleh (2019) boost visitor numbers and produce better satisfaction levels together with higher repeat visitor rates. Marketers start their planning process through market segmentation that uses demographic information and psychological data in addition to behavioral analyses of target customer groups.

Adam, Wessel, & Benlian (2021) explain that after identifying target segments organizations develop customized strategies. Tourism marketers need to choose their channels correctly while creating compelling messages and adjusting their marketing mix elements (4 Ps) of Product, Price, Place and Promotion. Within tourism marketing the four core elements which make up the “Product” denote exceptional experiences and Price focuses on affordable value and Place specifies connectivity and Promotion involves communication channels. Digital marketing brought innovative approaches while social media, search engine optimization and content marketing help businesses efficiently reach larger markets (Al-Amarneh & Stephenson, 2012).

Digital Marketing Strategies

Digital marketing platforms serve to connect audiences toward specified performance targets like raising tourist visits together with increased brand awareness (Alamri, 2019). Tourism benefits greatly from social media marketing and content marketing because these techniques enable the presentation of interactive destination highlights (Aldakhil, 2020).

Tourism enterprises using social media networks can distribute intriguing content such as images videos and storytelling which showcases their distinctive tourist attractions. The combination of user-created reviews and visitor photographs strengthens trust accounts and builds credibility through social media advertising that lets marketers focus their ads at particular population segments (Appel et al., 2020). Through practices tourism websites become more visible to potential tourists who can easily find their destinations. These marketing methods work together with content marketing to deliver beneficial and informative material that attracts and interacts with potential guests.

Promotional Activities

Current academic research documents promotional activities as keys which achieve two objectives: destination visibility expansion and visitor interest growth. The 2025 study demonstrates that tourism marketers use advertising together with personal selling and sales

promotions and public relations and direct marketing to draw tourists and promote their destinations (Smith & Johnson, 2025). The unique features of destinations find effective promotion through these strategies by organizing wildlife safaris and cultural festivals and eco-tourism events which attract more visitors (Smith & Johnson, 2025).

The 2024 prediction from Digital Travel Expert shows that destination promotion and combination of relationships between influencers alongside non-governmental organizations (NGOs) sustainable travel organizations as well as green brands enables broader audience exposure to promotional messages.

The implementation of effective promotion strategies encourages both higher arrival numbers of tourists and better experiences to attract return visits along with positive recommendations. Destinations achieve more meaningful enduring connections with travelers when they implement social media techniques into tourism promotion strategies because these approaches motivate people to explore destinations and return (Profile Tree, 2024).

Influence of Marketing Strategies on Tourist Influx

Tourist inflow depends heavily on marketing strategies because they establish perceptions while growing visitor demand while making destinations more appealing to travelers. Elliott (2018), highlights their effects in the following dimensions:

i. Increased Visibility and Awareness

Through marketing strategies destination visibility increases on different media outlets which enables potential tourists to learn about their offerings.

ii. Enhanced Destination Appeal

A destination achieves higher attractiveness through marketing efforts that showcase its distinctive features either in nature or historical heritage or recreational opportunities.

iii. Improved Tourist Perceptions

Positive promotional activities along with awards and endorsements help establish trust which leads tourists to select the destination instead of other options.

Integrating Digital Marketing in Tourism for Regional Development

Tourist influx dependence on marketing strategies exists because these strategies facilitate both perception transformation and demand development along with improving destination attractiveness. Elliott (2018) highlights their effects in the following dimensions:

i. Increased Visibility and Awareness

Through marketing strategies destinations gain increased exposure on different media platforms which leads to raising awareness of their visitor offerings among potential tourists.

ii. Enhanced Destination Appeal

Guided exposure to a place's one-of-a-kind qualities starting from natural sceneries and cultural traditions combined with recreational opportunities makes visitors more drawn to it.

iii.Improved Tourist Perceptions

Positive promotional activities along with awards and endorsements help establish trust which leads tourists to select the destination instead of other options.

Theoretical Framework

The research foundation of this study relies on Push-Pull Theory

Push-Pull Theory

The travel motivational components according to Crompton's Push-Pull Theory (1979) consist of innate mental impulses that drive people to travel ("push" factors) along with the outside factors that attract people to specific locations ("pull" factors). Travel motivations form from push factors that create the need for travel while pull factors determine the selection of destination choices. Gashaka National Game Park uses marketing strategies to boost psychological drives while promoting distinctive attractions which attract visitors. (Crompton, 1979).

The framework serves as a beneficial tool for developing marketing strategies within Gashaka National Game Park. Gashaka National Game Park can pull tourists through its exceptional biodiversity together with cultural heritage parts and scenic beauty attributes. The combination of psychological need-focused experiences that promote relaxation or adventure effectively enhances push factors. The park can use guided wildlife safaris and eco-tourism activities along with cultural festivals to meet visitors' internal motivations and showcase its unique characteristics (Kim et al., 2021).

The research field confirms that both push-pull factors should be integrated into tourism promotional strategies. Successful destination marketing requires entrepreneurs to study how psychological motives connect with destination characteristics (Kim & Ritchie, 2019). Destination marketing benefits from offering products which target tourists' hidden motivations as this practice produces successful experiences and leads to repeat visits (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). The marketing strategies of Gashaka National Game Park should focus on both dimensions of the Push-Pull Theory to boost visitor satisfaction.

The basic nature of this theory might not explain contemporary travel choices that result from socio-economic or political influences. The theory applies a linear model to push-pull dynamics while neglecting how various external factors affect the relationship.

Review of Empirical Studies

Various investigations have studied the impact that marketing strategies create on tourism results.

A team led by Alex together with Jennie and Noelah (2021) conducted research about tourism marketing strategies operating in the CALABARZON region to analyze brand positioning and cultural event promotion efforts. The research demonstrated how these strategies proved effective for building a united regional identity which effectively brought tourists to experience cultural past-oriented activities. The researchers proposed that digital marketing strategies should receive more attention because traditional methods alone fail to maximize the tourism market potential in the digital age.

Multiple research studies during recent times have demonstrated digital marketing as an essential practice for tourism sector development. A 2023 research conducted by Elysium Marketing Group demonstrated that the tourism hospitality industry heavily depends on digital platforms now that travelers search primarily through online channels for accommodation venues as well as dining spots and destination evaluations. Digital platforms emerged as vital tools which establish increased visibility together with better consumer relationships in the modern market.

The 2024 Taylor & Francis Online publication demonstrated how digital marketing changes business operations in all. Organizational performance received substantial improvements due to digital marketing strategies which allowed businesses to contact broader markets using search engine optimization (SEO) data analytics and social media tools.

The need for a modern approach in digital tourism marketing stands stronger because of recent technological developments. The Times released an article in 2024 that indicated artificial intelligence systems would reduce visitor congestion through promoting under visited locations and providing instant recommendations for substitute tourist sites. The 2024 Cadena SER report investigates how Instagram together with other social media tools enable companies to reach younger tourists because of their collaboration strategies with influencers and user content creation.

The 2021 research conducted by Alex, Jennie & Noelah maintains its relevance because digital marketing transforms how the tourism sector operates. The traditional approaches used by both entities for branding and event promotion remained successful until their efforts received a performance boost through digital platform integration. Tourism stakeholders in CALABARZON should adopt SEO and social media together with data analytics to discover new growth prospects while competing for modern travelers.

Extra study should concentrate on analyzing the permanent effects that digital promotion strategies have on tourist destinations throughout remote and undeveloped locations. The assessment of particular engagement tools including AI and virtual reality would generate practical knowledge that tourism boards worldwide could use.

Faisal (2022) investigates through "The Role of Tourism Marketing in Changing Perceptions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" how strategic tourism marketing influences global perceptions of Saudi Arabia. This qualitative study sheds light on marketing programs which assist the country as it follows its Vision 2030 blueprint to develop tourism infrastructure while diversifying the economy through tourism industry development. The research by Faisal evaluated how tourism marketing functions to improve Saudi Arabia's worldwide reputation. Analyze Saudi Arabian tourism marketing approaches that determine visitor numbers as well as destination image while investigating their consistency with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 framework.

The study conducted interviews with tourism sector executives together with development authorities and policymakers by using a qualitative research method. The research method delivered a detailed comprehension of both the marketing obstacles and possibilities that exist for successful implementation. The research by Faisal demonstrates how tourism marketing serves as a vital instrument for Saudi Arabia to achieve its economic diversification targets. The nation

directs its tourism strategy through cultural heritage initiatives and nature-based attractions combined with entertainment offerings which turn the country into a growing travel destination. Marketing campaigns which showcase Saudi Arabia's historical sites and cultural heritage and modern attractions have produced substantial changes in how the world sees the country. These campaigns use hospitality together with innovation and accessibility in their messaging to overcome stereotypes which has successfully directed international interest toward the country.

According to Faisal (2022) tourism marketing serves as a vital force that transforms Saudi Arabian perceptions while making national tourism objectives compatible with Vision 2030 goals. This research identifies digital marketing as well as strategic messaging and mega-events as fundamental elements for achieving these results although it points out future development opportunities. With implementation of Faisal's proposals Saudi Arabia will build its position as an international tourism hub while proving itself as an exemplary case for nations that use marketing methods to transform their economies.

Tulel, Ombaka, & Kariuki (2020) conducted the study "Effects of Destination Marketing on Tourism Performance in West Pokot County, Kenya" which delivers important findings about marketing strategy effects on tourism performance in underdeveloped regions. The empirical research studies the marketing-destination association to key performance metrics of the tourism sector thus providing knowledge about marketing strategies which drive changes in developing tourist destinations.

The researchers examined how marketing efforts affect tourism results in this specific Kenya region. The study analyzed four essential aspects including awareness creation together with new market development and advertising and branding approaches. The researchers conducted their study with descriptive research methods to collect data from hotel staff members and tour firm representatives and county tourism officials which they analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. Destination marketing explains 41.8% of the changes in tourism performance in West Pokot County and this relationship holds statistical significance at $p = 0.000$. The researchers establish through their work that destination marketing activities lead to substantial tourism performance improvements through better recognition among national and international visitors. The authors suggest that destination marketing stakeholders should work together to push for funding growth which will enhance tourism performance in the county. (Tulel et al., 2020).

The research analyzed (1) the destination marketing method effectiveness in West Pokot County Kenya, the direct impact on tourism performance measures involving visitor numbers, economic productivity and travel satisfaction and the key obstacles preventing successful destination advertising in this geographical area.

Tulel, Ombaka & Kariuki (2020) show through their research that destination marketing functions as an essential driver for tourism performance enhancement within underdeveloped regions such as West Pokot County in Kenya. The economic developments in regions benefit from destination marketing because this marketing method makes destinations more visible and triggers increased visitor influx and monetary revenue flow. It remains essential to deal with funding shortages and infrastructure defects because they represent barriers to sustain the recent improvements. This

investigation lays essential groundwork for additional studies and delivers useful suggestions about using marketing to transform tourism sector operations.

Julian (2018) examined digital marketing strategies for sustainable tourism development through his research “The Role of Digital Marketing in Promoting Sustainable Tourism Development: A Global Perspective.” The research analysis demonstrates how digital marketing instruments help sustainability efforts in tourism through activities that support eco-tourism together with cultural protection and neighborhood participation. Through analysis of diverse global case studies Julian develops a complete assessment about how digital marketing enhances sustainability goals for travel tourism.

This research examined the digital marketing influence on sustainable tourism growth while discovering appropriate digital methods for sustainable tourism promotion together with determining tourism operators' adoption barriers when using digital marketing for sustainability initiatives.

The research design by Julian used qualitative methods through case studies in Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, Latin America and Oceania. 50 interviews with tourism operators together with officials from government entities and sustainability advocates formed part of this assessment which examined data obtained from social media initiatives as well as website and digital advertisement platforms. Through his emphasis on sustainability Julian connects tourism marketing to environmental and cultural conservation while creating a new perspective on the subject.

Julian (2018) constructs a notable case that shows how digital marketing enhances sustainable tourism practices. The research provides business operators with practical approaches to connect their marketing strategies with sustainability objectives through its exploration of story-based communication and contemporary technology in addition to community engagement methods. Sustainable tourism will achieve its full digital marketing potential only after solving issues that include skill deficits alongside funding requirements and worries about green washing practices. The research by Julian continues to be important because it provides essential guidance for using digital platforms to establish a sustainable tourism industry that includes all stakeholders.

Study Gaps

The significance of marketing strategies for tourism stands confirmed by past research but more evaluation is needed regarding their success in underdeveloped regions such as Gashaka National Game Park. The research needs additional investigation to understand how marketing strategies function in remote underdeveloped areas especially when studying digital tools and different types of tourists.

METHODOLOGY

This research used a methodology to study how marketing strategies affect the visitor numbers at Gashaka National Game Park. The research methodology followed a systematic approach to achieve its objectives by collecting data which supported evidence-based conclusions.

The study applied a research design as it uses quantitative evaluation approaches. The researchers implemented this research design to achieve complete knowledge about marketing strategies and their impact on tourist numbers. The quantitative research methods allowed researchers to cross-analyze data which strengthened their evaluation of marketing strategy performance.

Gashaka National Game Park serves as the research location for this study because it represents Nigeria's largest National Park situated in the northeastern part of the country. The park stands out because of its abundant biodiversity and cultural assets and beautiful natural scenery which creates substantial opportunities for eco-tourism. The low tourist attraction at this location provides an optimal setting to study marketing strategy effects.

The research focused on four essential groups as its target population. The Gashaka National Game Park received visitors from domestic and international origins. Park management included staff members who operated the park alongside those who handled marketing initiatives and those who focused on conservation activities. The key stakeholders who promoted the park to tourists included tour operators and travel agents. Residents who lived near the park formed the fourth target group since they experienced direct or indirect tourism effects in their communities.

Different sampling techniques were used to guarantee a representative sample. A stratified random sampling approach was applied to tourist participants to obtain a wide range of demographic characteristics such as age groups and gender distribution as well as international backgrounds and travel frequency. The researchers employed purposive sampling to choose stakeholders who possessed specialized knowledge in marketing and tourism management. Three hundred survey participants were included in the study. The researchers determined this sample size to be sufficient for both data reliability and generalizing the study results.

The research collected primary data using surveys as data collection methods. The park distributed standardized questionnaires to its visiting tourists. The surveys utilized closed-ended questions to measure tourist responses regarding digital marketing awareness and promotional perceptions and pricing assessments as well as branding impressions.

The research utilized official reports in addition to marketing materials and tourism statistics and academic literature. The supplementary data added background knowledge which strengthened the analysis of the main research findings.

Different research instruments were employed to gather data. The questionnaire contained Likert-scale along with multiple-choice questions to gather quantitative information.

The researchers conducted statistical evaluation of the survey results by using descriptive analysis together with inferential methods. The researchers calculated descriptive statistics from tourist responses through frequencies, percentages and mean values. The analysis used regression methods as part of inferential statistics to establish how marketing strategies affect visitor numbers. The survey data processing utilized simple regression tools as the statistical tool. The research team used Cronbach's Alpha to test reliability and accepted values above 0.75 to demonstrate internal consistency. All interview protocols received standardized formatting to ensure data collection consistency.

The study maintained participant confidentiality through both the practice of response anonymization along with secure data storage to guarantee privacy protection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study surveyed 300 participants, including visitors, park administrators, and tour operators. The demographic breakdown in Table 1 shows that domestic tourists (62%) outnumbered international tourists (38%), highlighting an underdeveloped international tourism segment. Furthermore, 66% of respondents were first-time visitors, indicating a need for improved visitor retention strategies.

Awareness and Engagement with Digital Marketing Campaigns

Table 1: Awareness and Engagement of Digital Marketing Campaigns

Digital Marketing Perception	Percentage (%)
Aware of digital marketing campaigns	78%
Found campaigns engaging and informative	34%
Not aware of digital marketing campaigns	22%
Found campaigns unengaging or ineffective	44%

Source: *SPSS Output, 2025*

The study found that 78% of respondents were aware of digital marketing campaigns promoting Gashaka National Game Park. However, only 34% of them considered these campaigns engaging and informative. Additionally, 22% of respondents reported having no awareness of any digital marketing efforts related to the park. Furthermore, 44% of those who had encountered the campaigns found them unengaging or ineffective, indicating a potential gap in the effectiveness of current marketing strategies.

Relationship between Digital Marketing Awareness and Tourist Influx

Table 2: Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Coefficient (β)	R ² Value	p-Value	Significance
Digital Marketing Awareness	0.76	0.58	< 0.05	Significant

Source: *SPSS Output, 2025*

Regression analysis (Table 2) shows that digital marketing awareness significantly influences tourist influx, explaining 58% of visitor variation ($R^2 = 0.58$, $p < 0.05$). This highlights the importance of improving digital marketing strategies to boost tourism numbers.

Relationship between Destination Branding and Tourist Influx

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results

Variable	Coefficient (β)	R ² Value	p-Value	Significance
Destination Branding Awareness	0.82	0.64	< 0.01	Significant

Source: *SPSS Output, 2025*

Table 3 reveals that destination branding awareness significantly impacts tourist influx, explaining 64% of visitor variation ($R^2 = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$). Strengthening branding efforts, such as emphasizing the park's eco-tourism potential and cultural heritage, could enhance its appeal and attract more visitors.

Discussion of Findings

The results align with studies by Ginting & Sasmita (2018), emphasizing the role of digital marketing in enhancing destination visibility. Gashaka National Game Park could benefit from integrating advanced digital marketing techniques such as search engine optimization (SEO), influencer partnerships, and real-time social media engagement.

Similarly, Morton (2018) highlighted the importance of destination branding in differentiating tourist attractions. Establishing a compelling brand identity focused on eco-tourism and biodiversity could enhance Gashaka National Game Park's market positioning. Additionally, findings align with Valek (2020), who identified branding and promotional deficiencies as challenges in tourism development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Summary of Findings

- i. Digital marketing awareness significantly influences tourist influx, but current campaigns lack engagement and interactivity.
- ii. Destination branding efforts are insufficient, leading to low awareness of the park's unique features.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that marketing strategies significantly influence visitor numbers at Gashaka National Game Park. While digital marketing awareness is high, engagement levels are low, indicating a need for more interactive and targeted approaches. Additionally, destination branding efforts remain weak, limiting the park's appeal. Addressing these deficiencies could enhance the park's visibility and attract a higher number of both domestic and international tourists.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the objectives and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. The part should implement interactive and visually appealing content, utilize influencer marketing, and improve SEO strategies to increase engagement and effectiveness.
- ii. They should develop a strong branding strategy emphasizing eco-tourism, cultural heritage, and biodiversity to create a unique and compelling identity.

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